

CHERWELL

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Revealed: Rowers in row with houseboat owners



Rowers claim to endure homophobic abuse, broken boats and thrown eggs at hands of houseboat owners

Felix Pope, News Editor

Oxford rowers claim they have been the victims of homophobic abuse and numerous attempts to force them from the river as tensions between rowers and houseboat residents escalate, *Cherwell* has learnt.

There are allegations that rowers from a number of different colleges have been targeted by houseboat owners who have placed tacks on the towpath and thrown eggs and tomatoes at them.

Rowers also allege that residents have driven close enough to disturb the water in an attempt to capsize them, have intentionally

driven into boats, and hospitalised an Oxford town rower.

These incidents have been brought up at the college rowing captain's meeting, the minutes of which report that Oxford Rowing Club Secretary Tom Coles "had been in contact with the police and the Environment Agency about the houseboats on the bottom stretch."

University College team captain Ben Norbury described one encounter from last term with houseboat owners to *Cherwell*: "Just as we passed the houseboats, our cox heard some splashes around our boat and then a bang as an egg hit our stern. Not really realising what

was going on we kept rowing.

"On the next lap, rowing up to the top again, in the same place, we saw two guys with a dog on the river bank. This time, apparently having depleted their stock of eggs, they just threw (what I remember to be homophobic) insults at us.

"They began to follow us as we rowed to the spinning area, but gave up as we sped away. After spinning and rowing past them again we got similar shouting etc.

"I believe our cox made a quip about preferring his eggs fried, which seemed to incense them. We landed and that was that.

"I asked around and someone who was coaching on the bank that morning was almost knocked off their bike by an egg barrage from what sounded like the same folks."

He also claims that during a race

last week a houseboat continued to sail down the middle of the river as a boat from St Catz college approached. The houseboat collided with the rowers as they turned, and consequently ripped off half the boat's riggers.

On rowchat.org, a forum for rowing discussion, one commentator said: "Barge driver clearly not a fan of rowing, ignored a load of marshals and then carried on afterwards without bothering to stop and see if anyone was hurt."

In a separate incident, a Wolfson college boat was intentionally rammed by a houseboat.

Norbury believes that the boat that hit the St Catherine's boat was only in Oxford temporarily, but that the boat that hit the Wolfson crew is permanently based here.

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Applicants of colour still less likely to receive Oxford offers

Cherwell News Team

New admissions data released by Ucas has revealed a continued racial deficit in Oxford admissions. Of the 2,555 offers made for 2016 entry just 45 were to black applicants, compared to 2,090 to white applicants.

This represents a drop compared to the 50 offers made in 2015, but is higher than every other year since 2011.

The percentage of offers given to black and asian applicants was also significantly lower than the percentage rate for those that are white.

Offers were made to 26.3 per cent of white applicants, but only 16.8 per cent of Asian and 16.7 per cent of black applicants.

Across all universities only 70 per cent of black applicants received places, compared with 73 per cent of white applicants and 73 per cent of those from Asian backgrounds.

The Ucas data also revealed continuing disparity in terms of the wealth of applicants.

Oxford received over 5,000 applications from the richest fifth of teenagers but just 420 from the poorest fifth. Of those that did apply 20.2 per cent of the poorest received offers compared to 26.2 per cent of the richest.

The data follows David Lammy's critique of Oxford's "unconscious bias" that he claimed systematically disadvantages applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds. The Labour MP, speaking at a symposium at Lady Margaret Hall, said that "we all tend to recruit in our own image".

Dr Samina Khan, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach at the University of Oxford, told *Cherwell*: "The number of offers given to students from Black, Asian and mixed-heritage backgrounds has risen significantly over the past five years, which is encouraging.

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CHERWELL

INDEPENDENT SINCE 1920

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Editorial Staff Picks

Our Senior Editorial team choose their favourite articles from this week's issue

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A reflection on the symbolism behind the traditional meal

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A condemnation of alt-right approach to tackling rioting

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Katherine's pick: May and the nuclear holocaust

Exclusive reports on the Prime Minister's latest embarrassment

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Hadley Freeman recommended that I don't gush, so I'll do my best not to.

This week, my favourite journalist spoke at my (and her former) college after she willingly obliged to my email request. I was worried that no one would turn up. I needn't have worried: the lecture theatre was near full.

I first read Hadley Freeman in her 'Ask Hadley' fashion column in the *Guardian's* G2. I loved the frankness, the normality, and the unadulterated sarcasm she brought to a world ordinarily full of outlandishness. I followed her on Twitter, amused by her daily passionate and sharp-witted political commentary.

