

A Life in Objects: Andrew Logan

Words: Helen Jennings • Photography: Benjamin McMahon





“It all looks nice and glittery, yes, but if you want to go deeper, you can. There are many layers. I always say to my sitters, ‘I’m after your soul’”

“I’m afraid it’s a rather unfortunate colour,” says Andrew Logan, with a mischievous smile, as he pours urine-hued tea into two dainty porcelain teacups. “It’s made from saffron. I bought it on a trip to Bhutan.” We’re in the kitchen of the artist’s home in the tiny Welsh village of Berriew—an old courthouse now decked-out in his signature cacophony of neon colours and maximalist objects d’art—enjoying lemon drizzle cake and discussing life’s simple pleasures. “As a child my mother would make five cakes for her five sons—chocolate, lemon, currant, coffee and walnut. We’d come back from school, sit in the front room and have tea and cake,” he recalls. “I love the ritual of tea. You know, there aren’t many rituals left in the world now. They mark the passing of time, which is life-enhancing. They’re something we all need and they tend to get ignored these days. So serving tea, and all the delightful treats that go with it, is important. Let’s hope rituals come back.”

Bright autumnal sun pours through the conservatory onto a table strewn with freshly laid eggs, still covered in straw, and wonky green apples from the garden. Outside, a river meanders past the building, and at the back is a vegetable patch brimming with Swiss chard, curly kale and runner beans. This idyllic scene is a far cry from the London life the sculptor, jewellery maker, performer and national treasure is renowned for. Born in Witney in 1945, and having studied architecture at Oxford, Logan became ensconced in the capital’s thriving—and suitably seedy—art and fashion scenes of the early 1970s. He soon rose to prominence among the Butler’s Wharf warehouse set alongside fellow squatters Derek Jarman and Howard Hodgkin. It’s here he hosted one of his early Alternative Miss World competitions (the high-camp beauty pageant he still organises to this day) and where Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood threw their infamous 1976 ball.

His fantastical, dazzling and influential works have since found their way into institutions and public spaces across the globe. Most often fashioned from a freeform technique he has developed using a mosaic of mirror, glass and found objects, they portray his friends and family, or explore his preoccupations with nature, the universe and celestial beings. Logan’s 10-foot-plus likeness of Divine, complete with flamingos, takes pride of place at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore. His *Millennium Pegasus* stretches its magnificent wings on a roundabout in Dudley. And his commission for Mumbai airport, *Guardian Angels of India*, is a 45-foot-long fascia covered in portraits of significant figures including Mahatma Gandhi and Ravi Shankar.

“My art is about joy,” he says. “I’m lucky in that I’ve always followed that path and maintained my vision. It all looks nice and glittery, yes, but if you



Raja Zandra

“This is a sculpture of Zandra Rhodes called *Raja Zandra*, completed in 1983. We’d just taken our first trip to India together, so this piece explores the colours and smells of the country. I’ve incorporated clay dolls and incense burners I found there, which she holds in her hands to reflect that she is an empire builder. On her head is a Kathakali dancer, and the whole frame moves because she never stands still. The gorgeous thing about this is, when I first showed it to Zandra, she got down on the floor and looked right up her skirt!”



Jonathan Heale Teapot

“I have a huge collection of teapots. This one was made for me as a gift by Jonathan Heale and his wife Lesley. He did all the bone china for the Prince of Wales at Highgrove House. I’d just been to Burma, so he painted a reclining Buddha and the Shwedagon Pagoda on it in gold leaf. Did you know there are more diamonds on the top of the Shwedagon than in the Bank of England?”

want to go deeper, you can. There are many layers. I always say to my sitters, ‘I’m after your soul.’”

Buckland Abbey in Devon is currently home to a retrospective of Logan’s work, *The Art of Reflection*. This is the first time the National Trust has celebrated a living artist in this way, giving over the thirteenth-century property, a former Cistercian monastery and also once the home of Sir Francis Drake, to 18 sculptures spanning Logan’s career. Considering themes of discovery, peace and tranquillity, the Great Barn (where produce was once stored) houses *Goldfield*, an installation of wheat that was first exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1976.

Excalibur, a 3m glass sword, rises out of the Cart Pond, and, in the Long Gallery, Logan’s new work, *Life and Oomph*, portrays ballerina Lynn Seymour emerging from a sea of pearls, one arm an outstretched skateboard, the other a folded wing. Visitors can also take time out in a meditation room in the gardens. “What interests me most about the location is its history as a spiritual centre set in the most beautiful, secluded valley. I’m thrilled to be combining the contemporary and ancient in a gentle way.”



