

PLATFORM



ISSUE

Asha Mavers Casey Logue David Hiney Helen Bradshaw Lauren Stephens
Maria Halton Martha Goddard Noami Hu
Nonpumelelo Ncube Sam Batley Samantha Cain

Q02

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The New Normal

Q:

WHAT IS THE NEW NORMAL



A:

Undeniably, we are living through unprecedented times. Since the implementation of lockdown, we realise that freedoms we once took for granted are plentiful. From meeting a friend for a carefree catch-up to popping quickly in-and-out of the shop because you simply cannot go without ice cream that night, we are slowly realising that life as we once knew it, has changed. Operating in times of severe uncertainty, this modern-day dystopia has emptied city centres, normalised two metre social-distancing and grounded a consistent (and very real) threat of COVID-19.

Nonetheless, we persevere. Adapting new parameters of what is considered 'normal,' society has emerged connected. Though memories of the past still ring in our ears, we have learnt to redefine what is 'normal' in a world which is constantly in flux, and find ourselves asking when- or even, if- things will return to what they once were. Evidently, only with hindsight are we able to see what we truly value. This new reality, echoing romanticised nostalgia, is surely and slowly, becoming our collective 'normal.'

As we distance ourselves from old patterns, we have sourced our own unique ways to deal with life during a pandemic.

In a world upturned, what is your new normal?

HELEN BRADSHAW

Pattern recognition is a cognitive tool used by humans to rationalise their surroundings and make logical predictions. I believe this is why the Number Two has become so prevalent in our daily lives: we are attempting to make sense of a situation that cannot be logically predicted. We are maintaining social distancing by always being two meters apart, entering buildings in twos or gathering in groups of no more than two households. The 'New Normal' has been orientated around an integer previously thought of as completely innocuous. However, the more I think of the number and the more it appears in our lives, the less logical the predictions become.



I'VE GOT TIME

P06

Baby, I've got
A sinking melody in my mind
It plays all the time

Baby, I'm trying
To rid my self of all these
thoughts
Of which I'm inclined

Its funny what I see,
When you hold up your words
to me
Think I will agree...
well...
I've got time.

Baby, I've been
Locked inside my head for so
long
but I feel OK

Maybe, next year
I'll send my self a post card
from another busy day

Its funny what I see
When you hold up your words
to me

Think I will agree...
well...
I've got time
To wash it all away
Wash it all away.

Baby, I know
Everything is different now
I've never felt so slow

Hold on, just wait,
Locked inside your head for so
long
But it's ok

Its funny what I see
When you hold up your words
to me
Think I will agree...
well...
I've got time
To wash it all away
Wash it all away.

Song Lyrics

MARTHA GODDARD

These lyrics are from a song I wrote during the lockdown. I've spent the whole experience writing all sorts of songs in my bedroom. These are some lyrics that just came out which focused on my experience of this new life; a life spent waiting for things to start again but also enjoying the time.

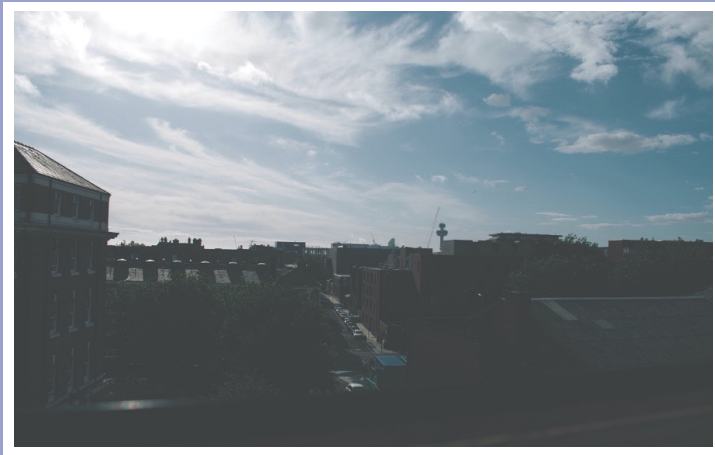
CASEY LOGUE



My days are mainly spent in the office/studio in my boyfriend's flat. We've always eaten oranges together, mainly late at night in dim light with tea and Sidney Gish. This tiny orange tree is from IKEA, bought a month or so before lockdown. It's on my side of the room, so I get to look at it a lot, as do people who Zoom me.

My desk! One of the ones you have to nail to the wall. It snaps shut with a little hook. The sun hits it fully for about two hours a day, so my butterfly plant loves living on it. I always seem to make a mess when I work, even when there's not much space. I like having Freud in the frame. I pretend that he's my grandad.

It's often hard to capture how lovely this view is. To the left are the Welsh hills on clear days, and to the right the cranes and mad skyscrapers that the University are currently building. The entire flat just has skylights, so I have to stand on a chair to look out of them. Worth it!



DAVID HINEY

Whilst we adapt to our own individual 'New Normal,' in regards to our work and personal relationships, I hope that collectively we will also consider how the environment around us could be improved.