I read Freeman's *Life Moves Pretty Fast*, her 2015 ode to eighties movies, and fell in love with her love of *Dirty Dancing*. Freeman suggests that Eleanor Bergstein's 1987 film is the ultimate feminist movie: beyond the love story of dreams is a film which shows a woman having an abortion, and getting on with her life afterwards, an aspect of the plot overlooked by everyone else.

This is the way in which Freeman's writing has stuck with me. She writes about popular events but critiques or celebrates aspects of them which every other critic seems to have missed. Her written voice rings out as one of sincerity and truth, always tinged with her New Yorker's charm.

Freeman started her journalistic career reviewing films on the pages of this very paper. Not everyone who listened to her speak this week wants to be a journalist (god forbid) but they all came out with that glowing warmth she puts across in her writing.

I was thrilled to have introduced her fantastic writing to so many people, and to have had Hadley back in St Anne's.

You may have noticed our new satire section in comment this term, or at least I hope you have.

I could easily fill my editorial each week with the horrendous consequences of Trump taking up his residence in the White House, but I need not reel them off for you. National newspapers have already treated you to a decent dosing of Trump's first wave of repeals, bills and his "alternative facts".

However, if there is one good thing to come out of his election to the Presidency and the various catastrophes of 2016, it is the rise of satire. *Private Eye* remains the top selling news and current affairs magazine and boasts a far smaller decline in sales than print newspapers in recent years.

Anger and frustration no doubt drive action, but human beings always seem to respond better to humor than fury. Laughter unites, whilst obvious and accusatory rage divides. Take the women's march last weekend as an example. The show of unity and anger at Trump's election was incredibly powerful, but even more so for the plethora of witty signs that expressed outrage so effectively.

Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov once said that "satire is a lesson" and if there is anything that can effectively educate the masses on the ridiculous and frankly petrifying state of affairs in politics at the moment, it is satire. It is without doubt the best tool with which to tackle the infuriating bullshit that pours from our politicians and greets us each morning via the media.

This week Stephen Hawes, James Lamming, Tony Campbell, John Maier and Benn Sheridan have written a variety of, in my opinion, pretty funny satire articles. Have a read, have a laugh (hopefully) and go forth with intelligence and wit, rather than blind fury. I know it's hard, but it's our surest way of winning.



Lord Patten condemns Brexit immigration plans

The Chancellor of Oxford University has called on the government to stop treating foreign students as "economic migrants"

Katherine Pye, Deputy Editor

The Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Patten, has urged the government to stop treating international students as "economic migrants".

Patten blamed the government's "obsession" with immigration number targets, which, he argued, it had failed to meet multiple times.

Although this claim has been rejected by the Prime Minister, who has insisted on counting students in official immigration figures, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has backed excluding overseas students from the government's target to get net migration down to the tens of thousands.

Immigration targets have previously helped the government crack down on bogus colleges used as a back route to work in Britain illegally.

However, Lord Patten warned about the detrimental impact of classing students in the same category as economic migrants.

Patten, who backed the UK remaining in the EU, referred to Theresa May's speech outlining Brexit plans to build a "global Britain".

He commented: "It would be extraordinary if having become global Britain we were to prevent the huge numbers of international students coming to study.

"Why do we deny ourselves, our

universities, the benefits of educating more young people from around the world?"

He insisted that people understood the difference between a student and an immigrant and the contribution they made to the economy.

"So why do we behave so foolishly? Because of our fixation with an immigration target.

"We put higher education in a more difficult position, we cut ourselves from a great deal of economic benefits because of that obsession with an immigration target, which we fail to reach, very often because we are growing so rapidly, year after year."

Patten emphasised growing de-

mand in Asia for western higher education. He said: "We have made the choice, global Britain, to cut ourselves off from that. It's completely crazy."

This news comes amid comments from Oxford's incoming Head of Brexit Strategy, Professor Alastair Buchan, speaking to the Education Select Committee held in Pembroke college, Oxford, two weeks ago, that a hard Brexit would be "giving up 500 to 950 years of exchange—I think we need to be very cautious."

