



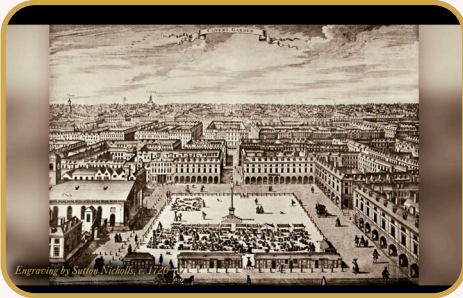
DART

AR Performative Walking Tours

by: Michelle Buckley

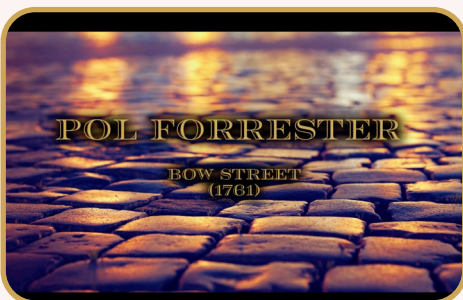


TRANSCRIPT



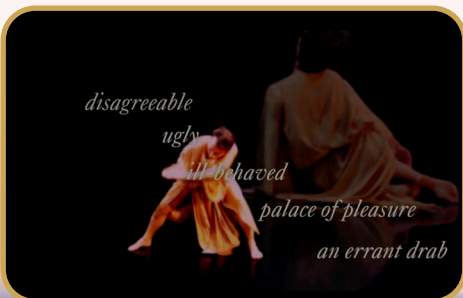
Introduction:

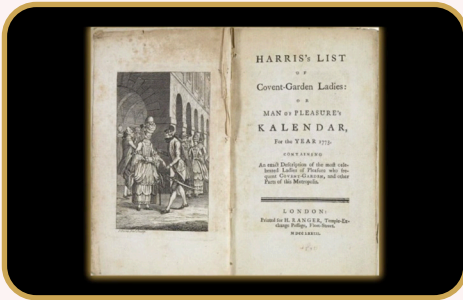
In the 18th century, London's Covent Garden Market was bustling with commerce; the buying and selling of goods went on through all hours of the day and night. Not only fruit and veg would be found, but also a commodity which was highly sought after. Sex. Harlots, Ladies of the Night, Courtesans, Prostitutes, those who frequented the dark streets as well as entertained polite society could be found here. The Covent Garden Market was the centre of London's sex trade. From bawdy houses to back alleys, there was plenty of entertainment to be found.



Pol Forrester; Bow Street

The very opposite of her namesake, being disagreeable, ugly, and ill-behaved. She has an entrance to the palace of pleasure as wide as a church door; and a breath worse than a Welch bagpipe. She drinks like a fish, eats like a horse, and swears like a trooper. –An errant drab. (1761)





Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies:

For many years I have been fascinated by Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies, a guidebook to London's sexworkers. The Ladies of Pleasure found within were presented in only a few sentences that summarized their notable features, tricks of the trade, potential fees and, most importantly, where exactly to find them. Something about how these women were stripped down so brazenly caught my eye, each organised into chapters based on height, age, race, interests, the good, the bad, even the ugly. Each volume was a duodecimo, with enough detail to make the book presentable, but not too much to make it impractical to take along whilst out on 'the prow'. The size conjures to mind the pocket friendly smartphones so easily carried around today.

FROM A CONTEMPORARY WRITING OF THE DAY:

"Women of the town seem to give the magistrates of London very little trouble. Yet they are more numerous than at Paris, and have more liberty and effrontery than at Rome itself... This business is so far from being considered as unlawful, that the list of those who are any way eminent is publicly cried about the streets: this list, which is very numerous, points out their places of abode."

-John Macky

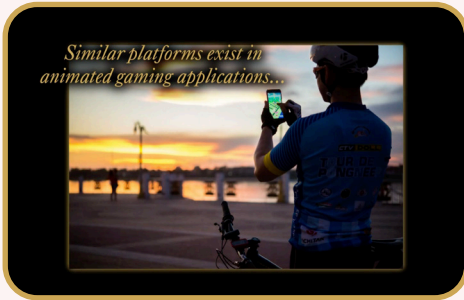


Mrs. Berry; King's Place, Pall Mall

'Mercury upon most women has some effect'

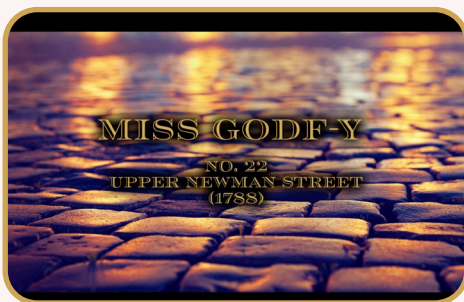
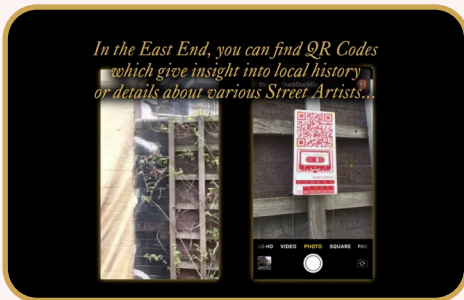
An arrant Brimstone of Irish birth, who pretends to set up as one of the rank courtezans, and would impost upon us her stale and battered commodity for fresh fruit, but we think our judgment cannot be imposed upon at this time of day, and are of opinion she has undergone too many salivations, that the power of Mercury has lost its effect upon her: in a word she is almost rotten, and her breath is cadaverous. (1773 supplement)





The Application:

Having been drawn back to this subject continually over many years, my intent is to create an experience that allows for the embodiment of a history and engages a viewer using an augmented reality application. An idea that arose from the loss of work in theatre and tourism due to the pandemic, using such technology would not only make this performance sustainable but it would also retain the element of live performance. Each entry would be embodied by a dancer and only viewable at the address of the subject. Having the application on a phone, means a performance can be found in your pocket. Each entry could be enjoyed singularly or strung together in a guided walk where participants move about the city in search of a lady, much like how many would have done centuries ago.



