



The FRESHERS

Issue 23/24





Featured Artist: Sarah Beck

Sarah Beck is an illustrator from Salford, currently studying Illustration with Animation at Manchester School of Art. Sarah works with a combination of energetic colours and textures, combining digital and analogue techniques. Her work flits between romanticising the mundane and creating narrative-driven fantasy pieces. This piece depicts the view from Sarah's old studio space in Benzie Building, overlooking the All Saints campus.

Follow @sarahbeckillustration

Welcome to The FRESHERS Issue

As our busy campus comes alive once again, we are thrilled to present The FRESHERS Issue 23/24. This special mini issue of aAh! highlights the freshest spots in our city to soak up arts and culture, serves up housemate-friendly recipes, and shares advice, opportunities, and experiences from students just like you.

For many of us, Manchester is more than just a place; it's a city full of history, culture, and diversity. This year, we celebrate the essence of what makes our city truly special with our 'Welcome home to Manchester' featured artist theme. We're delighted to showcase the work of our talented Manchester School of Art students, Sarah Beck and Grace Parnell. Find their work on p2 and p43.

As well as shining a spotlight on our creative community of students, this issue uncovers the hidden gems that make our campus special. As you start to explore the wider city, we highlight the best spots to work, chill and play. For foodies on the hunt for the perfect burger, we've got you covered. On a budget? We've curated a collection of budget-friendly activities and rounded up the best vintage shops that guarantee quality thrifty finds without breaking the bank.

We delve into the city's vibrant and diverse arts scene, meeting Manchester's rising drag star, Viola. They take us on a journey through their experience on hit TV show *Queen of the Universe* and offer insights on navigating the city's dynamic drag culture. We introduce Manchester Cathedral's Writer-in-Residence and recipient of the prestigious 2022 New Poets Prize, Tom Branfoot. He shares his vision for using poetry to make a difference. Immersing ourselves in the creative world of Venture Arts, we delve into the story of this innovative charity in Hulme, empowering individuals with learning difficulties and supporting them to excel as bold artists.

As we continue to navigate this turbulent decade and artificial intelligence rears its head, we examine the implications of the technology and its impact on our cultural landscape with a feature on the future of AI.

To top it off, this issue is also packed with Freshers tips and tricks, making it essential reading for those looking to get the most out of their time studying in the best city in the world. Whether you're a seasoned Mancunian or a newcomer to our vibrant city, we invite you to join our community of readers and contributors.

Welcome home to Manchester!

Lucy Vincent, Clayton McLoughlin-Lopez & Jenna Muiderman
aAh! Magazine Editors

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Get involved:

We're always on the lookout for student journalists, editors, social media marketers, graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, and filmmakers on an ongoing basis to help make aAh! an informed, inspiring, witty, and opinionated collection of student voices and talent that makes our city brilliant. Get involved and be a part of your student magazine.



On the cover:



Jack Dean
Follow @unfortunatelyjack



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By Lucy Vincent
Design Laura Sheridan

WHAT'S ON...



SEPTEMBER

FRESHERS FAIR 26 — 27/09/23

A must-visit event on your university calendar, the iconic Freshers Fair takes place at the Union over two days. It's your opportunity to pick up freebies and giveaways, meet the clubs and societies, and enjoy a complimentary slice of Domino's pizza.

(UN)DEFINING QUEER Until 03/12/23

Led by an intersectional group of people who self-identify as LGBTQIA+, the exhibition delves into language, histories, and narratives within the Whitworth Art Gallery's practice and collections. Explore the dynamic intersections of identities with work featured by artists Ajamu X, Niki de Saint Phalle, General Idea, David Hockney, Maggie Hambling and more.

STEPHEN HAWKING AT WORK Until 01/01/24

Experience a glimpse into the daily life of world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking through a special exhibition at the Science and Industry Museum. Offering insights into his workspace and the remarkable contents of his office, the display will feature objects from his office.

UNPICKING COUTURE Until 12/01/25

Introducing exquisite high-fashion pieces recently added to the Manchester Art Gallery's collection, Unpicking Couture celebrates the innovation of influential designers. The exhibition showcases pivotal moments in fashion history and features works by groundbreaking designers such as Christian Dior, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen and more.

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE 07—17/09/23

Following a record-breaking three-year West End residency, the smash hit musical comes to Manchester's The Lowry. Guided by his supportive mother and friends, Jamie confronts prejudice, overcomes bullying, and steps into the limelight in this heartwarming journey from darkness to the spotlight.

BACK TO THE 90S AND 00S: FRESHERS THROWBACK PARTY 19/09/23

Relive the 90s and 00s at The Deaf Institute, where Manchester's top DJs will take you on a musical journey to remember. Expect to hear all your favourite nostalgic hits, making Freshers 2023 an unforgettable night of retro fun.

CULTURE FEST 28/09/23

Immerse yourself in a celebration of global cultures at the Student Union, with diverse cuisines, traditional crafts, and cultural performances. There will also be a friendly support team ready to answer questions about university life.

WALKING TOUR: MANCHESTER MUSIC WALKABOUT 29/09/23

Led by award-winning Manc tour guide Jonathan Schofield, embark on a tuneful journey through Manchester's music scene from the 1960s to today. Uncover the diverse sounds that have shaped the musical landscape of the city. Limited tickets available via the Student Union website.

OCTOBER

MOOD BOARD MAKING 09/10/23

Elevate your goal-setting for the year ahead at the Students Union's free mood board-making event. Unleash your creativity and connect with fellow Freshers while you craft a personalised visual of your future plans and aspirations.

MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL 09/10 — 29/11/23

Immerse yourself in a celebration of imagination, stories, and voices from around the world at the Manchester Literature Festival at venues across the city. Hear from brilliant and creative minds in fiction, poetry, art, music, politics, economics and science.

42ND STREET 16 — 21/10/23

Experience the huge spirit of Broadway in *42nd Street* at Manchester Opera House. This larger-than-life production promises to uplift and entertain, starring Samantha Womack, Faye Tozer, Les Dennis, and Nicole-Lily Baisden.

MAISIE PETERS 21/10/23

Embarking on her biggest tour to date, singer-songwriter Maisie Peters brings 'Road To Wembley' to Manchester's O2 Apollo. Expect to hear hits from her chart-topping second album, *The Good Witch*.

HALLOWEEN IN THE CITY 28 — 29/10/23

Halloween In The City is back to haunt the entire Manchester population over the Halloween weekend, with a petrifying programme of Halloween-themed pop up events taking place across the city centre. Look out for giant rooftop monsters and a spooky parade.

2:22 A GHOST STORY 31/10/23 — 04/11/23

In this supernatural thriller, something otherworldly happens every night at 2:22am. Explore this award-winning play that challenges perceptions of reality and the supernatural at The Lowry.

NOVEMBER

THE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL AND NETWORKING EVENT 05/11/23

Join Weekend Film School Manchester for a short film festival showcasing local talent at Cultplex. Enjoy a collection of films followed by networking opportunities with filmmakers, directors, and actors.

BRITISH TRADITIONS: SPILL THE TEA! 09/11/23

Join a student panel at the Student Union to hear insights about British customs from fellow students. Enjoy a free slice of cake and a cup of tea while learning about cultural traditions.

HAMILTON THE MUSICAL 11/11—24/02/24

Discover the multi-award-winning masterpiece 'Hamilton' by Lin-Manuel Miranda, recounting the life of Alexander Hamilton and his pivotal role in shaping America. Experience it live at the city's iconic Palace Theatre.

MANCHESTER ART FAIR 17—19/11/23

Immerse yourself in the blend of acclaimed galleries and independent artists at the Manchester Art Fair at Manchester Cathedral. Here traditional and contemporary art meets to create a unique and approachable Northern art-buying experience.

WORLD DANCES TASTER SESSIONS 21/11/23

Enjoy a day filled with dance lessons representing various nationalities at the Student Union. Explore the rich diversity of dance styles and cultures, while making new friends.

DECEMBER

ICE SKATING AT CATHEDRAL GARDENS 27/10/23—02/01/24

Staying in Manchester over the festive period? Get yourself in the holiday spirit with a day out at Skate Manchester. The outdoor ice rink is located in the heart of the city at Cathedral Gardens. Come rain or shine, their covered ice rink ensures you can relish your skating adventure no matter the weather.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS 11/23—12/23

Experience the festive spirit with over 220 stalls across Manchester's city centre. The Christmas Markets are a great way to celebrate the festive season and offer the perfect opportunity to pick up some special gifts.

HOME ALONE IN CONCERT: THE FILM WITH A LIVE ORCHESTRA 03/12/23

Relish a Christmas classic as *Home Alone* comes to life at the AO Arena with a live orchestra performing John Williams' enchanting score. The film and music blend for a heartwarming holiday experience.

CHRISTMAS PYJAMA PARTY 07/12/23

Embrace the holiday spirit at the Student Union's Christmas movie night with complimentary popcorn and candy floss. Take part in a gift exchange with gifts under £5 or crafted during the free workshop earlier in the day.

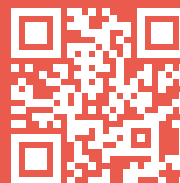
DMA's 15/12/23

Sydney trio DMA's hit Manchester's Aviva Studios this December as part of their UK-wide tour, following the success of their latest album, *How Many Dreams?* weaving electronic dance elements seamlessly with guitar rock and punk, they are not to be missed live.

NEW YEARS EVE AT THE WAREHOUSE PROJECT 31/12/23

Wrap up your 2023 with the ultimate NYE rave at Mayfield Depot. Last year's event hosted the likes of Annie Mac, DJ EZ and Interplanetary Criminal, so we can only imagine this year will be another hit. Guaranteed to sell out, watch this space for lineup announcements.

