

BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH...

LENNIE PAYNE

WORDS: SARAH HARDY

WHAT DO KATE MOSS, ALEXANDER MCQUEEN, Noel Gallagher and Ian Brown all have in common? Well apart from the fact that they're all absolute legends in their field, they've all been immortalised by artist Lennie Payne in one of our nation's favourite snacks – toast.

Since exhibiting at the London Arts Fair in 2004, Lennie has gone on to display and sell work in the UK, Cyprus, Spain, Holland and America, and the uniqueness of his craft has gained him plenty of media attention. It was a chance meeting with Anthony Donnelly, one half of the founders of Gio-Goi, that led Donnelly24 to become patrons of the artist, enabling him to indulge in developing his techniques further and push his career forward. Some 18 months later and following the success of his recent exhibition at the Maverick showroom in East London, FMS shares a brief encounter with the artist who founded 'toast art'.

FMS: It was around 1996 that you started experimenting with bread but do you remember the specific moment in time when you looked at a piece of bread and thought about applying it to your artwork?

LP: Yeah early one morning, just grilling some toast for my daughter who was three and rushing around like a mad dog when in comes the smell you know so well, yep burnt the toast! Remembering that old scrape the toast and butter it with a 'you'll never taste the difference' gig (okay for us but the kids don't do it); well I'm about to pull the same blag when hey, what about a big smiley face cut into the black and EUREKA! No, she didn't eat it but it got me thinking.

FMS: How have your different methods developed?

LP: Well I'd only done a few pieces, just burnt, dried out and stuck to wood. I gave one to a mate whose cats used it as a scratching board. After giving up for a few years and turning to the more common media, I got a chance phone call from Gary Sparks (the same mate whose cats were scratchin' me art) who had started making cello cases in Wales. With his



knowledge of resins and me on a roll with some new ideas the work moved forward. It was now sealed to protect from moisture, and I suppose with that out the way it was trial and error. To be honest, just when you think there's nothing else to do another light switches on and something else seems to materialise, the newest being breadcrumbs - same gig as toast but with a little more flow.

FMS: I'm sure you've burnt a lot of toast in your time but have there been any major disasters?

LP: Yeah there's been a few apart from the obvious, burning the skin off my arms, nearly burning a mates house down when the nets were accidentally torched, mice eating the picture which was about to be framed for the Royal Academy's summer exhibition. Still, good 'taste' in art.

FMS: Are there any other fashion or music icons that you plan to create portraits of?

LP: Too many to mention really - Pistols, Angus Young, Morrissey, I get a real connection with some of them I've done, especially when they're not about anymore. With Mark Bolan, I couldn't get 'I Love To Boogie' out of my head and with Ian Dury, 'Spasticus'. All Legends.



Clockwise from the left:

KATE, MAD FOR THE BLUES NOEL GALLAGHER, ALEXANDER McQUEEN (BROKE THE MOULD), IAN BROWN



FINISH UP!

Right now I'm...

Fed up with this ash malarkey

I'm inspired by...

Everyone who smiles

And listening to...

The bollocks on the news

Not a lot of people know that...

St Valentine is the saint of epilepsy, so when you're wasting all that money on over priced love you could always donate money to the NSE

I'll never forget the time...

We had no reality TV shows

I'm currently wearing to death...

My blow torch

If I could meet anyone (dead or alive) it would be...

Pugsy my pet Boxer, or Elvis

Or have a conversation with any animal it would be...

A bird

I like my eggs...

Flying through the air with wings

Elvis is definitely...

The king



FMS: How have things changed since Donnelly24 became your patrons?

LP: I haven't stopped working, am absolutely knackered, but that's what they're all about, getting amongst it, opening doors or kicking 'em down. Either way, the plan is...there is no plan.

FMS: Is bread still part of your diet?

LP: Yeah unfortunately. When you're on one you can stick anything in a samie, peanut butter and bananas being a favourite right now.

Mmm. Lennie is now working on a piece to be included in the Ray Lowry, London's Calling exhibition, private commissions and new pieces for his Manchester exhibition scheduled for September. Check it out.

LENNIEPAYNE.COM
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