

Taking a stand against the uglification of the world!

ten years of ingénu/e magazine

Let's go right back to the beginning!

It was the spring of 2013. Gill and I were at a bit of a crossroads – in jobs we didn't like, unhappy with the rate society seemed to be dumbing down – what to do? We had an Idea... Let's start a free, grass roots arts magazine that helps promote up-and-coming talent of all artistic genres. The purpose twofold: one, to help give more exposure to such talent and two, to raise awareness of the amount of creativity on offer in the area, thus releasing a greater aesthetic into the local culture.

What inspired us?

Well, Gill being an artist and myself a writer and musician, we were well aware of the dedication and hard work it takes to be a successful artist in any profession. And we were also well aware of the remarkable talents of many creative individuals that do not receive the recognition they deserve. We would come across musicians, artists and writers whose work we felt was so much better than others (often famous) who were less talented, yet were celebrated more widely. It seemed unfair, to say the least.

The next step was to choose a name.

We chose ingénu/e, and here's why. The word originates from 'L'Ingénu', a novella by the French writer Voltaire, published in 1767. The main character (a boy, a child of nature as it were) has an extremely literal understanding of society and its values and this serves as both comic and satirical comment on the culture of the time as his tale unfolds. The story satirises religious doctrine and the folly and injustices of French society and criticises the contemporary corruption in the French government.

"Congrats on the first mag, looks GOOOOOD."
–Pete Gilbert, Artist

In our current times of disingenuous politicians, corrupt media and vested interests it struck a chord!

In modern parlance the word ingénue tends to have a feminine slant in its usage, referring usually to a young creative girl or woman who is endearingly innocent and wholesome or very new to an artistic genre. The female form of ingénue is first recorded in English in Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair' of 1848.

Also, as the magazine had a primary mission to promote emerging and re-emerging creative talent of any genre – and most creative beings who are venturing forth on their career trajectories collide like sheep amongst wolves with such un-aesthetic situations as economic problems, critics and over critical and intrusive media – we thought the word quite appropriate for a title.

Ingénu is the masculine form of the word and ingénue the feminine form, and so we coined the name ingénu/e.

Next, we needed a Mission Statement.

We both had been deeply touched by the 1988 film 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being', directed by Philip Kaufman, based on the novel of the same name by Milan Kundera. It starred Daniel Day Lewis, Juliette Binoche and Lena Olin. And so we borrowed a phrase from the film to explain our purpose.

In one scene Sabina (Lena Olin) is having lunch with a friend in a restaurant, banal piped music fills the room. A talented, bohemian artist, Sabina becomes extremely annoyed and agitated, exclaiming "Everywhere music is turning into noise. Look. These plastic flowers – they even put them in water! And look out there, those buildings – the uglification of the world! The only place we can find beauty is if



Lena Olin as Sabina with her famous bowler hat in 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being'

its persecutors have overlooked it. It's a planetary process... and I can't stand it."

And so our Mission Statement became: 'Taking a stand against the uglification of the world!' And the magazine tagline became: 'Emerging Creative Talent'.

We then conducted some market research.

If ingénu/e magazine was going to be free for readers to pick up it would have to be funded by paying advertisers. Our conclusions following the research were that advertisers wanted:

- Good coverage of their local or regional area
 - Economical advertising rates
 - Exposure via social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
 - Expanding their reach to their target market
- All good so far.

Next we got busy creating, promoting and launching the magazine.

We chose the B5 format for the magazine as opposed to the larger A4 size (a bit unwieldy) or the smaller A5 size (too small to give some of the more detailed images justice), making it much more portable for readers when picking it up from one of our outlets – easy to pop into a handbag or capacious pocket – and yet still gives plenty of scope to create an aesthetic magazine.

We also decided that the magazine should have separate sections for each genre of creativity. Hence the features were initiated: Visual Arts, Contemporary Crafts, Art Trails and Open Studios, Performing Arts, Theatre, Festivals, Poetry, Prose & Illustration, Creative Courses and Workshops and occasionally Creative Lifestyle.

And, despite being a free magazine, we decided on a policy that advertising should cover approximately 40% of the magazine, enabling the remaining 60% to be dedicated to interesting articles, interviews and comment for readers.

We travelled extensively throughout the area setting up outlets in cafés, art centres, libraries, theatres, art galleries, hotels, tourist information centres, visitor centres, music shops, bookshops, museums and other venues favoured by culturally aware people.

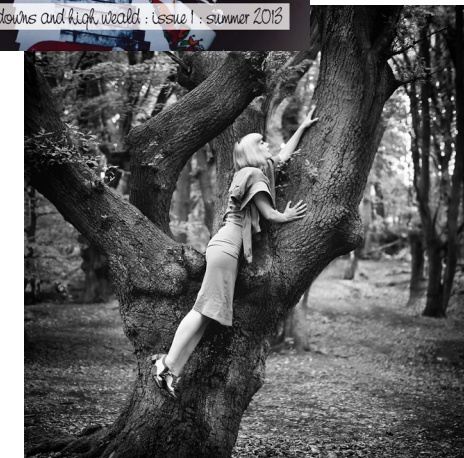
We began selling advertising, writing articles, visiting people and making ourselves known as broadly as possible. We set up the beginnings of our social media platforms and our first website and began in earnest to create the first issue.

