




**DUGGIE
FIELDS**

FOREVER



The portraits of Syd Barrett in front of the Victorian fireplace of a flat in Earl's Court are about as iconic as the mythology of rock n roll gets. Released in 1970, the pictures create the artwork to the seminal first solo album, The Madcap Laughs, after David Gilmour took over playing guitar for Pink Floyd. Unbeknowst at the time, the psychedelic darkside was in ascendency.

Syd Barrett is rumoured to have taken so much acid, he never came down, dying in 2006 at his mother's home. Syd's former flatmate is the artist DUGGIE FIELDS, whose pop savagery creates graphic commentary as canvases, collected by the well-connected, yet frequently overlooked by the art establishment. The Madcap Laughs was the starting inspo for the shoot with Greta and Robert. This year's Glasgow International debuts the Modern Institute's installation of the very rooms that the album artwork was shot in, which Duggie still uses as a studio, 50 years later.

Were you around when that shoot was going on?

I have no idea. Was I there? I don't know. I'm confused as to which shoot. One of them he's wearing my old coat. Uh, and while he's got my coat on did I let him wear my overcoat, or did he just put it on?"

What was he like as a flatmate then?

Well, he went from brilliant to disastrous. Started out being great fun but ended up being a nightmare. But the nightmare was more for him than anybody else. Co-existing was difficult.

We moved in together after a succession of flats, one in a basement in Queen's Gate, where if you carried having candles, the condensation from the wall would put the candles out. I found this place in the winter of '68. Having lived with Syd before at 101 Cromwell Road, where this band [Pink Floyd] used to rehearse before they became huge. So they used to do early light shows in this flat, 101. All sorts of people came: Yoko Ono - there were other flats on other floors with people from Cambridge, who were very into acid, it was kind of a cultural center, a hippie cultural centre, but featured in the newspaper were blacked out teenagers smoking marijuana after midnight so they were raided by police by the time Syd and I got this flat, he was out of the band, with David Gilmour around the corner. And Dave was still a friend, and Syd had his guitar but he thought he was still going to

paint, but then I think, because I was painting, he kind of thought, "Well I'll leave the painting to Duggie." And, um, he made his two solo albums from the flat."

And did you stay in touch with Syd after?

He didn't stay in touch with anyone. He withdrew and that was it. There was no staying in touch. It was never straightforward. But a lot of the stories are just stories. Someone came to me with a film script they were making, and it was a scene of Syd and me sitting around the kitchen table chopping up speed. We didn't have a kitchen table, and speed wasn't particularly a drug that was around very much and you didn't sit around chopping speed up, in any case. It was just, I thought, "Well, that's wrong." And uh, I said, "It's so funny, we didn't have a kitchen table."

Was the scene quite small?

Very small. It was before tourism hit London. Before the so-called "beautiful people of the Kings Road" and my college [Chelsea Art School] was right off it - but it was pretty homogenous like it is today it was mainly 10-12 spots along the whole road where there was this other life, you didn't necessarily talk to people, you just looked."

Granny Takes a Trip?

"Granny's and Quorum, the other one, and there were other various places in between the two. When Malcolm [McLaren] and Vivienne [Westwood] started, I already had history with that shop. It was already a hangout before they joined. It was part of my home territory, shall we say"

What was the change between the Syd Barrett bit and the punk bit?

"The punk bit was more I won't use the word "tourist" but it was it was people coming to the Kings Road, rather than people living around the area so much. And, it was different, a different spirit, but different in the fashion, so it was not that different at the same time. Young people looking for something. And maybe because they read the newspaper, whereas before, there was nothing to read in the newspaper"

Mass media must have been so much more traditional in the 60s compared to how it got in the 70s.

"Yes. Because in the 60s, we weren't really bothered about the media, but by the late 70s, young people wanted to be in media and in the late 60s, if you were you were, if you weren't, you weren't; it wasn't really relevant. It was about making an alternative world. There was alternative media, but that soon became either subsumed, or mainstream, or died." The IT. The Independent Times.

"I dated someone who was on the cover of one of them. And that still didn't make me think "Oh I have to buy it. She was a model. Most of the girls I knew were models. "

Were you dating girls then?

"Yes. I have never been exclusively anything. I don't like a gender box. I don't really understand gender boxes. Whether they're self-imposed, or not too, whether they're social or self-described."

You have created your own universe.

"I've been living in that space, this Christmas for 50 years. I had to squeeze past canvases at some stages to get to the bathroom, to get to the kitchen, they took up so much space. So now, I can do a lot of digital things with infinite virtual space."

Is that why your works moved into your films and music?

"Yeah. It wasn't a conscious thing, but once I discovered layers on the computer and transparency which I was already working with tracing paper and graph paper in layers learning another technology to do more with music and cassettes I've been making, to do more with film and super-8s I've been making, just seemed natural. And skillful. I'm still expanding that."

So, at what point did the canvas become the wall in your flat? Do you remember that?

"Yes. I do. When I was a child, I shared a room with my brother. Then, there was boarding school dormitory which I hated. And then when we moved, I got a room of my own. And I was allowed a limited amount of decoration of my choice. My choice in all sorts of things started to become important in puberty, I guess. My choice in music became vital, definitely. I loved music before, before but I wasn't buying it. And suddenly, I was buying, and I got a tape recorder and I was making tapes, at age 13. Around that period, I got to impose myself on the room."

DUGGIE FIELDS' new recordings with Marianne Faithful will be released later this year.