Scan for more events throughout the year so you never miss out.



USEFUL CONTACTS

Advice Centre

0161 247 6533 | s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk
theunionmmu.org/advice-centre

Campus Security

0161 247 1334

Careers Service

0161 247 1700
mmu.ac.uk/careers

Chaplaincy

Chaplain Mohammed Ullah | mohammed.ullah@mmu.ac.uk
Muslim Chaplain Umm Isa | u.issa@mmu.ac.uk

Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing

0161 247 3493 | counselling@mmu.ac.uk
mmu.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing

Course Enquiries

0161 247 6969
mmu.ac.uk/contact-us/course-enquiry

Disability Service

0161 247 3491 | disability.service@mmu.ac.uk

Inclusion Service

0161 247 3491 | inclusion.service@mmu.ac.uk

International Students Group

0161 247 6471 | isg@mmu.ac.uk

Jobs 4 Students

0161 247 1402 | jobs4students@mmu.ac.uk

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)

pal@mmu.ac.uk

Residential Life

studentliving@mmu.ac.uk

Student Financial Support

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Student Hub

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The Union

Meet Education Officer Sandesh Punhani



By Jenna Muiderman
& Kawaljit Kaur
Design Bradley Sansom
Photography Rohit Kumar

What is your main mission as Education Officer and how do you plan to achieve your goals?

I will closely collaborate with the accommodation team to ensure that students receive the necessary support and care, eliminating any mental distress that may arise due to accommodation challenges. This approach aligns with my vision of enhancing the overall student experience. Ultimately, my mission is to elevate students' learning journeys, foster academic success, and cultivate a positive and nurturing environment.

Why did you choose this role?

I am dedicated to creating inclusive environments and equipping individuals with the necessary tools to pursue lifelong learning. I firmly believe in the transformative power of education and its potential to empower individuals from all walks of life.

What do you do for fun?

I'm passionate about playing cricket and have a talent for cooking, specialising in Indian, Australian, and Western cuisines. Cooking allows me to unwind and experiment with flavours, and cricket keeps me physically active and fosters teamwork.

What do you see as the key issues facing students in 2023?

The obstacles that students will experience in 2023 and 2024 include stress related to their finances, mental health issues, anxiety, homesickness and housing. The institution has the resources available to provide full support, both mentally and emotionally, to assist students in overcoming these difficulties and succeeding in their academic endeavours.

What are your tips for getting the most out of university?

It's essential to stay engaged and proactive. Attend lectures and participate actively in discussions. Utilise the library resources to enhance your knowledge. Get involved in campus activities and clubs to meet new people and expand your horizons. Don't hesitate to seek guidance from professors and advisors. Finally, I'd say explore the city and embrace new experiences beyond the classroom.

Follow Sandesh's journey as 23/24 Education Officer on Instagram @educationofficermmu

Graduates' top tips for freshers

By Lucy Warburton
Design Bradley Sansom
Photography Lucy Warburton

Graduation is a special time to look back and reflect on your time at university. As the chapter closes for one year of students and a new chapter starts for those entering their first year at university, what better people to give advice than the group that just completed their uni experience. We caught up with recent graduates for their advice for freshers.

“Get involved in as much extra-curricular stuff as you can! My first year was during Covid, so I couldn't do a lot. But in my second year I did as much as I could, including aAh! Magazine, the Northern Quota, and I can't forget Matchday Live. ”



Benji
Multimedia Journalism



Wiktorja
English & Multimedia Journalism

“Work hard and don't skip any of your lectures because they are very, very important. As much as you may want to skip sometimes, definitely go to them! ”

“Meet people, make friends and think critically. Your time at uni is great to challenge your beliefs and preconceptions. Learn, stumble and fail (at times), but mostly enjoy the ride. ”



Lisa
Graphic Design

Are you on the hunt for things to do right here on campus? Good news! As a student, you've got a bunch of resources at your fingertips that'll not only amp up your learning but also make your time here more satisfying. So, let's spill the beans on some of the coolest hidden gems you can find on campus.



HIDDEN GEMS

By Lucy Vincent
Design Laura Sheridan

MANCHESTER POETRY LIBRARY

For all you poetry lovers! The Manchester Poetry Library is the first free poetry library in the North West. It's home to an amazing collection of modern poetry in lots of different languages. From books to recordings, they've got it all! Plus, if you're tired of the regular library, this is a cool alternative spot to study and get inspired. The team also hosts a year-round programme of events including poetry workshops, book launches and fascinating talks. So, the next time you're in the mood for some poetic vibes, head straight here.

Grosvenor East, Ground Floor

NEW CHAPLAINCY SPACE & PRAYER ROOM

Manchester Met now has a newly refurbished Muslim Prayer Rooms for students. The chaplaincy offices are here too, where you chat with the friendly chaplains and Student Services staff if you need any support. You can find this relaxing space right in the heart of the campus – in the Cavendish building. Friday Prayers will start at the beginning of the new academic year.

Cavendish

MAKE MORE STORE

Feeling creative? Get ready to explore the Make More Store. This place is super convenient and offers a fantastic range of supplies for all of your projects. Whether you're a graphic design, fashion or art student, this place is your go-to resource. They stock a large range of paper and art supplies, fabric and haberdashery items. You can also find sublimation and inkjet printers which you can book online using the Connect2 system. So, no more waiting around – just hop online, book your slot. The store accepts card payments as well as Met Cards.

Chatham, CH1.14



HUB FOOD COURT



Hungry? Get ready to satisfy those food cravings at the Hub Food Court, your one-stop destination for yummy eats right on campus. It's super convenient to grab a bite between classes. For breakfast, The Deli has got your back! From 8am to 11am, they're serving up some delicious morning goodness. Picture this: breakfast muffins, five-item breakfast boxes, or beans on toast – all part of the new campus saver range. You can indulge in a variety of cuisines from around the globe, including Asian, Italian, and more. So, next time you're feeling hungry or want to try something new, head over. Bon appétit!

Business School, Ground Floor

BENZIE ROOF TERRACE

Check out this great hangout spot on the fourth floor of the Benzie Building. It's a great place to take in some fresh air and views of the Manchester cityscape. The terrace also doubles up as an exhibition space too. If you're into sustainable dye making, you can find the dye garden up here. It's perfect for all you eco-conscious students who want to experiment with making dyes in the print room.

Benzie, Manchester School of Art

ON CAMPUS



PRINT CITY

Have you heard about Print City? Home to facilities for 3D printing, the team collaborates with many departments across the university. Now, you might be wondering, 'How can I learn to use all that fancy software for 3D printing?' Well, worry not! There are courses on 'Fusion 360 Essential Training' available on LinkedIn Learning. And here's the best part: if you're a Manchester Met student, you can access it for free through the MMU library. Happy printing!

Turing House, Phoenix Way

BRING & PING

Dining on a budget? Freshly launched 'Bring and Ping' spaces have popped up to support students during the cost-of-living crisis. You're invited to use the free microwave facilities when bringing in your own food and drinks to enjoy on campus. There's also a common room that serves as a space for eating and unwinding. Remember to bring your own mugs, plates, cutlery, as well as any other items you require for a chilled low cost lunch.

Geoffrey Manton, GM 1.14

don't spend more explore

At this time of the year, it seems everyone is competing for student cash. There is a lot to get excited about, but one thing that won't be advertised so much are good days out that don't cost a penny. We round up five days out which won't break the bank.

**By Lucy Vincent
& Clayton McLoughlin-Lopez**
Design & Photography **Bradley Sansom**

1 Visit a historic library

If you find yourself overwhelmed by the noise and action of the city, there are a number of stunning libraries which offer the perfect refuge. Founded in 1806, the Portico Library is one of Manchester's longest running institutions, and one of the oldest buildings in the city. Located on Mosley Street, it hosts free exhibitions which are open to the public. The John Rylands Library's neo-gothic architecture is also magnificent and impressive. There is a popular myth that the library, on Deansgate, was used as a filming location for Hogwarts in the early Harry Potter films. Chetham's Library, founded in 1653, is one of the oldest public libraries in the English-speaking world. Located within Chetham's School of Music, it's renowned for its historic charm and rich collection of rare books, manuscripts, and archives. Manchester Central Library is also an epic example of a modern and bustling public library situated in the heart of Manchester. Don't forget to register online for your free library card.

Scan the QR code below for more recommendations of the best things to do in the city



2 Explore the city's museums and galleries

Manchester has no shortage of quality museums and galleries to explore, including but not limited to the People's History Museum, the Science and Industry Museum, and Manchester Art Gallery. Manchester Met even has its own little museum, Special Collections. Easily accessible, it is located on the third floor of All Saints Library. It's a great place to take a break from your studies, request to view archived materials, and explore the different exhibitions. Check the MMU website for details on how to request a viewing or for help in relation to your own research.

4 Discover the charity rescuing donkeys

Located beside Gorton's Debdale Park and set across seven acres of land, animal lovers can enjoy the company of rescued donkeys. The Donkey Sanctuary is a charity dedicated to the welfare of donkeys. Here the animals have the liberty to roam freely and decide whether to engage with visitors. During your visit, you may find the donkeys grazing in their enclosures, enjoying a peaceful moment in the barn, or participating in one of their enrichment activities designed to keep them mentally and physically active. Open every Saturday and selected Sundays, free tickets are available to book online. There's also an option to make a donation which goes towards supporting the expert care of the donkeys and global education to improve donkey welfare.

