



BY JENNIFER HIGGIE
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Excellent Beauty

The predictable, outraged reactions – how strange, bizarre, crazy it all is etc etc – to the annual Turner Prize short list never cease to amaze me, if only because they make me wonder: where do these so-called critics live? On some planet, where people’s lives and imaginations are marked only by their similarity of thinking, appearance and mood? A place where difference exists only as an aberration and where creativity functions purely as a tool for the dissemination of sameness? ‘There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion’ wrote Francis Bacon. I tend to agree; but strangeness, I hasten to add, is obviously not the preserve of art and beauty is often besides the point. To illustrate my point, here are a couple of totally unrelated links sent to me today for no particular reason – one of a religious LA-based public access TV show that has been running for 20 years and is hosted by Christian puppets, and the other a recording of [Marie Osmond reading a poem by Dadaist Hugo Ball](#) – that thrilled me for reasons that reiterate, better than I ever could, the fact that you can criticize the Turner Prize for the quality and intelligence or not of its engagement with the language of art, and the ingenuity or not with which the artists use their materials – but please, don’t tell me it’s weird. That’s like telling me you had a weird dream. What dreams aren’t?

JENNIFER HIGGIE

Jennifer Higgie is editor-at-large of *frieze*, based in London, UK. She is the host of *frieze’s* first podcast, *Bow Down: Women in Art History*. Her book *The Mirror and the Palette* is forthcoming from Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

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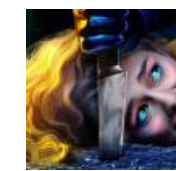
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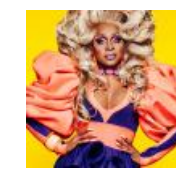
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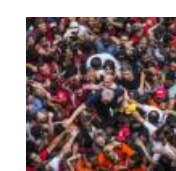
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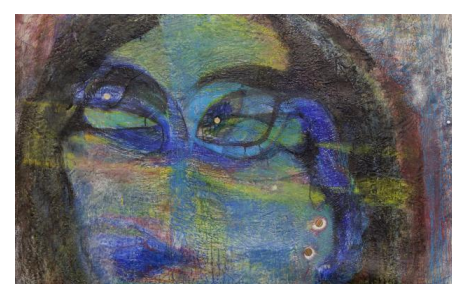
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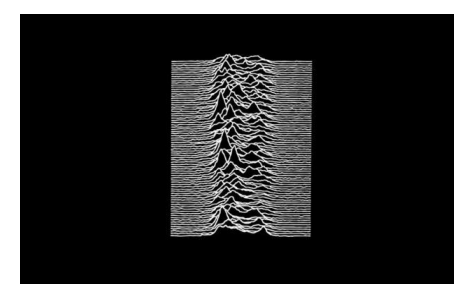
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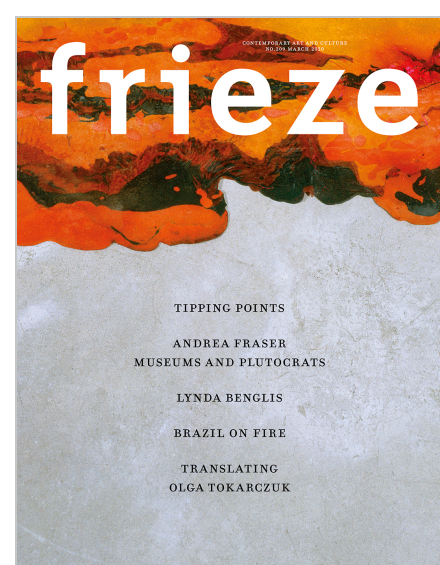


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