The waterways in our towns and cities are often forgotten and neglected. They are used to dump the detritus of our daily lives. These waterways have been abused since the industrial revolution to wash away the waste of industry and as sewers for our growing cities. Today, many waterways run with much cleaner water, but they are still used by many to dispose of unwanted items no longer required in our throwaway society.

Will we ever consider that sustainability is a real measure of success in our society?



P10



WONDERING WHAT
I CAN EAT TODAY?



NAOMI HU

My favourite animals are cats and dogs. Sometimes the former is better because of their mystery and elusiveness. I tend to think, in their little heads, that they have problems such as wondering what can they eat, instead of destroying mankind or occupying the earth like humans do.

THE LOOK OF THE OTHER

If we all wake up, and this new normal isn't just a dream, and if we can agree we aren't all brains in a vat or a simulation, then let's say this New Normal is our new existence. We aren't alone in this new existence. It's clear nothing has been like before including making or viewing art. Before, we never thought twice about our old habits of meeting in groups and seeing others. Social life has new meaning, new consciousness in this new world. What does it mean now to look around and see others; especially in art?

Lens-based media can be described as having an 'eye,' seeing and capturing others within its gaze. Art can be considered a social experience needing the gaze of others to view what has been captured by its artist. Do we look at certain art to experience the look of others? When a picture is taken of someone, it's the eye of the artist capturing the look of their subject.

When audiences view pictures of people they experience three 'looks': the eye of the artist, the gaze of the subject, and their own viewership.

We can put ourselves in the artist's shoes: observing their experience in the moment they took the picture. We can put ourselves in the person's shoes: observing their experience having their picture taken by the artist. We already exist in our own shoes, but we can self-reflect and observe our experience looking at this picture. Through art viewership, can we come to better understand ourselves and our existence?

Maybe we look at art to try on other pairs of shoes, or to see with another pair of eyes. One reason we look at art could be to experience the experiences of others.

Sometimes these experiences are similar or vastly different to our own.

LAUREN STEPHENS

IN THE NEW NORMAL

With each look we define our personal essence, meaning art could help us define 'who' we are rather than define 'what' we are. Art can't change the fact I was born in America.

What art can change is my inner consciousness of the experience of others who share my nationality or the diverse experiences of other nationalities.

This is how art can change society as a whole: art allows us the unique experience to look into the experience of others, no matter how similar or different. Some philosophers say it's only through looking at and experiencing others that we can truly understand ourselves.

To see someone in art and understand "I am not them, I have not lived their experience" is also to understand "I am me, I have lived my own experience." I look now at pictures I've

taken of myself in crowded public spaces before this New Normal, and I see my past self in the picture stare back at my present existence. I did not have the knowledge then of this world yet to come; the world we live in now. I am somehow different to the person in this picture, but it's a fact I'm still me.

How strange it is to know I'm staring back at the same being: 'what' I am has not changed in the wake of this new normal, it's 'who' I am that has changed.

Political movements have raised my consciousness of privilege and my country's historical treatment of black people. Public health movements have raised my consciousness for the health of others more at risk to illnesses than myself. In the wake of the new normal I may see with the same sight, but I look with a new, open eye.