3 Wander round the city's Northern Quarter

Take in the Northern Quarter's iconic streets and visit the alternative shopping complex, Afflecks. This place is more than a shopping experience; it is a cultural hub for Manchester's alternative scene. The three-story complex on Tib Street is filled with eclectic stores to window shop at your leisure. As you continue your journey through this vibrant neighbourhood, be sure to explore the evolving street art scene. The Northern Quarter is known for the ever-changing murals and graffiti that adorn its buildings. These colourful artworks add a dynamic and creative flair to the area, and they often serve as a canvas for social and political commentary.

5 See the garden in the sky

Castlefield Viaduct is a beacon of the city's greener future, and a ground-breaking way to experience Manchester's industrial heritage. Located in the heart of the city, the grade-II listed viaduct is dubbed as Manchester's first 'sky park', embracing nature's reclamation of its industrial structure and planting beautiful gardens to bring life to the city. Part of the National Trust, pre-bookable guided tours are available every morning except Wednesday, or you can turn up and explore yourself every day from 11am to 4pm.

the best green spots in the city

Living in such a big city, it's natural to want to escape and spend a while in nature. And although the picturesque Peak District is just an hour away, you needn't leave the city to immerse yourself in the countryside. Bradley Sansom rounds up some of Manchester's best green spaces...

river irwell

Flowing through the city centre is the River Irwell, an often overlooked waterway that links some of Greater Manchester's greenest hidden gems. Follow the riverbanks up from Salford's Peel Park ❶, the UK's first publicly funded park, through to Kersal Wetlands ❷, where a former racecourse has been converted into a huge nature reserve. As well as providing a home for birds and roe deer, the fields protect the city centre from flooding by stormwater. For a great arty day out, follow the Irwell Sculpture Trail up through the peaceful Drinkwater Park and into the Lancashire countryside.

➡ Salford Crescent

mayfield

Opened in September 2022 as the city centre's first new park in a century, Mayfield ❸ is a fantastic place to relax and take some time out just around the corner from Piccadilly station. As part of the development, a disused former railway depot has been transformed and the old River Medlock has been opened back up into a lush landscaped valley. It's perfect for a break from the hustle and bustle while enjoying everything the city centre has to offer.

🚶 Piccadilly

mersey valley

Although the Mersey ❹ is better known for running through Liverpool, in fact the river starts here in Manchester, and its banks are an ideal place to walk and surround yourself with nature. Flowing through Chorlton, Didsbury, and Stockport, it's easily accessed by public transport yet makes the city feel miles away. Alongside the river, the paths give access to some great green spaces such as Kenworthy Woods ❺, Sale Ees ❻, and the Trafford Watersports Centre at Sale Water Park ❼, which is brilliant for kayaking and wild swimming. The banks also form part of the Trans Pennine Trail, a coast-to-coast route linking some of the most scenic parts of the north.

🚶 Sale Water Park

heaton park

On the outskirts of the city is Heaton Park ❸, the biggest municipal park in Europe. Known for holding summer concerts as well as the Parklife music festival, it's also home to a wide range of activities, including everything from orienteering to rowing. Within its 600 acres, you'll find a garden centre, golf course, Manchester's beekeeping visitor centre, and a farmyard with a herd of highland cattle. There's a tramway museum, with vintage tram rides running on weekends, or you could climb to the top of the hill and look out over Manchester's impressive skyline.

🚶 Heaton Park

fletcher moss

Down in Didsbury, on the banks of the Mersey sits a haven for wildlife at Fletcher Moss ❹. For over a century, the tranquillity of the botanical gardens has been an inspiration to many, including the founder of the RSPB, Emily Williamson. Their inaugural meeting was held in the park in 1899, campaigning to protect birds from harm. The gardens' sheltered microclimate means non-native plants have thrived there, and the park is also home to a flock of parakeets, with their bright green plumage and unmistakable chirping.

🚶 Didsbury Village

RISE

ROUND UP

By Leonie Kellar
Design Faye Byrne

Man Met Rise is an extracurricular programme that gives you the opportunity to gain a wide range of experiences, skills and qualifications, all while meeting new people and potentially earning extra credits towards your degree. Featuring self-study programmes, workshops, internships and volunteering opportunities, there is plenty to get your teeth stuck into. We round up some of our favourite Rise highlights (but be sure to check out the website for more!)

STITCHED UP VOLUNTEER

There is no denying that fashion is a huge part of everyday life but with fast-fashion on the rise, why not team up with Stitched Up to help make fashion more sustainable? Stitched Up is a not-for-profit community benefit society inspiring communities across Greater Manchester to take action on sustainable fashion. They offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities including helping in their shop, sewing projects, preparing for campaigns, workshops and more.

MICROSOFT & ADOBE CERTIFICATION SCHEME

Whether you want to impress your future employers or develop your Microsoft or Adobe skills for your course studies and assignments, these courses are for you. They are fully-funded opportunities (worth up to £600) to gain external certification from Microsoft or Adobe, which evidences your competency to use their software. Both courses offer a completely flexible self-study and examination process.



Photography @stitchedupcoop

WORLD LANGUAGES

This self-study course caters to people with no (or very limited) prior knowledge of a range of languages spoken across the World, including French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese. You will learn and practice beginner level words and phrases, and explore how language learning can enhance your employability, as well as the various opportunities that are available to you for learning a language at Manchester Met.

MATCHDAY LIVE

Interested in sports journalism and broadcasting? This unique project provides students with the opportunity to broadcast MMU BUCS sports games weekly. The Manchester Met sports livestream show was launched last year at the university's Platt Lane sports hub in Rusholme. The team have built a sector-leading broadcast system from scratch, with remotely-operated cameras indoors and outdoors showing live coverage of university sports teams playing football, rugby, basketball, volleyball, netball, lacrosse and futsal. The show goes out live from a dedicated studio, created by student volunteer presenters, commentators, producers, camera operators, sound and vision mixers, marketing assistants and more.

HOME FROM HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER

This is a great opportunity for anyone who is looking to build their skills and gain experience within the Health and Social Care sector. You will be supporting the Recovery Service and Home from Hospital volunteers, which enables patients to return home with confidence and support. You might help with their shopping, collect prescriptions, or just be a listening ear while people begin to develop their independent skills again. Your role will involve elements of lone working and building a relationship with those you visit, which is hugely rewarding for both you and the people you support.

Visit
rise.mmu.ac.uk
and follow
[@ManMetRise](https://www.instagram.com/ManMetRise)
for year-round
opportunities



VENUE GUIDE

By Tom Cooper Design Faye Byrne

NQ64

Fans of retro gaming look no further; NQ64 is packed with arcade classics like *Time Crisis*, *Guitar Hero* and *Dance Dance Revolution*. You can even get powered up on novelty-themed cocktails like the Kong Island Ice Tea and the Power Star Martini. Just try not to lose at the games too quickly.

nq64.co.uk

YES

This former auction house now exclusively deals in flogging good times. Spread across its four floors are dance rooms catered to all musical tastes, whether it be indie sleaze or glittery pop. Also on offer: live music and tasty pizza. Yes!

yes-manchester.com

Matt & Phred's

Tucked away in the Northern Quarter, this smoky underground basement lounge has some of the best live jazz, blues, and soul performances around. You can even get on stage yourself to perform with the full live backing of the impressive house band - you'll be a professional crooner in no time.

mattandphreds.com

FAC 251

Formerly the headquarters of the legendary Factory Records, the venue was reborn as a nightclub under the guidance of New Order's Peter Hook back in 2010. Each of its three floors comes with its very own DJ and its own select genre-focus. Expect helpings of R'n'B, indie, and tech.

factorymanchester.com

Hidden

One of Manchester's premiere dance spots. Specialising in all things garage, house, and disco, Hidden is one of the city's worst-kept secrets. If you're doing anything for Freshers this year, make sure to head down to their Freshers Festival night, a staple among students.

hiddenmcr.com

The Temple

Here's one you've probably slipped past already; it's hard not to notice its alluring entrance poking out to the surface of Oxford Road. Follow those steps and you'll find a truly unique spot. This subterranean bar actually used to be a public toilet, but don't worry - it certainly doesn't stink anymore. Expect cool tunes and punk vibes.

[@temple_mcr](https://twitter.com/temple_mcr)

As one of the most thriving cultural epicentres of the UK, Manchester has got a lot to take in. It's easy to be overwhelmed - with so much on offer, where do you even start? Fear not; we're here with a shortlist of some of the best live music hotspots and independent venues in town.

The Deaf Institute

Stationed just across from campus, this music venue gets its ironic name from the building's past as a medical institute. Now reborn as an exciting hub of live indie music - featuring acts such as Be Your Own Pet - this is certainly one to check out. Don't forget their carefully curated club nights either; you can expect to see everything from post-punk to glitzy 80s pop.

thedeafinstitute.co.uk

Big Hands

This NYC-styled dive bar is a masterclass in shambolic-cool. The venue is kitted out with a chaotic mish-mash of kitsch decorations, giving it an authentic bohemian atmosphere. Sample one of their trendy beers and pick a tune on the old-fashioned jukebox before heading up to the famous roof terrace.

facebook.com/BigHandsBar

Night & Day Café

Since its opening in 1991, Night & Day Café has been a hub of grassroots music in the city. The venue has seen a number of successful bands play there back in their early days, giving it a reputation as the place to see the next big thing. After some recent troubles with the council over noise complaints, many artists have spoken out in its defence, including Elbow and The Charlatans.

nightnday.org

The White Hotel

This is the authentic, beating heart of Manchester's nightclub scene. Hidden away in an old Salford industrial estate, overlooked by Strangeways, this former warehouse is a truly underground gem. It's the kind of place that gave garage music its name. Garage isn't all that's on offer during its all-night raves though. Get down to experience the very best in electronic music from across the spectrum.

ra.co/clubs/112509

Dog Bowl

If you fancy something a bit different on your night out, the wittily-named Dog Bowl is a good place to start. Open till late, you can enjoy a bit of healthy competition on one of its many bowling lanes. Plus (if you get there before 9pm) you can grab some alley-side snacks to enjoy as you watch your mates get another one in the gutter.

dogbowlmanchester.co.uk

Manchester is an amazing city and no single list could truly attempt to capture all of the interesting things it has to offer, no matter how extensive it might be. This is simply a starter course. If you're ever bored, just wander around and see where you end up. You never know what you might find. Happy hunting!



