BROKEN MIRRORS AND A GOOD TIME

ANDREW LOGAN ON THE MEANING OF LIFE, TRANSFORMATION AND COSMIC LIGHT

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Previous page: Cape by NATIONAL THEATRE HIRE, crown and jewellery by ANDREW LOGAN
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In a documentary about his life and career, artist Andrew Logan tells an anecdote about the time he approached Andy Warhol with the idea of wrapping a rose around the Empire State Building in New York. Warhol said to him, "You should make maquettes and do an edition to make money and to make a statement," to which he replied, "I don't want to do that, I want to wrap the building." In the film Logan quips: "That, to me, is our essential difference."

Logan never managed to wrap a rose around the Empire State, but he has created a romantic, glorious alternative universe within London, through his Alternative Miss World (AMW) pageants, his public art, and his sculptures, which are now housed in the Andrew Logan Museum of Sculpture in Wales. Recently he talked to Beauty Papers about the virtue of transformation; here's that conversation.

Beauty Papers: First things first, will there be another Alternative Miss World?
Andrew Logan: I intend to do it until I pass away so I could be brought onstage in a coffin.

In the 70s when you first started Alternative Miss World, was it a conscious decision to poke fun at the establishment and vanity?
No, not at all. My work is about joy and happiness, and having fun, a celebration of life, so I'm always thinking up ideas, that's really it. I think the world needs more of it. The Alternative Miss World is one of the ways I can do it. And that's how it started, just with friends.

And throughout the years it has witnessed all these changing landscapes in fashion and politics. What are the standouts for you?
Of course people did love the Circus Tent, 1978, on the Super Tent in Clapham Common. The co-host was Divine. Miss Linda Carriage won – but then I've loved every one. Every one has a quality.

I'm fond of the images from the year Derek Jarman won.
Yes, 1975, in Butler's Wharf.

My mum was obsessed with Derek Jarman, so I grew up hearing about him and his Caravaggio. Such a great loss to the world. I wonder what he'd be doing now. He'd be making movies! He was so good at making movies. It's wonderful that he's become a legend, because that's what he always wanted. I knew him very well. Derek always wanted to be a big film star and director. His great ideal was Jean Cocteau, and if you think about Jean Cocteau and Derek Jarman, [they're] very similar. Derek is very English, but Jean Cocteau... film, writing, theatre, performance.

Your work is broad, too.
Yes, it is.

But your urge is different, I feel. Your work seems less self-absorbed. It's more about creating an environment.
Yes, very much so. I somehow want the work to present itself and this message of joy.

Where does your fascination with mirrors come from?
I discovered mirrors in 1968 when I was a student at architectural college in Oxford. It's like playing with cosmic light, because basically mirror is light, even though it's physical. And I'm also particularly obsessed with portraits.

Why are you drawn to them?
People's faces. I do portraits of people who I feel are important to the world, or to my life. I'm very classical. I'm self-taught. I work in clay, and then they get cast in white resin, and then I do the glass work on top. Fenella Fielding took eight years. I'm doing Rula Lenska at the moment, and that's up to three years now.

I always say to my sitters, "I'm actually going to take part of your soul." My portraits are very lifelike; it certainly has an aspect of people, of the character, you can feel the person straightaway.

You use a lot of different mediums in your art – found objects, even rubbish. And there's the plastic doll that you said you rescued from a gutter in New York.
Yes, she's in the museum! She's called Bubble Birth.

That idea of salvaging, what's the urge there?
Well, I've always felt that. Even when I was a student I was obsessed with jumble sales. I used to buy all these suits and so on. My mother had a sewing machine, and I'd go home and transform them. I used to take old cricket flannels and convert them, and I made these patchwork trousers, which are still in the museum. You couldn't really buy anything then.

What do you work with now mainly?
Mainly the portraits and glass. And I'm reusing a lot of the things I've collected over the years. I'm doing a piece called *Narcissus* at the moment. I'm using a little display mannequin, a man wearing Y-Fronts. I've had it for years, and I got it from an old 40s department store in Kensington High Street.

You found your first AMW costume – the half-and-half – in a jumble sale. Could you tell us about the original idea behind that costume?
Imagine tango – you come onstage, go across stage as the woman, go offstage, turn round, and you have the man on the other side. It was never presented from the front, it was always presented one way, then the other. But I just loved the idea of putting it on, because in Buddhism, it's this great balance – we all have male and female, and it's the balance between the two. Brian [Eno] talks about that sexuality in [*The British Guide to Showing Off*], going to the toilet [at AMW], suddenly meeting all these... there is a male toilet here and a female here, but there is this huge spectrum in between.

