

# whitewall

CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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THE ART ISSUE



TRACEY EMIN - ERIK PARKER - THEASTER GATES - SOPHIE CALLE



## THE ART ISSUE

This issue's cover, done by **ERIK PARKER**, just may be our favorite yet. We visited Parker's studio last September and were pretty excited by his new series of paintings on pyramid- and plank-shaped canvases. Those works made up the exhibition "New Magnetic Destiny" that was on view last winter at **HONOR FRASER GALLERY** in L.A. We previously featured Parker in our pages leading up to his show at **PAUL KASMIN GALLERY** in New York in 2012, "Bye Bye, Babylon." And he was gracious enough last year to participate in an intimate salon *Whitewall* hosted in partnership with Gertrude. We felt it was time to do a proper feature story in the magazine, and what better way to celebrate our annual Art Issue than to ask him to design our cover?

We were blown away by what he created. And not just because we're suckers for gradients and because a warm image of a tropical pool and a shark-infested aqua ocean was the polar opposite of the polar vortex we were experiencing when we went to print. We've always been drawn to Parker's use of color and imagery—a choice he makes to bring the viewer in, to connect with his audience, as he told us over a series of conversations.

That interest in connection is a big part of this issue. We spoke over the phone with **TRACEY EMIN** right after her big opening at MOCA North Miami during Art Basel Miami Beach. Emin immediately felt a tie to South Beach when she first visited. It reminded her of Margate, England, where she grew up—a beachside town with lots of neon. She also shared with us her recommitment to her art practice. Forget dating; she has her work. "I'm in love . . . with art. And the relationship is getting better and better every day," she told us.

We visited the artist **SOPHIE CALLE** (and her cat Souris!) in her studio in Paris. Writing and text is always an element in her work. She told us about how her concern for a viewer to be able to read her work—on a wall, in a gallery, standing up—affects the form of it and her concise, economical way of writing. It's striking how much we connect with Calle's exhibitions, time and time again. They are almost therapeutic, and she shared with us that while her "engine is the work," it can be therapeutic for her as well.

How to connect, to relate, to represent his art practice was the big question for **THEASTER GATES** in the summer of 2011, in the months leading up to the 2012 Documenta. What he came up with was *12 Ballads for Huguenot House*, where a group of African Americans from Chicago's South Side moved to Kassel, Germany, to try and make a derelict, historical property useful again. Gates seems to be the artist on everyone's mind as of late, and we think it's because his practice is so all encompassing. ". . . An artist can think as expansively as possible about where he or she fits in the world—and that I would commit myself to the complex activity of 'living,'" he told us.

And there's so much more to identify with this in the issue. We get a tour of the totally insane Pop art and fashion penthouse in New York that the designer **LISA PERRY** calls home. Then there's the beautiful castle where the watchmaker **RICHARD MILLE** spends his weekends, and **LANCE FUNG**'s loft that used to be the home of Barbara Rose (the art historian and critic and former wife of Frank Stella).