Manchester's rising star **Viola** on Queen of the Universe and navigating the city's drag scene

“There was nowhere for ‘baby queens’ to break into the scene”

Fabulous drag queens strike fierce poses in their own outfit creations. Cabaret show hosts request tequila shots from the bar staff every five minutes. Further down the street, lip syncing competitions rage on. All just an average night out in Manchester's Gay Village, featuring local talent, established performers and emerging artists. Manchester Met student Niall Trowsdale Stannard, also known as ‘Viola,’ is one of these rising drag stars.

Niall explains how his hometown of Coventry doesn't have much diverse drag, aside from a few gay bars and local drag queens: “There was nowhere for ‘baby queens’ to break into the scene and really find their drag identity.

“Before leaving to study at MMU, I had visited the Manchester Gay Village only once, and I knew it was going to be my second home while living here in Manchester.”

For Niall, Manchester's drag scene has it all. “Manchester is more diverse than most cities. I have to admit, it is very oversaturated, but I don't see a negative in that; it pushes queens to try new things within the niches of drag,” he says.

Niall's journey into the world of drag began unexpectedly when a classmate playing the role of the Killer Queen in their school musical production of *We Will Rock You* dropped out. Without hesitation, Niall stepped up to fill the spot. He crafted a “gender-bending evil villain” character for the role, which later evolved into his current act, ‘Viola.’

Niall explains, “I started as an androgynous, quirky singer. I would spend hours in my bedroom perfecting my unique drag makeup style while being inspired by Trixie Mattel's YouTube videos.”

He adds, “Drag can be ANYTHING! It has no boundaries. Art is limitless, and drag is art. However, the community that we call drag nowadays is an amalgamation of many different cultures and movements throughout history.”

Niall's love of drag comes from his passion to perform, sing, and dance. He picked up the violin at only seven-years-old and the flute at 14: “I love playing the violin and I love singing, so what fuels my drag is really my passion for performing. And let's be real, the drag audience LOVES a queen with a niche. It was a no-brainer to bring my talents into my drag.”

Deciding to maximise his niche talents, Niall applied to be on the TV show *Queen of the Universe*, a global singing competition featuring the most talented drag queens from around the world. Each episode, hosted by Graham Norton, features a musical performance by the contestants who each represent a different country perform live in front of judges Michelle Visage, Trixie Mattel, Vanessa Williams, and Mel B. After seven months of auditioning, Niall was selected to represent the UK on the show as Viola.

Viola sang several songs on the show, originally performed by queer British icons Freddie Mercury, Sam Smith, and Elton John. On top of this, Niall was the youngest queen in the cast. He describes how this was intimidating but gave him “the fire

to show that it doesn't take experience to be a superstar”.

The show featured a particularly emotional moment which saw judge Michelle thank Niall's parents, who were in the audience, for supporting a queer child. “It's so important to have support from family as a queer person, let alone a drag queen. My parents have been amazing, from the moment I came out until now,” says Niall.

They've driven me to gigs, paid for wigs and heels, and come to my shows wearing my merchandise! My dad pushed me to learn musical instruments and to join choirs and orchestras. I really don't think I'd be a singer, musician, or drag queen if it wasn't for him.

When discussing the challenges faced by drag queens, Niall mentions various difficulties such as finding work, competition, funding, and balancing work with social life. He expresses that securing residencies at venues and performing at least three nights a week is highly coveted for drag queens, as it allows for a full-time drag career. For those without such privileges, every gig requires extensive planning, communication, negotiation, and travel.

When asked about life after university, Niall says: “I'm asking myself, can I make my dream of having a full-time drag career a reality?” He acknowledges the need for plenty of hard work and establishing a reputation within the drag cabaret scene to secure regular bookings. However, without guaranteed gig stability, Niall recognises the importance of sustaining himself financially and considers pursuing work as a textile artist.

“I love making drag and art through all kinds and media, I am grateful for all the opportunities and support and I hope I never stop.”

You can watch all episodes of *Queen Of The Universe* on WOW Presents Plus and find Viola on Instagram @playedbyviola.

By Lucy Vincent
Design Bradley Sansom
& Lucy Vincent
Photography Kelvin Gray

FASHION FORWARD-



BACK IN TIME

By Molly Granger
Design Laura Sheridan

It's no secret that Manchester is a hub for all things fashion. With its long history of being a 'Cottonopolis' it's inevitable that the city leads the way in major fashion design and trends. With growing calls for sustainable practices, Manchester is the perfect place to find an endless amount of independent vintage and second-hand shops.

Shopping second-hand is a brilliant way to keep your carbon footprint to a minimum, but knowing where to look can be tricky with so many shops to choose from. So we're sharing our guide to hours of vintage treasure hunting!

BARE NECESSITIES:

Manchester is home to not one, but two Bare Necessities (one of which is conveniently located right across campus) where you'll find endless rails of vintage clothes and cheap prices. Every time you go in you'll be sure to find new stock to spend hours looking through, from vintage Levi jeans to skirts going for as little as £1.99.

POP BOUTIQUE:

Located on the first floor of Afflecks, Pop Boutique first opened in 1994 in the heart of the Northern Quarter. The shop is packed with quirky vintage pieces as well as own brand goods. The stock ranges from 1950s dresses to mod jackets, with a swinging 60s vibe to the entire shop, there is a warm atmosphere sure to give a unique shopping experience to anyone who visits.

AFFLECKS:

Afflecks has titled itself an 'emporium of eclecticism', and it sure does live up to it's reputation. Home to 60 shops across four floors there is hours of browsing through vintage gold from independent retailers right at your fingertips (you could even get a piercing or tattoo while you're at it). Afflecks is also known to be a safe space, in which you can experiment across the variety of retailers and there is sure to be something for everyone

BLUE RINSE:

Blue Rinse Vintage, located on Oldham street in the Northern Quarter, sells used, recycled and reworked clothing. Their 'Re made in England' line can be found in Urban Outfitters as well as being currently one of the largest vintage wholesalers in the UK. Their shop has an amazing selection of accessories, as well as brilliant themed window displays for inspiration.



BEST BUNS IN TOWN!

By Isobel Bates
Illustration Snehal Rajendra Dhanwate
Design Faye Byrne

aAh! reviewer Isobel Bates checks out the best burger joints in town.

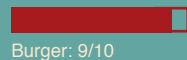
Manchester has a wealth of show-stopping restaurants. From the Philly Cheesesteak Combo at FAT PAT'S to Chicken Gyros at What The Pitta, there are thousands of infamous dishes to try in the city. But where do you begin?

When we think about staple dishes, our minds always go to the humble cheeseburger.

Celebrity chef Bobby Flay once said, 'The best burgers are simple, juicy, and messy.' While burger joints can strive to create unique patties with truffles, eggs, and chorizo, if they can't master a simple cheeseburger, they are not worthy of calling themselves a burger restaurant.

We review the top burger restaurants and takeaways in Manchester, (with bonus sides included).

WHOLESOME JUNKIES (Vegan)



Good vegan restaurants are few and far between, but Wholesome Junkies could be the best all-vegan restaurant in Manchester. Tucked away beside the AO Arena, this is the perfect spot for a date or a casual hangout with a small group of friends.

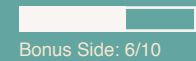
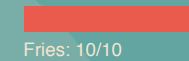
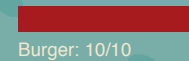
It's very rare to find a quality vegan burger, which made me wonder if their Classic Burger was actually vegan – it was! I inhaled

it in one go. The only reason I'm giving it nine out of ten instead of top marks is due to the burger being a bit pricey. The fries were seasoned to perfection; I only wish there was more cheese sauce and no jalapenos.

The creamy Classic Mac 'N' Cheese bonus side was insanely good but pricey, especially for the portion size. However, I'm really glad I tried it.

ARCHIES (Halal)

10% student discount available in store



Archies was made in Manchester. And it's definitely a Manc institution worth a visit, particularly when their maiden store is located right outside the university. Their Royale with Cheese burger was juicy and filling. There's something nostalgic about eating a cheeseburger wrapped in paper, it takes you back to the first cheeseburger you ate.

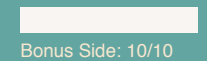
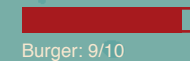
I am biased when it comes to burgers that have been smashed: smashing seals the flavours of a burger, by creating a crust. The process uses a meat press or spatula to press on a ball of beef after a few seconds on the grill.

My review for their Crinkle Fries might also have been influenced by the fact that these take me back to my childhood too. The texture and cheese sauce together could make Archie's the best, and I will battle anyone who disagrees with me. That clown, Ronald McDonald, can keep his fries.

While I have tried to choose a different bonus side each time, I was disappointed with the Mac and Cheese bites. They weren't anything special, and it wasn't a bonus for the meal.