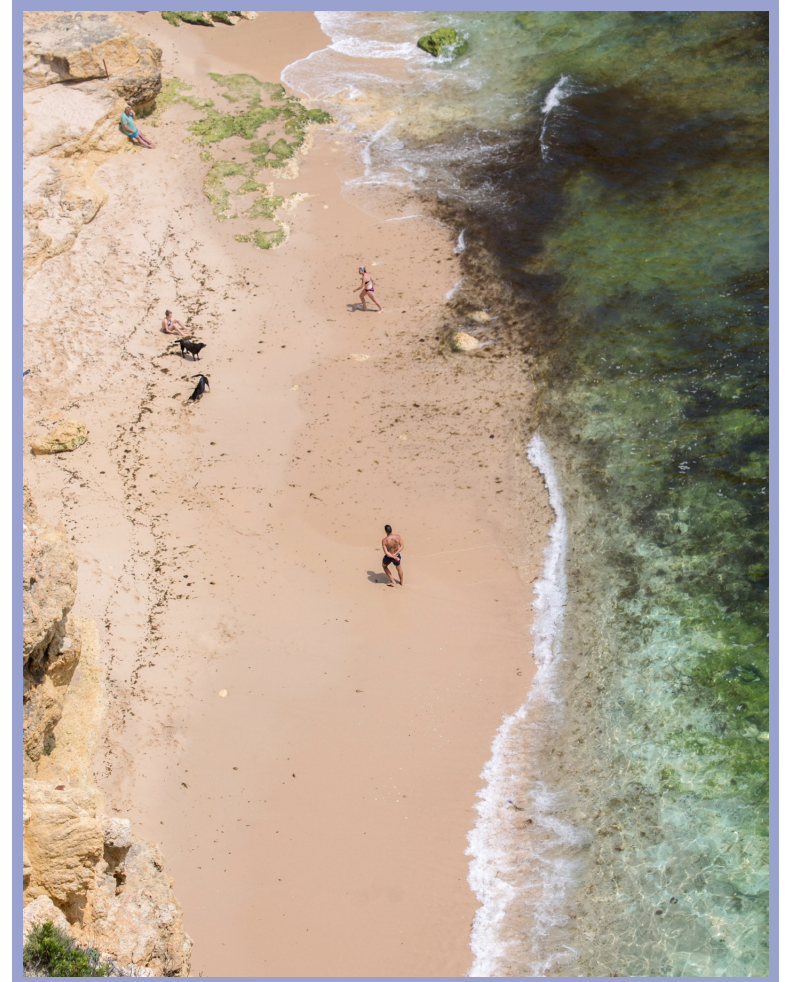
NOMPUMELELO NCUBE

P14

The Mundane (October 2017) was my first ever photo essay. Ironically, I tasked myself with finding beauty in the everyday. It was my homework as a photojournalist in training; the beginning of a new chapter in my life. I guess I'm not a person that photographs objects, or really cares enough about the mundane to document it. Finding beauty in the everyday is just not my thing. Me photographing those objects is ironic; it's just not me. I never thought I would enter into a period of life where finding beauty in the mundane would be the reality of the world. The 'New Normal,' as a practitioner, has been similar to that of time travel - it's about going back to the beginning. It is surreal. As an individual I have come to understand that the finer things in life are those which you take for granted.



ASHA MAVERS



These images were taken whilst I was inter-railing in Europe. I wanted to show the beauty of each place, with hope of making people feel happy. At the time, I was so unaware of the future (and what the year 2020 had in future, regarding Covid-19) and the effect it would have on the world. People's lives were put on hold for months; many still are. These pictures provide an opportunity to experience the world outside, at least until things get back to normal... whatever that may be.



SAM BATLEY



The 'New Normal' I've found myself in has been a shared experience; a shared normality of sorts. I live in supported accommodation with six other men in recovery and each of us have embraced lockdown the best way we can.

Powerlessness and acceptance are important themes in addiction – themes that have helped us admit surrender to the now. To face the fears that are present in this world by supporting each other, to check in emotionally and to run a variety of activities that keep us close. Each of us has been a cog in the wheel of the everyday, keeping it all together so it can roll into tomorrow intact. The foundation of this acceptance has paved the way for us to find our own meaning and importance. We've discovered how each member of the household brings something unique.

Perhaps most importantly, it provides a degree of subtle positivity in the air. In this atmosphere it will be alright. Of course, some days are harder than others but that's OK too. In these images I've paid homage to the atmosphere of this everyday experience: men at ease with themselves. Men who have found ways to cope. Men who are doing their best... one day at a time.



ARTISTS

HELEN BRADSHAW

Photographer

MARTHA GODDARD

Lyricist

CASEY LOGUE

Editor

DAVID HINEY

Photographer

NOAMI HU

Illustrator

LAUREN STEPHENS

Art Writer

NOMPUMELELO NCUBE

Photojournalist

ASHA MAVERS

Photographer

SAM BATLEY

Multi disciplinary Artist

EDITOR'S NOTE

At the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, PLATFORM was handed over to a new team. The original publication, created by Leah Jones, wonderfully displayed the creative talents of the Open Eye Gallery volunteers. We wanted to continue Leah's vision whilst addressing the unusual times we found ourselves in. In such creatively challenging times, how could we not focus on the art produced?

Our aim for this issue of PLATFORM is to distil such an inventively challenging time in history, whilst foregrounding the talents of our volunteers whom managed to create during lockdown. At a time when the world was in flux, deciding to focus on the ideology of 'normality' was a chance to make sense of a seemingly senseless world. Through PLATFORM, we have attempted to portray our individual 'norms' and then asked others to replicate their own. What emerged was a personal, intimate and collective series of artworks. Embracing the unique challenges of lockdown has made each and every one of us re-evaluate what we hold dear.

With the introduction of the 'New Normal' digital age, we have been forced to adapt and readjust not just socially, but creatively too. Pushed to our imaginative limits, we have found innovative and intricate ways of creative expression. In this way, has lockdown been a creative experiment?

This issue of PLATFORM is an epitome of our title, 'The New Normal.'

Communicating solely through virtual spaces, the conception of this zine has ensued through scheduled Zoom calls, WhatsApp messages, shared e-drives and countless e-mails (though not without a few I.T. mishaps!). Most importantly, this edition of PLATFORM materialised when the team was scattered across the UK. But we persevered. We found what worked for us and ran with it, adapting to the new realism we found ourselves in. What developed was an artistic community in which ideas were shared in a space which was visible and open to all; an opportunity for volunteers to have their creative voices heard.

PLATFORM will continue this journey. We hope in future editions, we will reflect on contemporary culture and society illustrating creative replies. The 'New Normal' has just begun. Months after the announcement of lockdown, we still question what the future of creativity will look like. Each step towards this unknowing destination will prompt more questions; and while there's much to consider, we hope that PLATFORM inspires and pushes our own, and each other's, artistic boundaries. As we have discovered, shared experiences cultivate our own individual creative potential.

PLATFORM Team x

THANK YOU



All proceedings for this issue will be going to the Independent Food Aid Network to support those who are on the poverty line during these uncertain times.

Q02

The New Normal

OPEN
EYE
GALLERY