

Silly Symphony

Ollie Dook, Elly Thomas, Andy Holden, Bobby, Phillipe, Sputnik

8th Dec - 5th Jan. Saturdays or by appointment, 11-6pm

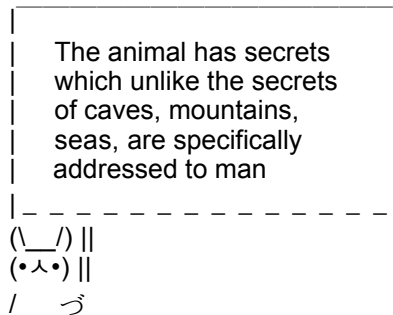
Ex-BALDESSARRE, 103 COVENTRY RD, BEDFORD

HEART

BREAKING NEWS

A tiny bear cub frantically tries to climb up a snowy mountain, repeatedly falling terrible, catastrophic distances, but never giving up. The cub's parent paces anxiously at the summit. Eventually they are reunited. The clip is widely shared online as a heart-warming tale of persistence and resilience. *Wait, what?* The bears were deeply alarmed by the drone filming the very footage you were watching, and the reason for their frantic climbing and repeated falling was fear.

It me.



(John Berger bunny)

Who do we whisper our secrets to? Back in 1995 there was a mouse with a human ear growing out of its back; we could have whispered our secrets to him. At the time, Paul Morley wrote: "In 1995, the Mickey Mouse ears were comprehensively defeated by another mouse with ears. The logo for 1995 is a hairless mouse with a human ear growing out of its back. The bald deformed earmouse in all its jagged anti-glory, made by humans with Nobel intentions, symbolised the twitchiness of reality in 1995." The earmouse lived and died in obscurity compared to Pizza Rat or Sneezing Panda. It lived at a time when we looked at animals in desperate circumstances and felt sympathetic pain for them, or pity. Now, the images of animals which we share are metaphors for our own pain, and the pity is self-pity. You can never have too many cute animal pictures!!!

Whoops. In the end, it turned out you that you *could* have too many animal pictures. Maybe the animal pictures provided us with a collective emotional soothing that we did not deserve, and maybe this made things seem less bad when in fact they were terribly bad. We didn't notice until it was too late.

Ruh-roh. We went and built ourselves a haunted house. A meme is a ghost because a ghost is a mimesis, and they are both doomed to keep repeating repeating repeating until forever. In times of great trauma, so the stone tape theory goes, ghosts repeat because the same trauma that caused their formation leaves an imprint behind, a recording. (These times are times of great trauma.)

Like real memory, it is best when it glitches. When a joke is good, it gets copied, unattributed. It begins to echo and morph as people half remember it, or tweak the punctuation and pentameter to steal a wisp of a sentiment that really belongs only to the commons.

This ghost world is our own world but it runs on a different register, overlaying ours like a transparency. There must be rooms in its haunted house where the old tweets and memes are stored, where we can walk and stroke their dusty vitrines, and remember. These are memories but not memories, they inhabit a world that is here but not here. Mostly tantalisingly close but you still can't quite get to it, except when the walls to the otherworld become thin. We carry our memories of things that did happen, and that people did say, alongside a different set of memories - things that did not quite happen, or things that people only said virtually. We all now operate on two planes at once.

Better even than the stolen jokes are the disarming tenderesses. A very specific type of silly symphony has managed to weaponise sincerity, creating a meme-language of anxiety, and emotional honesty so raw it is abject. *Ha ha*. But, wait, there is hope too in this dark night! Because we have shared memories in the meme ghost-world, we have managed to collectivise our internal lives. We are all haunting each other. And in this time of great trauma, we found out we can pull together psychically as well as physically. An army of giggling ghosts, tied closer to each other in our daydreams too.

Tessa Norton