**KATY DONOGHUE**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF





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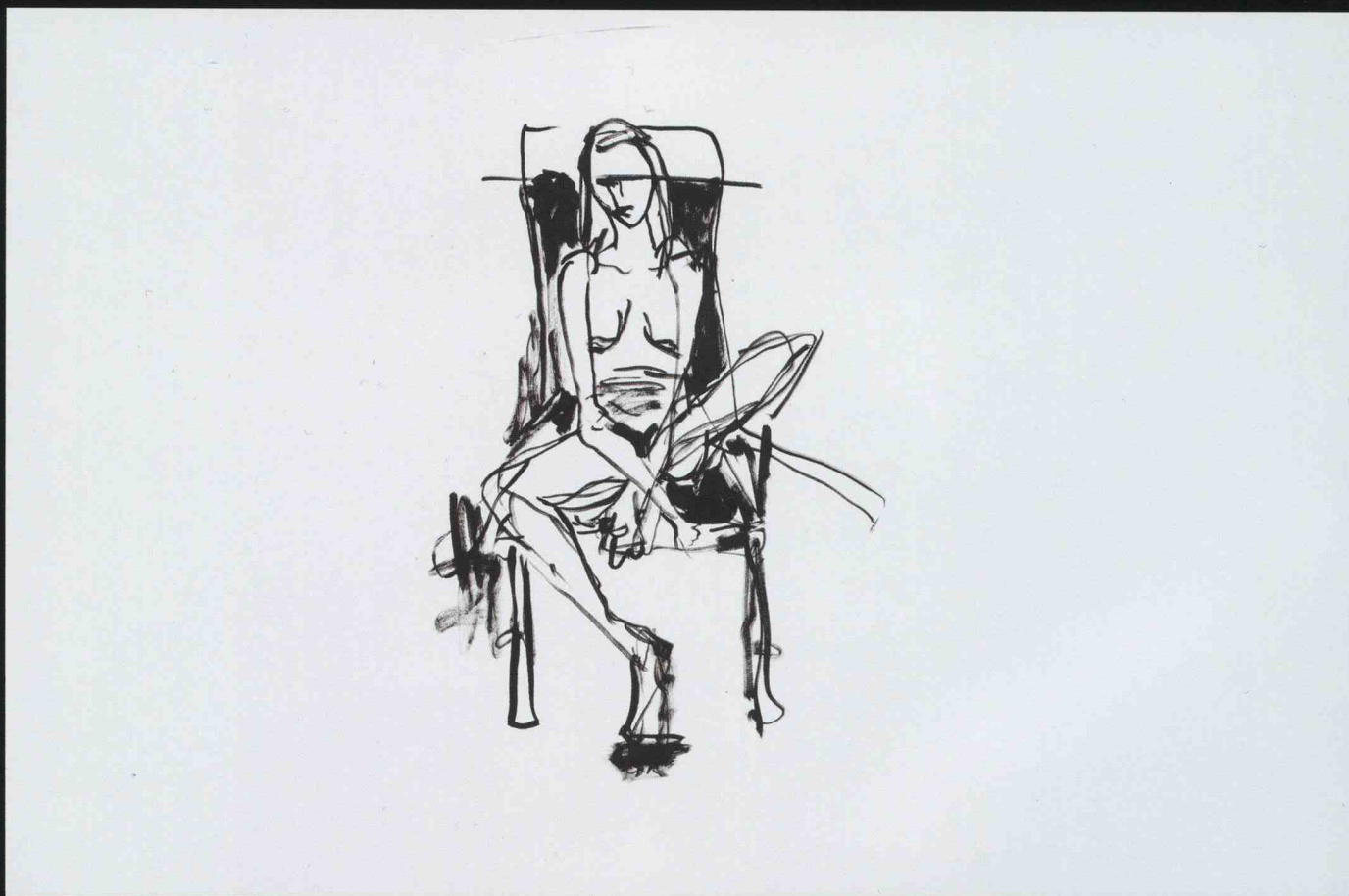
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BY LAURA VAN STRAATEN  
PORTRAIT BY STEVE BENISTY

TRACÉ

WINE



Tracey Emin  
*Lonely Chair drawing*  
2012

Gouache on paper

39.9 x 53.9 inches

© Tracey Emin

Courtesy of Lehmann Maupin Gallery







“Is that Loo-rah?”

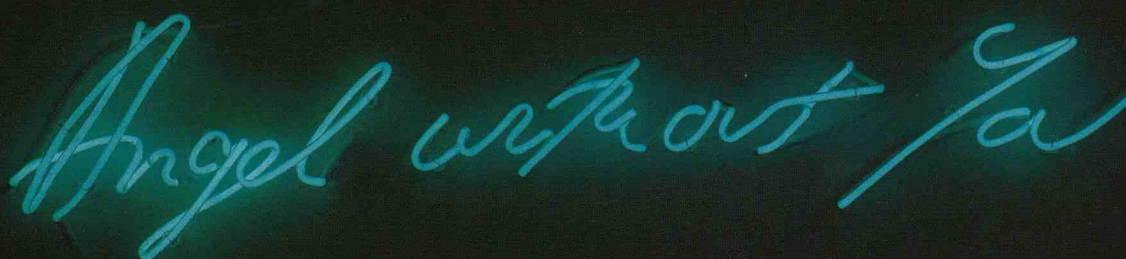
So began a fun and wide-ranging phone call with Tracey Emin, who first made headlines and won acclaim in the 1990s as the girl wild-child among the family of (now-not-so-) Young British Artists whose other most famous member is Damien Hirst. Speaking from her studio in London, Emin began by apologizing for her jetlag. She was closing out 2013 by being fêted at various events during Art Basel Miami Beach, where we were introduced, and celebrating the opening of her first solo museum show in America, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami.

Right now she is working on a major exhibition opening in October at White Cube's largest space in London. The show, which she expects will include small- and large-scale paintings, large and small bronze sculptures, her trademark embroidery, and an installation of her own photographs, is entitled “The last great adventure is you.”