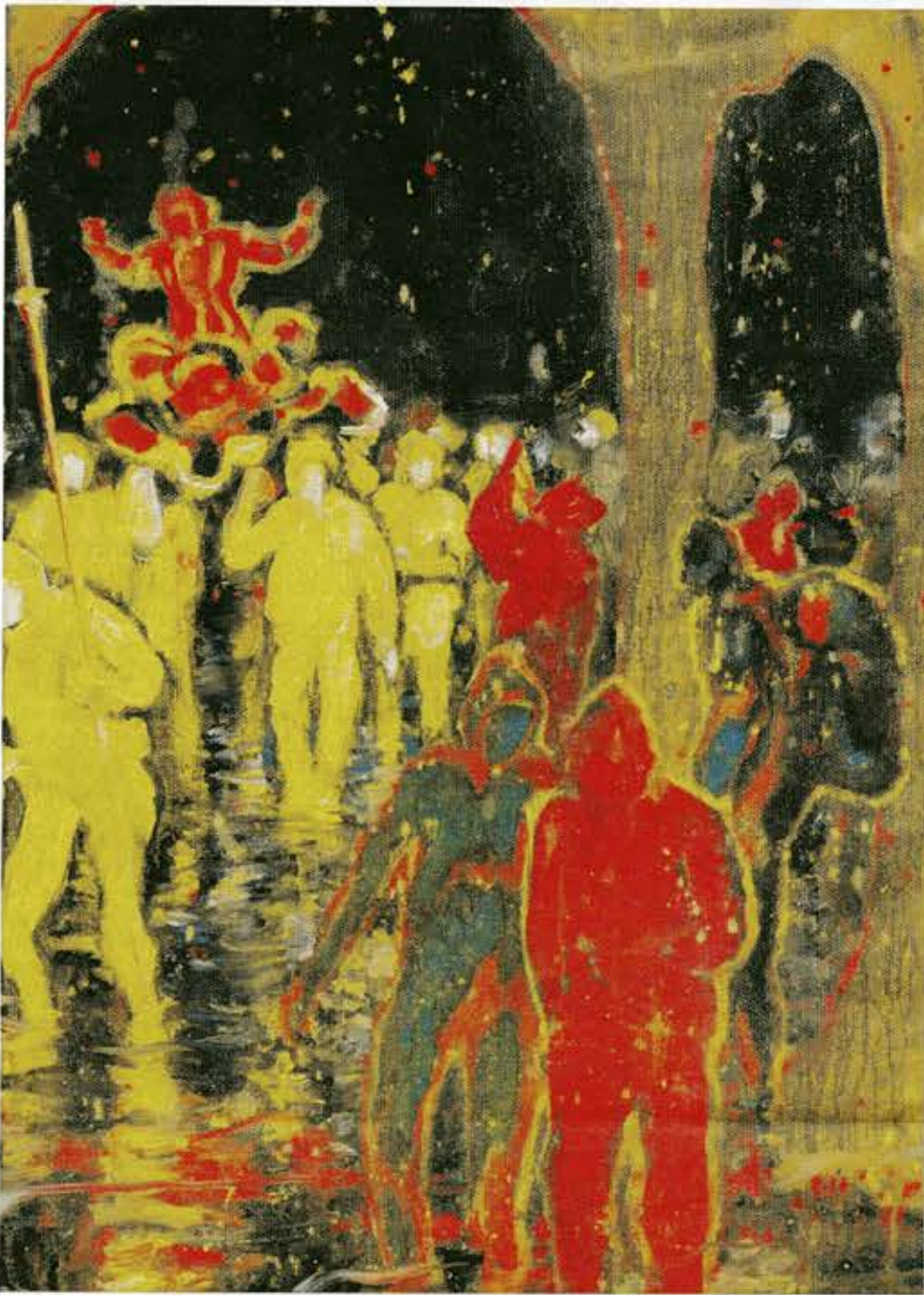
Carl Gergs, a third year at Pembroke and a German citizen, told *Cherwell*: "subjecting all international students to a blanket immigration rule in order to 'clamp down' on a

misusing minority doesn't seem very efficient at all. Most students are net economic contributors and enrich UK university life - some of them will be excluded or deterred by this system. I can only agree with Lord Patten that this approach is at odds with the vision of a 'global Britain.'"

Steve Sangbeom Heo, international students' rep at Brasenose college JCR told *Cherwell*: "I think it's very unfortunate that the national mood's becoming more and more insular. To be honest I can't really think of a good reason why students should count as economic migrants nor understand what motivated May to argue for this other than political bluff to show that she's 'hard on immigration'. But I also think this is hardly surprising given that Theresa May's currently trying so hard to pander to Brexiters."