ALMOST FAMOUS

50% off burgers every Tuesday with a valid NUS or student card



A visit here is never disappointing. Maybe I'm a bit biased about the location due to the aesthetic of this part of the city, but I think the Northern Quarter Almost Famous is the best site in the AF chain. The staff are friendly, and there's an amazing selection of bars like Wolf at the Door right outside for a post-burger beverage.

I went for their Famous burger, which was juicy and simple. All of the components complimented each other perfectly: the meatiness of the burger, creamy cheese and salty sauce paired with the fresh salad

was unreal! I also ordered the Winning Fries (without sweet potato mixed in, as I think the sweetness can ruin the flavour when paired with a cheese sauce), which topped off the meal.

For the bonus side, I opted for the Blasts, boneless buttermilk chicken tenders with creamy bleu cheese sauce. If I could, I would drink the sauce. The chicken seasoning could put KFC's spices to shame: it perfectly coated the meat, and the saltiness complimented the sauce perfectly.

recipes to make with your flatmates

Mexican Chickpea Salad

As new students, we are often on the go. Juggling our studies, work and other commitments in a new environment can be tough. A super hectic lifestyle can make it difficult to get all of our daily nutrient needs throughout the day. We also know that making friends in new university accommodation can be difficult. So, we're serving up healthy recipes to make while getting to know your new housemates (and help you put your new IKEA kitchen supplies to good use!)

By Megan O'Sullivan

Illustration Snehal Rajendra Dhanwate

Design Faye Byrne

Time 30 minutes

Portions 4

Price £1.50 per portion (approx)

Equipment Frying pan, Wooden spoon, Chopping board, Mixing bowl, Tablespoon, Knife, Microwave

Ingredients

1 tin of chickpeas
1 tin of sweetcorn
1 avocado
½ a cucumber
1 whole head of lettuce
A large handful of tomatoes
1 packet of microwaveable flavoured rice
1 taco seasoning packet
A sprinkle of grated cheese

Optional Extras

Sour cream
Salsa
Chilli flakes

Method

Firstly, toss the tin of chickpeas in the taco seasoning and fry over a medium heat until warmed through.

Next, while the chickpeas are cooking, chop the salad and avocado into small pieces.

Then, microwave the rice, following the instructions on the packet.

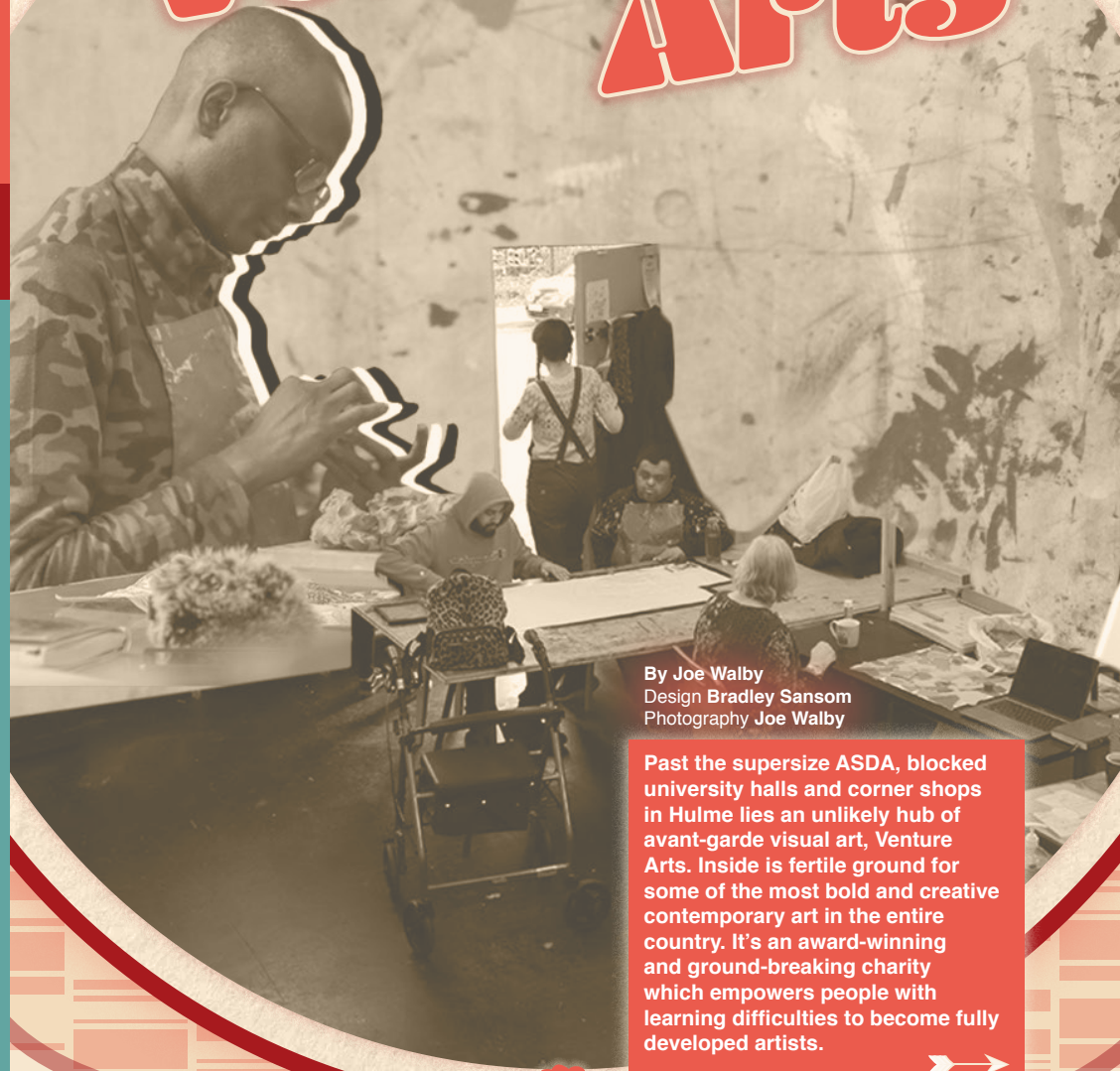
Stir all ingredients (except cheese) into one bowl

Serve individually, then add any optional extras as desired.

Finally, add a sprinkle of grated cheese and enjoy



Spotlight Venture Arts



By Joe Walby
Design Bradley Sansom
Photography Joe Walby

Past the supersize ASDA, blocked university halls and corner shops in Hulme lies an unlikely hub of avant-garde visual art, Venture Arts. Inside is fertile ground for some of the most bold and creative contemporary art in the entire country. It's an award-winning and ground-breaking charity which empowers people with learning difficulties to become fully developed artists.

The charity's work was recently recognised and rewarded by Manchester City Council, with Venture Arts being included in a new £939,982 grant package, awarded over the next three years to twelve of the city's arts organisations.

Inside, the main studio has two large wooden tables with artists sitting around each side. During the excitement and activity of the morning's workshop, one unassuming artist works away quietly.

His name is Leslie Thompson. "He's probably one of our most successful artists. He is very quiet. I think his expression is entirely through painting and drawing," says Venture Arts Director Amanda Sutton.

Leslie blends in and mainly keeps to himself, wearing an aptly patterned camouflage fleece. But his art is bold, original and breath-taking. Thanks to Venture Arts, he has been able to professionally exhibit work all over the UK, and even in Japan.

One of his large-scale drawings, *Animals from Memory*, was acquired by the Government Art Collection to be displayed in government offices around the world, Amanda shares with pride. It features dozens and dozens of animals drawn based on one visit to Chester Zoo thirty years ago. Today he works in sculpture, moulding a small grizzly bear out of recycled clay from other artists' projects.

Venture's work empowering their artists is driven by their brilliant art facilitator system. Their aim is to get the best out of the artists' instincts without hindering them. For this to work, the hierarchy has to be flat: this is

not a teacher-student relationship but not necessarily a collaboration either.

78-year-old Violet has been working with volunteer art facilitator Morr each week for the past four months on abstract textile compositions. I notice how Morr works with Violet by simply making observations and asking questions. She never steers the direction of the piece by providing answers. "It's entirely Violet's work," she says.



Art facilitator, Ali, has been volunteering since before the pandemic. He explains: "It's a forum for people who wouldn't normally be able to express themselves.

It's giving value to people's ideas. I feel like I've developed as a person, just by coming in and volunteering."

But it wasn't always like this. 15 years ago, Venture Arts was a standard community arts organisation, where members would come for the day to work on the same projects each week under tutelage and supervision. No professional development, no tangible ambition. But gradually, their director, Amanda Sutton, and Artistic Manager, Katherine Long, transformed Venture Arts into a forward-thinking development studio which nurtures learning disabled artists' individual visions.

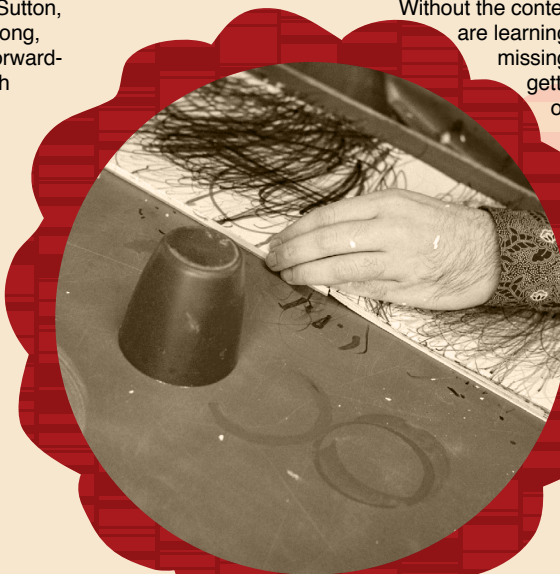
"Their ideas come from completely within themselves. It's authentic. It feels really true. I think that's why so many people are really appreciating this kind of work," says Amanda. "Where we start from is that when people are recognised in the arts, that then transfers into social justice and things like that. Learning disabled people have been marginalised, left behind,

ghettoised and bullied for years. Up until the seventies or eighties, most people would've been locked up in institutions and left there. It's about respect. We respect and value all the people that come here. It's about ambition too, we've got real ambition for our artists."