Top:  
Tracey Emin  
*I can Feel your Smile*  
2005  
© Tracey Emin  
Courtesy of Lehmann Maupin Gallery



Left:  
Tracey Emin  
*Angel without You*  
2005  
© Tracey Emin  
Courtesy of White Cube



**WHITEWALL:** *I got a real kick out of something you said in one of the interviews you did with Carl Freedman, which was, "I always say 'why have therapy when you can go and do an interview?'"*

**TRACEY EMIN:** It's true isn't it? When people talk about my work, they end up talking about life.

**WW:** *So should one of us be on the couch for this?*

**TE:** *[laughing]* One of us should be, yeah!

**WW:** *No one is neutral about you or your work. The author Jeannette Winterson wrote in the introduction to one of your books (Tracey Emin: Works 1963–2006): "The noisy arguments around Emin's work are good for art. Nothing is worse for art than a rarefied remote state, where the thing languishes in the lands of connoisseurship and curators."*

**TE:** She writes so well, doesn't she? It's painful, but it's true. I just get on with what I've got to do. But there's been a bit of a sea change.

**WW:** *A sea change in what way?*

**TE:** Well, I've been doing what I do for so long. People are kinder to me. They realize that I'm not going away. This is my work; this is my life; I'm an artist and I'm here to stay.

**WW:** *Jeannette Winterson also wrote that your famous bed piece [My Bed, 1998] and your tent appliquéd with the names of everyone you've ever shared a bed with [Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995, 1995] had "huge impact—Duchamp Urinal impact, or Warhol Soup Can impact—because they found a way of containing the mesmeric and iconic properties of art within the most commonplace of objects." Can you comment on that and whether that's been hard to live up to, given that those works came rather early in your career?*

**TE:** Those were seminal pieces. You'll never see those again—of course, not the tent because it was burnt and gone in Momart warehouse fire in London in 2004. Lots of artists never make anything seminal. They never make anything that changes the perception of things. But artists like Flavin, Bourgeois, Nauman—they changed our perception of what we understand to be art. That's what we as artists should be doing. But I believe my neon show is seminal in the same way.

**WW:** *Let's talk about the neon—it's the sole medium of your first big solo show in the USA. I'm going to quote you to yourself on the subject: "Neon always has that seedy connection. But then I think it's sexual too. It's spangly, it's pulsating. It's out there, it's vibrant. . . . For me it's always had a beautiful allure."*

**TE:** Yes. I was brought up with neon in Margate, in the bars and the nightclubs. Most people expect to find neon in red light districts, bars, casinos. I've wanted to do a pure neon show for a long time. The space at MOCA was perfect. And Miami was perfect. Because Miamians were brought up with neon, too.

**WW:** *When I saw the neon show, I was struck by how these pithy but personal sayings in your handwriting seemed like self-talk, like the little notes to oneself one might write in one's diary, like mantras or mottos. Or else like a line from an intimate talk from the vantage point of inside of a relationship? But then you turned them into this brazen signage...*

**TE:** The neons work on the level where it's like the lyrics to a song that you think you know but you don't. It's not one dimension.

**WW:** *Tell me about the most provocative piece, which everyone was photographing (myself included) at your opening: People like you need to fuck people like me, from 2002.*

**TE:** *People like you need to fuck people like me* is not about sex. It's in capital letters so it's shoutin' but it's a reference to a need—for warmth, for balance. It's about needing each other.

**WW:** *How frustrating has it been for you that your celebrity and your personality have often eclipsed discussion of your work?*

**TE:** It's never going to go away. I will always be in magazines and newspapers. I've embraced it. And I'm quite happy to embrace that side of me. A lot of artists hide behind their work. If I didn't accept that part of me and my

personality, I'd become schizophrenic. I'd be fighting myself.

Also, my success isn't negative. So it'd be churlish of me to treat it that way. There's a really positive side, too. I can get into a restaurant easily! Although in America of course I'm much less known.

**WW:** *I often ask visual artists—as opposed to writers or filmmakers, whose work is almost always meant to be reproduced and disseminated—how they can bear to part with any original object they've created and may never see again? Does that pain you, especially since your work is so personal?*

**TE:** Yes. I really struggled with it. I actually cried when I sold my first quilt, or blanket as you Americans would call it, in 1994. I was sad that it wasn't mine anymore. I miss all my work when it is no longer mine. But whatever I make, I'm still its creator. The point is to let it live and breathe in the world. If I did not or could not do that, then I wouldn't be an artist.