VISUALS



We will meet

Art by Alvin Ong

Clockwise from top left:
 'The miracle'
 'A shadow and a dream'
 'Into great silence'
 'We will meet' triptych



Walking the pilgrim's way

Looking back at his exhibition *We will meet*, Alvin Ong tells **Sophie Jordan** of his walks along the thin line between memory and fiction

Singaporean-born painter and Ruskin alumnus Alvin Ong spends his life in-between continents, unsettled and unsettling. As he travels through countries, he moves lightly across art and forms of representation, depicting scenes stuck between internal, near-fictional visions and the everyday world.

He studied architecture for two years before choosing painting as his primary medium, for its versatility and the flexibility it offers. "In architecture school, my drawings acquired the camouflage of the designer, dedicated to the ceaseless production of preliminary ideas, false starts—lines that suggested wall, floor, concrete, garden, bush." This brings him to his years at the Ruskin School of Art, which ended with the highlight of the 2016 Ruskin show put on by the year's graduating students. "I think because of the linear instruction I received in my previous education, I found it initially difficult to adjust to life at the Ruskin. So I continued accepting commissions, doing one for Chelmsford priory, and a few for the Oxford Oratory down the road from my college, St Anne's."

"Gradually, I began to devote my energies away from commissions and toward the rhythm of a self-driven practice. At the same time, I also found through the presence of my neighbours a creative energy in the studio, as we spurred one another on to take bigger risks. The school became a safe space for experimentation."

We will meet, Alvin Ong's second solo exhibition was shown last year in the Chan Hampe galleries, set inside the prestigious white walls of Singapore's Raffles Hotel Arcade. The initial idea for the exhibition came to the artist and poet friend Theophilus Kwek during their years in Oxford, leading to similar experimentation which took three years to finalise. The result is a collection of large canvases and short, free verse poems each with the same titles providing them with a common starting point from which they then build their own atmospheres.

"In my painting titles, I find myself often drawing from poetry and song, mediums which give voice to that which

can be felt, but not necessarily understood. One of my personal favorites, for example, is the painting, 'A Shadow and a dream'. I took the title from Taverner's choral work, 'Song for Athene', which I felt vacillated between the feelings of arrival and departure. In very much the same way, I also see the function of the text, alongside Theo's poems, as given to suggestion, as opposed to illustration."

Working with newly-assembled words on *We will meet* was not an exception for Alvin Ong. Theophilus and him share an interest in travel, in the way history is presented today and in all the possible consequences of this on a rather unstable notion of identity, which had already led them to work together on the writer's poetry collection *Giving Ground*, where roles were switched as Alvin's art completed the text.

"*We will meet* came out of an ancient pilgrim route I undertook on foot over Easter last year, traversing around 800 kilometers of the Spanish northern coast from Irun to Santiago de Compostela, and then to the cape of Finis-terra, the 'end of the Earth'. Each day, I found myself in a different town, sleeping under a different roof. 'Home' became a place to rest my aching feet, to share a meal, to sleep and to clean oneself. Some of these pilgrim inns were ran by volunteers, while others were convents, monasteries or farms."

These foreign images became the basis of Alvin's next paintings, mixing in the various atmospheres and by then slightly blurred faces he met during his travels.

"Along the way, I also met and walked with other people. We would trade stories, share our food and our lives with one another. I am left with the memories of these encounters, no matter how fleeting, and these are the starting points for each of my paintings in this series."

Alvin's paintings are lit by fuzzy back and sidelights, making his journey companions into silhouettes whose outlines are reinforced by startling colours. The grain of the canvas and the thick lines of painting bring a confusing sense of materiality in his images of monks and ritual processions.

"The wee hours past midnight on Good Friday in Seville were the most dramatic of the Easter processions, against miraculous icons and objects surrounded by flowers, incense, and candlelight. These were the memories that inspired 'The miracle'."

"Like them, the convents and monasteries that sheltered me in Spain always seemed to belong to another place and time. There was one night in Ziortza when after the evening prayers, the monks switched off all the lights and just sat in silence. I sat with them, in that stillness; it was such a memory of indescribable simplicity and beauty. These are the places I return to in painting. Fictional places I found myself revisiting, all mixed up in wonder, fascination, and alienation."



Old&New: Young art on old walls

Kate Asquith on the interplay of past and present at Somerville Arts

Somerville may be one of the newer colleges, but in its past 138 years, it's had more than its fair share of cultural history. Hoping to explore this, the theme of Somerville Arts Festival 2017 is 'Perspective', aiming to illuminate the diversity of both our past and our present in ways that are new and exciting. Many associate our namesake, Mary Somerville, with

students by finding inspiration in the past. 'Views from the Ville' is a new flash fiction initiative being launched to encourage writers to take on the perspective of someone connected with Somerville. This could be a porter, a student-turned-war-nurse, a fresher, or even Margaret Thatcher. The extension of empathy is possibly one of the most powerful tools an artist can utilise, which makes our theme of 'Perspective' so important.