Issue 1 summer 2013



"The magazine is beautiful!!!"
–Liza Riley, subscriber

"The best arts magazine in the South of England."
–Guy Portelli, Sculptor



top: Front cover of ingénu/e magazine, issue 1, summer 2013; above: Gabby Young in Hampstead Heath 2022. Photo by Rachel Anthia Sherlock

The front cover shows Gabby Young, ringleader of the hugely popular eight-piece circus swing band, Gabby Young & Other Animals. And what news of Gabby ten years later? Well, the uphill struggle of making it as a DIY musician, a bout of cancer and also motherhood have intervened. But with her new husband by her side as co-writer and producer, she now performs simply as Gabby Young.



above: Roger distributing the first issue of ingénu/e magazine; right: magazine delivery day!

As the magazine grew and evolved, we began to also include more of the various cultural events in the area, all the while not losing sight of our fundamental concept and core principles. Thus our tagline evolved to 'Creative Talent Revealed'.

Growth and improvement

And so as we progressed onwards from issue number one. We gradually expanded, becoming more professional, always adding new distribution outlets (and finding favourite cafés), regularly augmenting our roster of subscribers as more and more readers discovered us, increasing the number of pages and improving

The obligatory café stop while on our distribution rounds, at Chichester and Tunbridge Wells



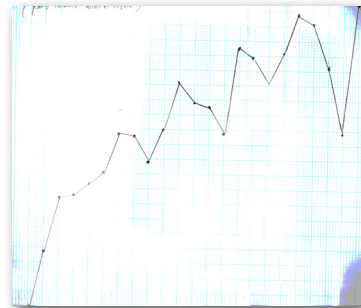
"Thank you for the issues, the ad and feature look great and we were delighted by the Facebook post, we really appreciate the support. We have put the magazine on display, they all disappeared quickly last time!"
–Caroline, the Lighthouse Gallery

the magazine design while also enhancing our web-site and social media platforms.

I should interject here with a well-worn idiom, and say that the magazine has always been a labour of love, rather than a business purely for profit, and as long as we are keeping our head above water we are happy.

We have met, and in a lot of cases become friends with, many people, welcomed people willing to help distribute the magazine and also cemented abiding relationships with a wealth of artists, galleries, theatres, performers, educators, venues and contributors.

A few years on and flying relatively high, we were very optimistic about the future.



pre-pandemic graph showing ingénu/e's expansion

Then the pandemic hit!

Of course, while some companies and individuals became wealthy from the crisis, the Arts particularly were left to drown, decimated both economically and culturally.

While a few creative outfits rose to the occasion, adapting to the 'new normal' (whoever had heard of Zoom before the lockdowns?) it was nevertheless tragic to see some galleries, artists and performers as well as businesses in the arts sector struggle and even in some cases close their doors. One needed to be astute and resourceful to survive such a drastic situation.

A bright idea

After recovering from the sudden shock of the majority of our advertisers cancelling their advertising, we had to think! And so we think deep!

We came up with the idea of

"Just read issue 32 and I'm so utterly delighted to have found you. I have heard of festivals I didn't know existed and been reminded of festivals that I do follow but did not realise the dates were so near, for example Wordfest. Many thanks for pulling Sussex together." –Subscriber

"I love your magazine. I picked one up in Shoreham and it's buzzy, beautifully laid out and inspirational for creatives. Many thanks."
–Angela Petch, author

simply publishing online for the duration of the situation and promoting this version via Facebook ads. Remarkably this worked, with a reasonable number of advertisers coming or staying on board, and we managed to put together a string of issues online (issues 28 to 31, see below) and survive the lockdowns.



"Just a brief note to thank you for the superb work you did on the feature and advert for us. It was really a pleasure to see some real journalism at work and Jim was delighted to be so well reported."
–Ian Roberts, Teignmouth Jazz Festival

"Such a lovely magazine, it's the highlight of my quarter! When I retire I'm going to go around all the places that are advertised in the magazine!"
–Subscriber



"That's me sorted for the afternoon: latest ingénu/e magazine arrived at Chalk Gallery. Lots to read!" –Louisa, Chalk Gallery

"ingénu/e has really flown well, and thank you so much for the very hard work which both Gill and yourself put into the publication."
–Andrew Bernardi, Shipley Arts Festival



the air. Art trails, open studios, exhibitions, festivals, performances, theatre, creative workshops et al sprang back to life after being incarcerated for so long. It seemed all would be back to normal in no time and the future was so bright we had to wear shades.

Over the next few issues the magazine started towards regaining the heights reached before the pandemic and fair stood the wind for the future.

But of course we soon discovered it wouldn't be all plain sailing. Now came the war in Ukraine and the subsequent economic fallout.

And so once again we had to think! And after very careful consideration and much deep thought we decided "To hell with it! We are just going to push the envelope and continue to create and improve the magazine no matter what!"

And so we created a brand new website, increased the print run, improved and streamlined the distribution, added to the number of subscribers and have quite a few ideas on the back burner that will be implemented in the near future – watch this space!

So here we are. Summer issue 40, our tenth anniversary issue, packed to the gills and overflowing with an abundance of creativity. We are proud to have come this far and owe a huge debt of thanks to all who have supported our endeavour. You know who you are!

Enjoy, and do spread the word about ingénu/e, and if you are not one already, become a subscriber. Support us and support local artists, makers, musicians, writers and all such independent creative ventures. It's not a just desirable thing to do, it is vital, especially considering the adverse mental and spiritual effect of all the nonsense pervading society at the moment.

In the words of Pablo Picasso "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

And how that washing is needed! So let's get busy!!

Gill and Roger Kaye... Cheers!



Back in print – hooray!

With the summer issue 32 we were back in print and raring to go. And there was an optimism in