**WW:** *I understand you're a collector yourself—of tiny antique pornography photos?*

**TE:** Yes, I have about 50. I carry them in a little wallet, which I shouldn't do because I might lose it. The images have to be artistic, but not in a cheesy way. I look for ones with the "golden section," that ratio [derived from mathematics] within that makes a perfect composition. I get them from flea markets and antique shops. I use them for reference materials as well. But I don't get off on them! *[laughing]*

**WW:** *I wasn't even going to go there, I swear!*

**TE:** They are fascinating. Some are 100 years old and they are of both men and women.

**WW:** *Were the porn photos the first luxury you ever allowed yourself once you became successful? You know that Whitewall bills itself as a luxury and art magazine—*

**TE:** When I first started earning money, not lots but just enough, the first thing I spent it on was oysters! I was eating 150 oysters a week!

**WW:** *You are woman after my own heart! Where was this?*

**TE:** *[laughing]* Anywhere! That was my first big indulgence. And getting private health insurance. And flying British Airways first class.

**WW:** *And now?*

**TE:** My big indulgence now is property. I always was invited to stay in people's houses and got tired of always being the guest. I have a big place in the South of France about 40 minutes from St. Tropez. It's 40 acres near a nature reserve. I have the apartments in New York and Miami, and in London. I now have a 10,000-square-foot studio with an 18-meter swimming pool. I bought the house next door to the studio and am turning it into my home.

**WW:** *Let's talk about what's provided for those luxuries. Your collectors include a number of rock stars, supermodels, celebrated actors, household names I won't name. How would you characterize your relationship with the people who collect your work?*

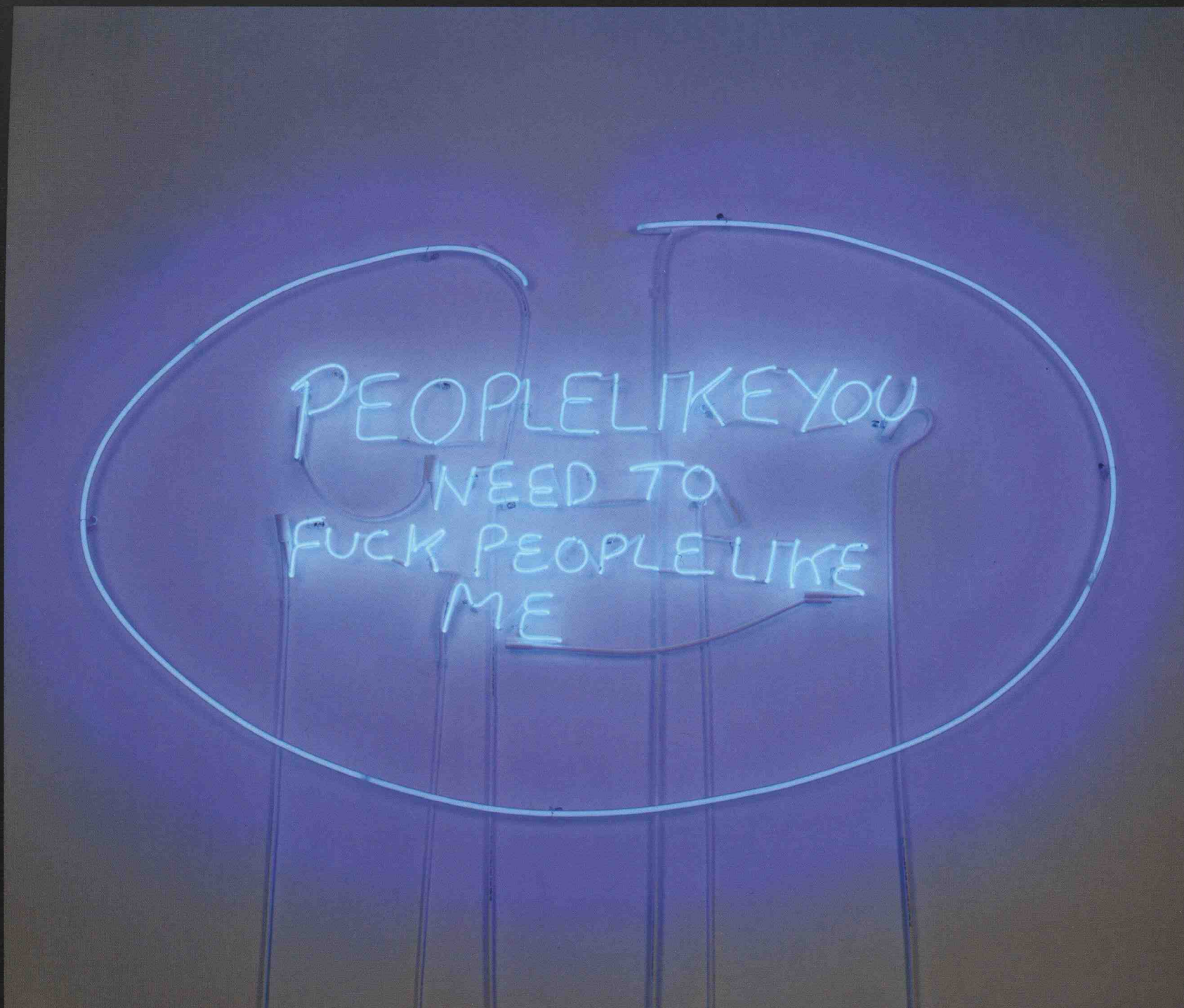
**TE:** It's quite nice that my work rarely comes up on the secondary market. Most collectors don't buy my work as an investment. They buy it because they like my work. So usually when I get to meet them, they like me.