Art can break down the boundaries that divide people—whether those erected through differences in gender, race, sexuality, or time. With this in mind, we're welcoming back past students to share their experiences of the creative industry. Gillian Cross and Daisy Johnson are both published authors and will read short stories from their collections. This cross-generational duo prove that literature can be a unifying force that transcends the separation of time.

By exploring new perspectives, we're giving voices to the unheard. Our visual art zine, named *The Siren* after the Somerville magazine which was last produced over a decade ago, is paying particular attention to the subversion of traditional narratives and the inclusion of mi-

nority perspectives. In the same spirit, our open mic night encourages everyone to get involved and share their gifts, from music to spoken word and poetry. Fred, a second-year student, says "it's really exciting to see how talented and creative the people around you are, especially when you aren't always aware of that on a day-to-day basis".

Likewise, we've chosen special acts to showcase the variety and diversity of the university's talent. Celebrating originality, The Oxford Belles' a cappella performance embraces music without instruments, putting a fresh spin on old classics and reproducing them with a strong, feminist voice. Similarly, the improvised comedy of the Oxford Imps is wickedly genre-bending, while also embodying a joy for the arts that resonates with the spirit of the festival.

'Perspective' is a wide-ranging and far-reaching theme, chosen to allow as many people as possible to engage with not only the arts, but also the history of the arts and its untold stories.

While we desire the expression of new and alternative points of view, we also hope to find some connection with the past that encompasses that elusive quality that makes Oxford Oxford, a shared sense of identity that exists despite the boundaries of time, through our art.

Home is where the art is

Queenie Li considers the use of public transport in art

Even for people with the least art literacy, it is unlikely for them to conclude contemporary art merely being created within traditional means such as paintings and sculptures today. Art has been striving to excite the world and break convention in all pluralistic means. Installation, performance, site-specific art, digital art, to name but a few. Art needs to be stimulating, shaking, startling in any imaginable form and venue.

The prevalence of conceptual art in the mid-1960s placed the focus of art on the process rather than the outcome. The way of thinking has since then become one of the most powerful tools to conjure up art. After 'Fountain' (1917) by the French artist Marcel Duchamp, the definition of art objects has been unprecedentedly widened. A chair, ready-made clocks, unfinished Coke in bottles... one would wonder how far the boundary could possibly extend? Kingsley Ng, a multi-disciplinary artist based in Hong Kong, affirmed that the line could at least be drawn beyond our daily commuting giant, the tram.

'25 Minutes Older' (2013) metamorphosed a moving tram into a camera obscura as a witty twist of the everyday object the locals encounter. Shrouding the upper level in absolute darkness, the artist created numerous pinholes across the tram body allowing external light to permeate through, casting a misty inverted image of the exterior environment on the tram's inner wall. Participants were isolated from the crowd in this 25-minute journey and immersed into the gleaming light whimsically transited from day to night.

The sensational experience was further charged by a magnetic reading of the renowned local novelist Liu Yichang's *Tête-Bêche*, which was loaded with rich narratives illustrating the hustling city scenes in Hong Kong while juxtaposing the daily routines of a middle-aged man and a young and vibrant lady. Presented in the *Fifth Large-Scale Public Media Arts Exhibition: Human Vibration* in 2016 Hong Kong, '25 Minutes Older' is a delicately enchanting art piece intertwining with the immorality of literature and the transformation of daily banality, embodied in Ng's quote "A city gets old. People get old. Something doesn't."

Returning to the column's title "Home is where the art is", it seems to be a literal and sharp slogan signifying one of the essences of art—to embrace audience with the sense of belonging and originality grounded to the world through the connection with the art. Yet, it is equally interesting to think from the alternative angle, "Art is where the home is". Here, the term "home" transcends our physical orientation but the perceptual ideology prevails. In other words, art is a way of seeing, and it is always electrifying to see how artists' boundless imagination unceasingly inspires us.



Kingsley Ng, '25 Minutes Older'

the sciences, as she was a pioneer in mathematics—but it is worth remembering that she was also an accomplished artist, and many of her landscapes and self-portraits hang proudly on display around the college.

In order to honour our artistic heritage, Arts Fest intends to celebrate the talents of current