It must have been liberating to create a space where you don't feel the gaze. In the 70s when you started, society was even more conservative than it is today.
Oh, yes – but I had a motorbike! And I had the outfit for it, a fisherman's overall thing with the pinny, and a big jacket, a hat and long gloves. I'd put on my costume un-

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This page: Ruffle by National Theatre Hire, shirt by MOSCHINO
Opposite page: Blue ruffle shirt by MOSCHINO, blazer by KIT NEALE,
crown by ANDREW LOGAN

Jacket Andrew's own Jewellery by ANDREW LOGAN

PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANT RHYS GRAY. FASHION ASSISTANTS KATIE SILVER AND ALIZE DEMANGE. LIGHTING AND DIGITAL TECHNICIAN LLOYD AT DIREGT PHOTOGRAPHIC. PRODUCTION SAMANTHA BRENNAN AND SOPHIE LEEN. LOCATION ANDREW LOGAN MUSEUM OF SCULPTURE, WALES

YOU COULD PUT THE WALKMAN ON AND WALK DOWN THE STREET, AND YOU WOULDN'T HEAR ALL THE REMARKS, PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT YOU.

derneath and I'd come out of the end to go to a party. I remember there was this one outfit that was made from a dress that had fluted sleeves, and blue polka dots and a great big Diane Logan hat and I had these leopard-skin stack shoes from Camden Town. I'd come out looking glorious like a butterfly, so this was like a chrysalis. It would take me ten minutes to undo [the motorbike outfit]. So in a way I was able to get round the city. And there was the great invention of the Walkman, by then it was the 80s. It was fabulous, because I'd always get whistled at – even now people react to me. But you could put the Walkman on and walk down the street, and you wouldn't hear all the remarks, people talking about you. I've never been conscious; I think I've just been so in love with life, and people.

Your work is about the celebration of life and joy, but is it a reaction to a dark place?
Grayson [Perry] once said the reason he was successful is because he addressed the dark side and I never have. But actually my work is very deep.

What I wondered, though, was whether your work was an enclave, almost, being surrounded by a darker society.
I've never really seen that.

You've previously said that your sculpture and jewellery are interconnected.
Absolutely. It's a sculpture jewellery, it's what it is, it's of sculpture.

And the Alternative Miss World is part of that vision. It's a sculpture as well.
I think sculpture is a very good description that allows you all these different nuances, how you can go from one world to another. It embraces all worlds. I'd love to do more public art because the art I see is really depressing. Last thing I did was the big letters outside the library in Clapham. It is mirrored on the front, coloured glass on the back. In between the two pieces of glass I collected artefacts from local people – toothbrushes, records, cameras, knives and forks, plates, so people can identify with the sculpture.

Should public art be relatable?
Well, I think so. And then there's the *Pegasus*, which is in Dudley, on the bypass. It's 20ft tall, it's based on *My Little Pony*, and it was voted in by the public, and now the local people have even formed a Pegasus society to protect it.

But my legacy to the world is my little museum, in a very remote part of Wales, and it will always be there, even when I go. We've formed trustees so it will continue, that's what I want really. My work will always be housed in there.

What about your latest work?
I've been doing a lot of work in India; I've done a huge installation in Mumbai airport. I love India, it's such a crazy place. It's hard work, you have to re-educate yourself totally, because all your senses are thrown out the window and you have to start again. It's a powerful country. I first visited in the 80s, with Zandra [Rhodes] – she's been a very good friend and we've collaborated a lot.

Do you like sharing your ideas?
I like doing collaborations, it's nice working with other people. It's funny, you see, two young artists in Paris, she's Russian, he's French, but she's going back to St Petersburg because she says that even though life is difficult there's a feeling of community, artists working together, in pockets. That can often happen when there's a regression.

When there's oppression coming from the government.
Yes, exactly, and then you stick together, and of course it makes very interesting work.

In the 90s you had a lot of Russian contestants, didn't you?
Yes. It was a wonderful time, here was communism and here was capitalism, and for artists of course it was a free time, because there was no system. People experimented.

Speaking of experimenting, can you tell me a bit about the Butler's Wharf years?
My brother Peter studied with Derek Jarman and Maggi Hambling at the Slade, and they were doing theatre design, so that's how I met Derek. From 1975 to 1979, we lived there. It was an illegal squat in a [disused] spice warehouse, so you smelt beautiful cardamom, and all those wonderful spices when you went into the building. It was a happy time: Derek making movies, my brother doing shows, so many things going on – performance, people. When we started there were just a few tenants, and by the time we left I think there was about 175 – artists, dance groups, the whole area was becoming rich with art. Then the fire happened and we moved somewhere else.

I remember reading about the fire in the Pandemonium *exhibition, where I also came across an interview between you and Jarman for* Interview *magazine in April 1973.*
It was very funny, Andy [Warhol] had got this magazine in New York. Primarily it was a film magazine. He appointed an editor, and Derek knew Richard Bernstein, who was an illustrator. So he asked Derek to do an interview, and it took such a long time – we tried doing it [face to face] but it didn't work. Then we tried writing letters to each other. So we tried all these different techniques, and then we did a photo session with JD Matthews. It was sent off to America, and it changed the face of *Interview*. From then on it became interviews with celebrities – well, then it became more celebrity-based, but it started with me and Derek.

You led a lot of firsts. There was the famous Valentine's Ball where the Sex Pistols played one of their first ever really noticeable gigs.
Yes. As an artist, I open myself up to the world.

By being there, and being inclusive.
Yes, just open up and then things will come to you. ———