I do find that in America, collectors are much more friendly, open, less guarded. And you get to know who knows and likes your work much easier than you would do in Europe.

**WW:** *To that point, at the opening for your show at MOCA in Miami I met by chance Bob and Daphne Bransten, two big Bay Area collectors of your work. They told me they originally met you through a classified advertisement?*

**TE:** Yes! *[laughing]* I put a little ad in *Artists Newsletter*, which he subscribed to. Bob's mother had collected British artists like Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. Bob decided he wanted to learn more about younger artists so he could, like his mom, collect artists who were his contemporaries. He came to Britain in the eighties and nineties eager to learn about my generation of artists. And he saw my little ad seeking a place to stay and help establishing myself a bit in America. I stayed with him and Daphne about 20 years ago in the Bay Area when no one knew who I was.





Top:  
Tracey Emin  
*People Like you Need to  
Fuck People Like Me*  
2002  
© Tracey Emin

Left:  
Tracey Emin  
*Sex 7 25-11-07 Sydney*  
2007  
Watercolor on paper  
8.2 x 11.7 inches  
© Tracey Emin



**WW:** *What luck! They were the first people in America who took you under their wing?*

**TE:** Yes! I didn't know then they had such a great a collection! They introduced me to his sister-in-law Rena Bransten and her gallery in San Francisco. They had a party for me and helped me get set up across America. You remember the people that help you.

**WW:** *Do you use social media to keep in touch with people from across the years? I looked for you on Facebook, thinking that might be a fun medium for you since it's all about the tension between the personal and the public . . .*

**TE:** No, I still write letters by hand. I'm not on social media. I wouldn't enjoy it. I couldn't do Facebook. No Instagram. No tweeting—though my studio does that for me.

**WW:** *I hate to ask, but are you aware of the Tracey Emin Appreciation and Bollocks Art Group on Facebook, which defines itself as "A group inspired by the work of Tracey Emin . . . with dismal snapshots of life's mediocrity"?*

**TE:** No! *[laughing]*

**WW:** *Yes—one photo, for example, is entitled "A Group of Wet Tissues on the Floor." And then the acronym is of course TEABAG.*

**TE:** Teabag! *[laughing]* I'm not aware of them at all, but it sounds quite funny. If they have the time, let them do it.

**WW:** *At this stage of your life and career, do you ever think about how to get back to the kind of unqualified happiness you've spoken about experiencing as a student at Maidstone College of Art?*

**TE:** I think if I went and did a PhD. I was just so happy to be studying. Maidstone was sternly intellectual. And it was a forced discipline. I really thrived on it.

**WW:** *Are you seriously thinking about pursuing a doctorate?*

**TE:** I have three honorary doctoral degrees already!

**WW:** *But those don't serve the purpose you seek like "forced discipline," et cetera?*

**TE:** No! *[laughing]* And then I'm also a CBE [Commander of the Order of the British Empire].

**WW:** *As an American, I have to wonder, does that come with outfits or props?*

**TE:** *[laughing]* Medals! Lots of glorious medals!

**WW:** *That brings us to the topic of legacy. Did your big fiftieth birthday in 2013 make you more aware of your legacy?*

**TE:** [Artist] Maurizio Cattelan announced when he hit 50 that he was going to retire! For me, it isn't so much "legacy," but I actually realized I need to be more focused and concentrate on what I really love, which is art. It is like waking up to someone you really love and realizing you haven't been as kind or paid attention as you might have done. My art and my love for art is what my life is about and going to be about.

**WW:** *Okay, I have to ask, since so much of your work is about love and sex: Are you dating?*

**TE:** No. But I'm in love.

**WW:** *You are?*

**TE:** Yeah, with art. And the relationship is getting better and better every day.

"THE NEONS WORK ON THE LEVEL WHERE IT'S  
LIKE THE LYRICS TO A SONG THAT YOU THINK YOU  
KNOW BUT YOU DON'T. IT'S NOT ONE DIMENSION"