This ambition seems to be working wonders. Venture Arts have had countless exhibitions across the UK and the world, including at the 2022 Venice Biennale, at the TJ Boulting Gallery in Fitzrovia and recently close to home at the Lowry in Manchester. Promoting their artists' work like this, as well as selling and commissioning pieces, means that a fulfilling career in art is a real possibility for all their artists.

Having such high professional ambitions for their artists presents a difficult position for the identity of Venture Arts. Getting the balance right between being seen as professional in the world of high art, while also acting as a charity which needs support and funding. It's oxymoronic and paradoxical all at the same time. Their marketing and communications lead Debbie Cowley explains: "We don't talk about their disabilities a lot. They are artists in their own right. At the same time we are a charity, we want supporters, we do need to raise more.

Without the context that these people are learning disabled, you're missing out in terms of getting support. It is part of the picture."



"It causes constant dialogue within our organisation," Amanda says. "I'm really fighting strongly not to do the 'Please give us some money to help

these poor people.' It's more asset based. It is very difficult to get the tone right."

And in terms of thriving professionally in the world of high art, Debbie says it's a case of Venture Arts leading by example: "Once people have actually had the experience of working with us, they're always really amazed by how capable our artists are. But before they've had that experience, they naturally make assumptions."

Venture Arts is slowly teaching people to value the ideas of learning-disabled people in the same way they do. This change of perspective has immense potential for the way that people with disabilities are seen in culture and society. If you can be moved by their art like you can be moved by anyone else's, maybe they aren't so different to you?

In order to promote their positive social message more widely, growth is needed. "We want to work more internationally, and we would like another space. We can't move in this space," Amanda explains. A larger studio is needed to work on more projects and bring in new artists without losing any current members.

"We only cater to a group of people who are from mainly central-south Manchester. What about all that other talent out there?" The difficulty in relocating comes in the form of accessibility, affordability and community. The idea of Venture Arts abandoning Hulme is not even close to being on the table.

Amanda sums up: "I love art. I've always loved art. You know that everything you're doing is for a really good social purpose. I'm not here to make my million. No one working in the arts ever will be. But if I can make some small difference in some way, then that will be a great thing. It's exciting, there's so much to do, there's so much potential. It's never ending really."

Follow @venturearts_ and visit venturearts.org

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE:

Assessing the 'evil' of Artificial Intelligence

By Clayton Lopez

Design Faye Byrne

"...it's not science or progress driving us to make advancements in AI, but greed."

Artificial Intelligence has dominated public discourse since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022. According to a UK Government survey, the word "worried" was most commonly used to describe people's feelings about AI.

American actor and politician Arnold Schwarzenegger shared his thoughts on the subject earlier this year claiming that *The Terminator* "has become reality". The star was using his platform to raise the alarm about concerns of machines taking over and there is something that rings true about his words.

Over the last century, the fantasy of machines surpassing and usurping humanity has been seen in the most popular science-fiction. Today, AI has become powerful enough to be a real worry; crossing the boundaries of speculative sci-fi, and becoming a real concern to be addressed.

"We shouldn't be worried about a Skynet/Terminator situation; we should be worried about the prospect of us losing our jobs and how society will cope," says certified Cyber Security Analyst and former Manchester Met Cyber Security alumni, Ewan Downey.

Perhaps the biggest fear concerning AI is that it will lead to enormous job losses. This June, a BMG Research survey for *The i* found that 39 percent of the general public are concerned about future employment prospects. This figure increases to 52 percent of 18—24-year-olds.

This concern over job insecurity was a major catalyst for the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) strike currently taking place in Hollywood. The high-profile industrial action is a significant symbol of the struggle between labour and AI,

and marks the first time that SAG and the Writers Guild of America (WGA) have gone on strike together since the 1960s.

"Writers don't want AI to study their work and to be replaced, however the companies aren't budging on this," says Ewan. "They won't give up an opportunity to save this much money."

Ewan speaks candidly of his personal experience: "I can't even find work these days as a programmer in data solutions because AI has taken all the jobs in analysis, database architecture, and network infrastructure."

He compares the current situation to the industry shifts that took place in the mid-20th century when automation led to a significant decline in manual labour jobs.

"I'm retraining to program AI," he says. "Otherwise, there will be no work for me in

the future. I would recommend to everyone to get well-adjusted to AI tech."

Some issues associated with AI are in fact driven by large corporations hoping to cut costs, says Ewan: "Ultimately it's not science or progress driving us to make advancements in AI, but greed."

Yonghong Peng, Professor of AI at Manchester Met and the head of the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre for Advanced Computational Science, weighs in on AI's effect on employment.

He says, "While [AI] brings forth opportunities for innovation and efficiency, it also raises concerns about job displacement. The need for upskilling and reskilling the workforce to adapt to this changing landscape becomes crucial."

**“We can
shape a future
that leverages
technology for the
betterment
of humanity”**

Professor Peng describes AI's impact on culture and social relations as “vast and complex”. He adds, “While AI has brought tremendous advancements and conveniences, it also requires ethical, societal, and cultural considerations.”

The creative sector is one of the first to be majorly affected by AI. Isobel Bates studies MA Graphic Design, specialising in Motion Graphics with Augmented Reality. “It's taken away the mystery and culture from our industry,” says Isobel, reckoning that “clients will probably try to justify poor pay because AI can do it”.

She says, “Those who've taken years to learn their craft are now being told AI can do it better.”

Describing it as “embarrassing” when people claim to have created art while solely using an AI art generator, Isobel predicts a future industry flooded with “faux designers”.

Speaking about some of the positive benefits of AI, Ryan Houghton, a trainee English teacher and former Manchester

Met student in English and History, explains how technology has helped them in their career. “It's been a survival tool for me over my training year as it has cut my planning workload massively. Overall, it cuts down workload – a common issue in teaching.”

Time-saving benefits of AI are already easily accessible to the public. Spell-check and chatbots are examples of commonly integrated AI we may take for granted.

Helen Clark is the Marketing and Communications lead for the UK Cyber Security Council. She describes having “no desire to help retailers create a customised shopping experience or help social media organisations mine your data”.

Talking about what field of Artificial Intelligence interests her, Helen refers to medical deep learning: “The work being done to analyse genes and metabolic data to predict genetic disease will ultimately save lives.”

The pattern-recognition software can be used to recognise symptoms of disease. Digital Health reported that “AI has helped

over 38,000 NHS patients and detected more than 2,200 cancer cases to date.”

Professor Peng describes AI as having “the potential to further bridge language barriers, facilitate effective collaboration with smoother intercultural and international communications”.

AI grants access to people with disabilities, with one study concluding that the use of speech-to-text technology allowed children with special educational needs and disabilities to communicate more effectively, significantly boosting their self-esteem.

Speech-to-text and text-to-speech technologies effectively remove barriers which would otherwise prevent entire groups of people from accessing quality education.

In the 21st century, technological advancement has coincided with increasing inequality and wealth disparity. The idea that ‘automation’ could ever bring about a utopia, ending the need for labour, appears now a bygone pipe dream.

However, Professor Peng argues that this was never a desirable outcome: “Rather than striving for a completely automated society, we should aim to leverage the technological advance to empower humans to achieve their value and enable sustainable society.”

He tells us that invaluable human qualities such as empathy, creativity and belonging ought to be preserved. For AI to truly better society, we must protect those precious qualities of humanity, and assert ourselves as the drivers of our own destiny.

“By emphasising human values, embracing diversity, and maintaining our compassion and empathy, we can shape a future that leverages technology for the betterment of humanity while cherishing the unique qualities that make us human.”

the power of poetry

By Christine Johnstone-Swift

Tom Branfoot is Manchester Cathedral's new Writer-in-Residence and he wants to use poetry to make a difference.

"People have a right to choose how they are seen in the world," says Tom Branfoot, Writer-in-Residence at Manchester Cathedral and Manchester Writing School alumnus. For him, poetry is the means by which the Greater Manchester community can achieve this.

Although he was raised Catholic, it was not religion that drew Tom to his current position – he notes that the mission of the Cathedral is to be inter-faith – rather it was the inspiration of other writers. Tom had witnessed poets such as Ella Frears doing interesting work in similar positions, and saw it as "something to aspire to in, maybe like, ten years or so". Realising he had nothing to lose in applying, he sold his ideas about cultural and community outreach and has been working to promote literacy and poetry since.

As Writer-in-Residence, Tom's brief is to develop and deliver creative projects linked to local charities, Manchester Met and the community, to facilitate poetry workshops and organise cultural activities. One project is inspired by the cathedral's muniments room (containing its archive), for which Tom is running a workshop entitled 'Archive' at Manchester Poetry Library in November. It will draw not only upon the cathedral's years of history, but also ask participants to examine the body as an archive of all its experiences.

Determined that everything he does with the residency should be accessible and free, Tom is raising awareness and appreciation of poetry particularly as a form of action. Through workshops run in collaboration with organisations such as long-term

unemployment charity Volition and the British Study Centre, Tom feels connections can be made between experience, language, education and political resistance.