Andrew Logan’s travelling museum

Cosmic Egg

“The egg is the universal symbol of the life principle. The mirrored shell represents cosmic time and space swirling to reflect the world today. It’s where we all come from and are going to. It was commissioned by the Greater London Council in 1983 for an Easter parade in Battersea Park, and then I exhibited it as part of my *Goddesses* exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute (now the Design Museum). It sat on Kensington High Street for months. I’d like more people to see it. It would look fabulous in the main hall of the British Museum.” →



Fire Crown

“I’ve made crowns for each of my Alternative Miss World ceremonies. I call it a surreal art event for all-round family entertainment. The first one was in 1972, and there have been 14 so far, based on different themes—air, water, royal imperial, earth, void, neon numbers. Next year will be psychedelic peace. We have 15 contestants—young and old, any size, men and women—and I create the ambience for it, which means six months of work for one night. This crown was for 1995, which was about fire. We held it at the Clapham Grand and Richard O’Brien was my co-host. The design incorporates a Lenin brooch, a Disneyland coin, an English rose and amber from Latvia.”





“When I was a kid I had this thing called ‘The Happy Club’. You had to pay a tuppence to join, and then you got to be happy”

The dining room is the focal point of Logan's own house. He has filled it with works by his nearest and dearest, and calls this collection/installation *“Friends. We’re all there dining together,”* he says. So if they were all there for real, what would be on the menu? “Well it wouldn’t be a decadent banquet of swans’ necks and things like that. It would be a super-sensory experience. Zandra Rhodes is brilliant at soups, so she’d make the starters. I’d bring my friend from Delhi over to cook the mains, but nothing too spicy. And my sister-in-law would do the sweets. My weakness is dark chocolate. We’d combine that with a walk around the estate. The secret of food for me is that it’s fresh, simple and well sourced.”

Much of Logan’s work is still lodged in the building opposite his home, the Andrew Logan Museum of Sculpture, which he opened in 1991. Our teatime over, we take a stroll to explore it, meeting several neighbours out walking their dogs as we go. Friendly hellos and barks are exchanged. Logan cuts an unlikely figure in these rustic surroundings, where Barbour jackets and wellington boots are more de rigueur than his fuchsia silk suit and tapestry slippers. Now in his early seventies, he and his partner Michael Davis moved to Wales a couple of years ago (although they still have a flat in south London). They’re certainly the most colourful residents of these parts.

“We’re very remote here. There are more sheep than people. The community is interested in farming, not art,” he says with a slight sigh. “Artists started moving to Wales in the 1970s, and my friends were caretakers of Julie Christie’s farm, so I’d come and visit. I’d always had a dream of opening a museum—and had a studio full of work. One thing led to another and here we are. The museum has been wonderful. Some people haven’t seen art before; others travel from all over the world to visit.”

Once inside, an overwhelming kaleidoscope of works from his vast archive greets us. Costumes, crowns and photographs from various Alternative Miss Worlds nestle among mounds of statement jewellery, and portraits of Lady Diana, model Marie Helvin and nightclub queen Susanne Bartsch hang alongside those of his mother and father. It’s almost too much to take in—everything shining brightly and spreading love with a romantic, disco-ball-like quality unique to this truly one-of-a-kind, tender-hearted man. “When I was a kid I had this thing called ‘The Happy Club’. You had to pay a tuppence to join, and then you got to be happy,” he says, while fondly surveying his singular kingdom. “I think I’ve been doing the same thing with my work ever since.”

Andrew Logan’s *The Art of Reflection* is on view at Buckland Abbey, Yelverton, Devon, until February 2018.



Sun Brooch

“I started making jewellery in 1972. I met Thea Porter, who made clothes for The Beatles and Elizabeth Taylor—a very exotic lady—and she commissioned some work for a show at Tramps nightclub on Jermyn Street. I was making objects already, so why not jewellery? I started to do it alongside the sculpture and became well known for it. Collectors who wear my work say they can’t wear anything else. They’re very special, magical pieces, and each one is different. This brooch is from 1985, is coated in 22-carat gold and represents the sun.”



Kate Malone Bowl

“Zandra Rhodes studied at the Royal College of Art, and for many years she would go to the degree shows to discover ceramic artists. That’s how she met Kate Malone, who had two heroes at that time—Zandra and me. Kate calls me her guru. Now she’s very successful. She gave me this bowl a long time ago and it’s inspired by the patterns of the brain. It’s a beautiful piece and great for fruit.”