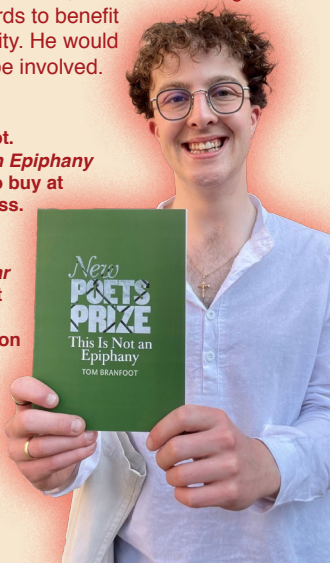
"Poetry, and teaching poetry, opens a space for people to impose themselves within a language that has been so corrupted by various operations of dominance over historical time," says Tom. When people attend the workshops, they can express their own individual personal experiences. This can be as a member of a minority group, or experiencing the fallout of having lived through a decade of austerity – poetry frees people to express their personal experience in a more radical way.

Political and radical poetry is integral to Tom's work; he won the 2022 New Poets Prize with *This Is Not an Epiphany*, a pamphlet of poems on social survival in the face of austerity, within the person and the landscape.

Originally a musician, Tom's poetry emerged from songwriting. He came to Manchester Met to study English and American Literature. As a once-fresher himself, Tom's advice for new students is to "look after yourself". He adds, "Focus on your mental health and ask for support."

Things have now come full circle. Once a Manchester student, Tom is now using the power of words to benefit the community. He would love you to be involved.

Follow Tom
@tombranfoot.
This Is Not an Epiphany
is available to buy at
poetrybusiness.
co.uk
His new
pamphlet *boar*
is coming out
with Broken
Sleep Books on
October 31st.



Must-read books



By Finn O'Leary
Designs Bradley Sansom
Illustration Lucy Vincent

In the thick of piled-up essays and loaded classwork, as well as adjusting to a bustling new city, it's a good idea to take some downtime to yourself and get lost in another world. To help you find a new book to get lost in, we've compiled a range of recently released reads we think you'll love.

My Daughter's Killer

Jacqueline Grima

My Daughter's Killer is a feminist domestic thriller written by Manchester Writing School alumna and former aAh! student editor-in-chief, Jacqueline Grima. Two years after her daughter, Sarah, was supposedly murdered by her husband, a grieving mother, Claire, spends her evenings running a helpline for vulnerable women. The thing is, Sarah's body was never found and now a caller to the helpline is claiming to know what really happened to her. This one is sure to keep you on the very edge of your seat.

Yellowface

R F Kuang

Satirising racial diversity in the publishing industry and social media, American fantasy writer Rebecca F. Kuang takes a stab at literary fiction with *Yellowface*. We follow the story of June Hayward, who is accused of cultural appropriation and plagiarism after she takes control of and publishes the book of a dead Chinese-American classmate, creating ambiguity over her own race and trying to present herself as Asian to the public. How far will June go to keep what she has stolen?

The Fraud

Zadie Smith

English writer, Zadie Smith, has returned with her first historical novel based on real events in Kilburn in 1873. It's here that the sceptical Mrs Eliza Touchet is at odds with the 'Tichborne Trial' along with the rest of England, who can't tell if the defendant is an imposter or not. The star witness, Andrew Bogle, is tasked with telling the right story as his future depends on it. Dealing with deciding the truth, and the hypocrisy and self-deception behind it, *The Fraud* is nothing short of remarkable.

North Woods

Daniel Mason

In *North Woods*, Pulitzer Prize finalist, Daniel Mason, writes about the history of a single house in the woods, following the vastly different occupants of the house over four centuries as they unearth the house's past. The book follows how history changes nature, language, and perspectives on the world, and how each person's history intertwines with each other. If you're looking for a mesmerising tale, this one is sure to put you under its spell.

Penance

Eliza Clark

For true and fictional crime fans alike, Eliza Clark's "untrue true crime" story, as coined by *The Spectator*, will grip you to the very end. It tackles the ethics and truths behind true crime media by following a journalist's unreliable narrative as he compiles different interviews, accounts, and statements on the murder of a 16-year-old in a quiet English seaside town. *Penance* is Clark's, who has also been named one of Granta's 2023 Best Young British Novelists, second book.



Breaking Down the Myths on Rape & Sexual Assault...

By Leonie Kellar
Design Laura Sheridan
Illustration Lucy Vincent

Starting university can be a great time to meet new friends and partners. Freshers events bring new opportunities and experiences, but it is important to ensure that everybody is safe and having fun. To help spread awareness and break down some of the misconceptions around rape and sexual assault, aAh! has collaborated with I Survived Too founder and Manchester Met student social worker Leonie Kellar.

"I created I Survived Too after I realised the help and support survivors need at one of the hardest times in their life simply wasn't widely available," says Leonie. "Thousands of people are left feeling alone, ashamed, violated and traumatised, with very limited support to deal with those thoughts and mental health implications. I hope that I Survived Too can provide a free, regular and accessible support group for survivors so they can feel believed, understood and empowered as part of a community."

A study by Revolt Sexual Assault revealed that almost two thirds of university students and graduates have experienced sexual violence while studying at university, with only one in ten students going on to report this to the police and/or university. Leonie aims to raise awareness and break the stigmatisation around rape and sexual assault to empower more students to come forward, be heard and receive support and justice. To help, she rounds up five of the most common misconceptions.

"If they didn't say no, fight back or run away then they weren't assaulted or raped."

The absence of "no" doesn't mean the individual agrees to sexual activity. If somebody is turning their head or body away, pushing you away, lying still, avoiding touching, staying silent or showing signs of distress they are not consenting. The four responses to trauma can be fight, flight, freeze or fawn meaning that everybody may react to the trauma differently. It is common for individuals to freeze within the moment as a body's automatic response to fear in order to keep them safe.

"It isn't rape or assault if you are in a relationship, friends or consented before."

It doesn't matter what your relationship with the individual is or whether they have consented before, everybody needs to clearly consent both verbally and non-verbally to every sexual activity. The theory of "stranger danger" is harmful as it creates a stereotype that only strangers can be dangerous. This enables perpetrators to abuse people they are close to as they are less likely to be suspected, when in fact 45% of cases of rape and sexual assault reported are perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner.

"They were wearing revealing clothes and/ or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, so they are to blame."

It is ok for someone to want sex, to flirt or enjoy somebody's attention. It is not ok for someone to assume that this is what they want based on how someone is dressed, where they were or how much they drank. Often, alcohol or drugs are tools that can be used by perpetrators to gain control over their victim, making them more vulnerable. Therefore, the only person to blame for an assault is the perpetrator. Nobody deserves to be violated and abused and perpetrators should be held responsible for their actions, instead of blaming the victim.

"Only women get raped."

Anybody can be a survivor of rape or sexual assault, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or appearance. While it is more common for women to be assaulted, one in 20 men have experienced rape or sexual assault as an adult. Anybody who does not consent to sexual activity is a victim of this abuse and should be believed and receive support.

"They instigated the conversation, kissing or sexual activity so they couldn't have been raped."

Consent is retractable at any point meaning that anybody can change their mind at any time. It is important for both individuals to gain consent and respect each other's decision to stop, as well as look out for signs of somebody withdrawing their consent both verbally and non-verbally.

Useful contacts

I Survived Too
isurvivedtoo@outlook.com

Manchester Rape Crisis
0161 273 4500

**St Mary's Sexual Assault
Referral Centre**
0161 276 6515, (24/7 support line)

The Survivor Trust
0808 801 0818 or text 07860 022 956

Samaritans
116 123, (24/7 support line)

**MMU Counselling, Mental
Health and Wellbeing**
0161 247 3493
counselling@mmu.ac.uk

Trauma dumping podcasts are causing more harm than good

It's no surprise that mental health is becoming a much larger conversation in the podcasting world, due to the medium's accessibility and intimate, conversational nature. But are the ways in which mental health is being discussed harmful to listeners?

Steven Bartlett's *Diary of a CEO* is one of the most prevalent podcasts supposedly contributing to the mental health discussion. For those who aren't familiar, Bartlett is an entrepreneur and *Dragon's Den* dragon who has frequently spoken publicly about his mental health.

One of the primary reasons for the show's success are its episodes involving celebrities recounting their life story, honing in on the most difficult times. Guests have included Liam Payne, Matt Hancock, and Ann Summers CEO, Jacqueline Gold. The template is tried and tested, with guests openly discussing their relationship with mental health. The catch is, there no longer seems to be any glimpse of shared experiences or advice, hence the act of trauma dumping dressed up as 'unfiltered' conversations.

Having listened to the first season and falling off as it felt increasingly exploitative, I decided to revisit a new episode. I chose 'Maisie Williams: The Painful Past Of A Game Of Thrones Star' and I couldn't believe what I was listening to. It felt like I was eavesdropping into someone's therapy session, as the actress spoke about her "traumatic" relationship with her father and how finding fame as Arya Stark on HBO's hit series as a child actor impacted her mental health. As the episode progressed, I felt increasingly guilty for becoming more enticed, the darker the information got.

It made me worry what impact the show could have on listeners facing challenges with their mental health, and for good reason. PhD and psychology specialist at the University of Wisconsin Markus Brauer's work explores the effects of negative news content on individuals' psychology and finds that consumers of negative content can experience increased anxiety levels.

This can also impact the celebrities featured. Some have come forward expressing regret at oversharing in interviews, including Radio 1 presenter Greg James. Though celebrities are choosing to go on Bartlett's show, whether they're aware of how their interview clips are then going viral is another story. The promo trailers showcase the most emotional moments of each episode and there's just something morally questionable about a video of someone recalling their trauma while intense background music is playing and a 'new episode Friday' title is slammed onto the image. Bartlett's podcasts are not labelled 'help' in bold letters, but what they are doing is providing an illusion that the content is therapeutic, when it's actually harmful.

While his show serves as a popular example of this trend, it isn't the worst out there. *Impulsive*, hosted by American media personality Logan Paul, also adopts the format of candid conversations with guests who share deep personal trauma. Another example is British author and podcaster Jay Shetty, whose bio reads 'My job is to make wisdom go viral'. His show includes celebrity guest episodes such as 'How to change your self-critical mindset' and 'Toxic vs healthy relationships,' which are more explicitly trying to sell themselves as 'help' than Bartlett's.

As consumers, we're drawn to negative content, and are more likely to share it with others. This is presumably why these podcasts are topping the charts weekly, but it's simply not enough to attach a mental health information link after a stranger has just unloaded their individual sufferings onto a listener. Prominent mental health podcast *Happy Place* hosted by Fearn Cotton feels much more like a shared conversation, and has since expanded to festivals and events where people can take part in activities proven to help anxiety and depression. With so much content out there, it's becoming more important to ensure that mental health discussions are constructive, not exploitative.

What do you think? Have your say and write for aAh! Email aAh.Editor@gmail.com and follow @aAh_mag

ASK aAh!

By Molly Granger
& Megan O'Sullivan
Designs Laura Sheridan

Q: I'm going to be commuting to uni and I'm worried that I won't be able to make friends. How can I make sure I don't miss out on meeting new people?

A: Whether you are moving to university accommodation or commuting, it's a big change for everyone. You may start to think that you are alone but there will be many commuting students who will all be in the same position. It might be difficult at first but once you have settled into the first few weeks it will get better.

We spoke to second year Law student Charlotte for her advice on staying open-minded to making new connections as a commuting student. She said, "It can be intimidating trying to make friends and as a commuter, you can sometimes feel like you are missing out on opportunities or that your classmates have already made friends from uni halls. As long as you remain optimistic and be yourself you will attract like-minded people."

"My advice to commuting students would be to arrive 10-15 minutes earlier to uni because it's easy to get distracted by other things on your commute. A break in between arriving at uni and your classes provides time to reset and refocus on your day ahead.

The Student Union is hosting a Commuters Chill and Chat during Freshers Week. This will be a great opportunity to broaden your contacts and find some other students in the same boat as you.

Q: I don't drink and I am worried that I won't be able to socialise with my friends.

A: There is often a misconception that everyone at uni is involved in the huge drinking culture, but you would be surprised how many students don't drink and still find activities to accommodate them. The Student Union hosts a packed programme of events to enjoy during Freshers Week and beyond, including sunset yoga and a roller disco.

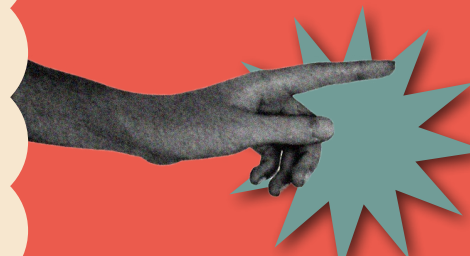
Third year sober student Sub, says: "Not drinking alcohol has not hindered the social aspect at university for me in the slightest and I've always been able to have a great time without the expense of a raging headache the next morning!

"University is still a blast without drinking. I've always been involved in activities with friends who choose to drink and despite my initial impressions, had a fun time with them without drinking, rather just enjoying music, playing games and socialising.

"On the other hand, there are a lot of people that choose not to drink at uni and so I have been able to make more like minded friends because of this. Also, not buying alcohol saves me a lot of money which means I can go out and have a lot more fun!"

Check out the Freshers Fair and societies page on the SU website to connect with other students with similar interests.

Have a dilemma that's bugging you? A problem that just won't budge? Life as a student can spring up all kinds of difficulties. Fear not, we are here to help. Scan the QR to #ASKaAh



One More Hug-

I know I'm embarrassing. I'm not supposed to engage in any form of conversation with other parents or students, you want me to keep my head down, empty the car and clear off. Charming.

'Well, I don't want to be lugging all your stuff up three flights of steps in this heat, I've given up my tennis for this. Do you think I want to be nagging you about your charger, your loan, your bedding? I've been wiping your arse for eighteen years now and I've had enough. Yeh go on, pull your face, eye-roll.'

This is worse than your first day at school, at least then, I had you to myself again at home time.

'Right, let's get the plates and everything into the kitchen. Pick a cupboard, that's what your sisters did, pick a cupboard and put all your pasta and everything in it. Did you bring those recipe cards? No? Where do you want these Pot Noodles? Oh I'll leave you to it...'

'Shall I make your bed?'

'Oooh, you've got an en-suite, I never had my own bathroom at uni, mind you, you'll barely fit in there. Good job you didn't bring the cat. I said, good job... oh you heard me, but I'm just not funny.'

I spot a silverfish slip into the drain, eww...

Shoving the pillows into their cases for the last time. Am I being melodramatic? Even if you don't come home 'til Christmas, I probably will make your bed again. Smoothing the duvet, my heart beats and breaks in double time. I reminisce about the day you were born; it really does seem like yesterday.

Distracting myself from the big goodbye by talking shit, I repeat the old adage, *everyone you make friends with this term, you'll be trying to shake off for the next three years.* You're not listening, you've heard it all before.

I don't want to leave.
I'll be redundant.
Mothering has been my job for the last twenty five years.
You're my youngest, my baby.
I'm your mum.

It's daft but I suddenly decide that I do enjoy doing your washing, cooking for you, giving you lifts, bollocking you for coming in late... pissed. Again.
I love all that, I don't want it to stop.
Filling up, I hug you.
You squeeze me back.
You used to cuddle me all the time
I remind you, sobbing into your shoulder.

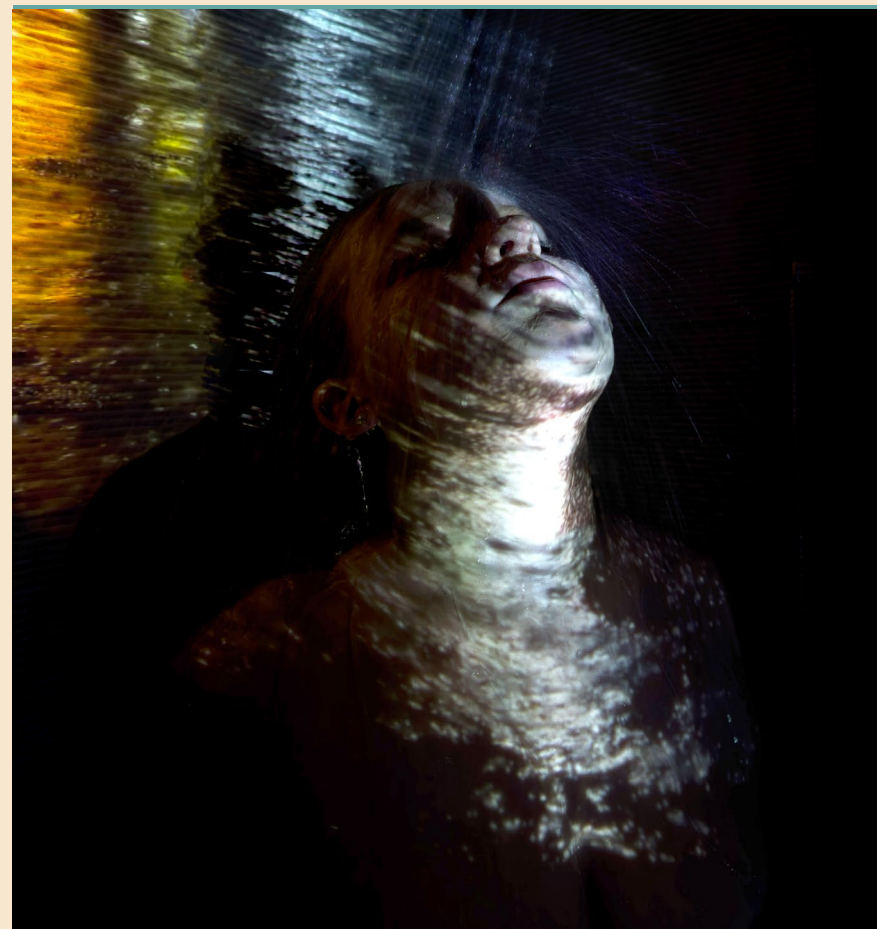
'I know I know, I'm showing you up, but the others can't see us, I'll go in a minute.
Sure you've got everything?'

'Look after yourself, don't choke on your own vomit, or anyone else's, don't do drugs, do some work.
Miss me but have fun.
See you soon. Love you.

You automatically reply that you love me more, but of course, that's impossible.
Like a toxic love affair,
I'm determined not to text first.

But, I will.
I'm your mum.

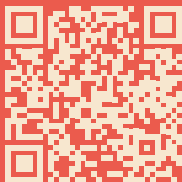
By Jane Ashworth
Design Laura Sheridan



Featured Artist: Grace Parnell

Grace Parnell is a designer from Lincolnshire, currently studying Graphic Design at the Manchester School of Art. Grace has a passion for photography and art direction. Using a variety of mediums in her work, she explores how she can convey a message or theme through her photography. This piece depicts our 'rainy city', evoking both the water and the glow of Manchester.

Follow @gracepics

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