Miss Godf-y; No. 22, Upper Newman-street.

*'If parts can conquer great and small,
Sure — and Godf-y must needs do all.'*

This lady is a kind of boatswain in her way, and when she speaks, every word is uttered with a thundering and vociferous tone. She is a fine lively little girl, about twenty-two, very fond of dancing, has dark eyes and hair, well shaped, and an exceeding good bed-fellow, will take brandy with anyone, or drink and swear, and though but little, will fight a good battle. We apprehend this lady would be an extraordinary good companion for an officer in the army, as she might save him the trouble of giving the word of command.

She resides in the first floor. (1788)





Fabula Collective:

fabulacollective



Recently, I was given the time and support from Fabula Collective to begin preliminary exploration in the studio with dancers, as well as being given access to filming equipment and mentorship. Presenting various entries from several surviving editions, I asked the dancers to choose a lady that caught their eye. Next came a series of tasks. Having each made a phrase based on the ladies' text, we then worked through the movement. I was keen to keep the choreography and performance as objective as possible, utilizing the Brechtian technique of Verfremdungseffekt. London today is vastly different to that of the 18th century, and the predicaments that brought these women to prostitution were often beyond their control. By defamiliarising the dancer from the text, the spectator may be able to interpret the individual objectively, thereby gaining a broader understanding of the socio-economic history for women at the time. I hope to not only shed light on the difficult lives these women may have had but also illustrate those that may have fared better, especially when included in Harris's List.

MISS J—NS—N
NO. 17
GOODGE ST, CHARLOTTE ST
(1788)

Miss J—ns—n; No. 17 Goodge St, Charlotte Street.

*'And all these joys insatiably to prove,
With which rich beauty feasts the glutton love.'*

The raven coloured tresses of Miss J—ns—n are pleasing, and are characteristics of strength and ability in the wars of Venus. Indeed this fair one is not afraid of work, but will undergo a great deal of labour in the action; she sings, dances, will drink a cheerful glass, and is a good companion. She has such a noble elasticity in her loins, that she can cast her lover to a pleasing height, and receive him again with the utmost dexterity. Her price is one pound one, and for her person and amorous qualifications she is well worth the money. (1788)

dexterity

dances
drink a cheerful glass
noble elasticity





"The list itself straddled the boundaries of fact and fiction, and we will never be able to attest to its accuracy."

-Kate Lister

MRS. FORBES

BACK OF YEOMAN'S ROW, BRUMPTON
(1778)

*"...frequently declares that a female bedfellow
can give more real joys than ever she experienced
with the male part of the sex..."*

A Question of Identity:

Although the title suggests Ladies, I am approaching the embodiment of the text as openly as possible. The majority of these women have no other surviving documentation of their existence, and how they were presented in The List was solely meant for the male gaze and a gentleman's own sexual pleasure. The lives they really lived will sadly remain a mystery. Therefore, by acknowledging the text as something separate to their own personalities, I hope to engage with performers of varying backgrounds and also acknowledge the vast array of identities that would have existed in 18th-century London, despite sometimes lacking their representation in surviving historical documents.

BETSY MILES

AT A CABINET MAKER'S,
OLD STREET, CLERKENWELL
(1778)

Betsy Miles; at a Cabinet maker's Old St, Clerkenwell

'Which way you will and please you'

Known in this quarter for her immense sized breasts, which she alternately makes use of with the rest of her parts, to indulge those who are particularly fond of a certain amusement. She is what you may call, at all; backwards and forwards, are all equal to her; posteriors not excepted, nay indeed, by her own account she has most pleasure in the latter. Very fit for a foreign Macaroni-entrance at the front door tolerably reasonable, but nothing less than two pound for the back way. As her person has nothing remarkable one way or the other; we shall leave her for those of the Italian gusto.

*indulge
certain amusement
backwards and forwards
posteriors*





I particularly had in mind...
CARYATIDS
... the female sculpted support structure.

Costume:

Ancient Greek and Roman ruins influenced much of London's skyline at this time. Inspired by surviving Georgian architecture, as well as ballet in the eighteenth century also taking inspiration from neoclassicism, I fashioned a costume that would reflect the classical line aesthetic.



MISS LOVEBORN
 NO. 32 GEORGE STREET
 QUEEN ANNE STREET EAST
 (1790)

Miss Loveborn; No. 32 George St, Queen Anne St East

If we are not misinformed, this lady is one of the daughters of fortune, having a pretty good income left her by an old flagellant, who she literally flogged out of the world, and will probably more, as she is an expert at this manoeuvre as Mrs. Birch herself, of Chapel Street, Soho. Indeed she is very happily constructed for this bizarrerie, as the French call it, being of middle size and well set together, and never leaves off, 'till her patient (for patient he must be in our opinion,) is completely gratified. Such gratification, good Lord keep us from! But it has been observed by a great Philosopher that there must be characters of every complexion and disposition to fill up the great chasm of nature; the chain of individual existence would not be complete if there were a single link wanting; and Miss L-n is so attentive to her interest, that she will never let a link escape her, so which she thinks she has any claim... (1790)





In Conclusion:

Despite my own ongoing affair with these women, there is still much to discover. Published annually from 1757 to 1795, only nine editions are known to have survived to the present day. Despite this, there are still somewhere around 1,000 entries to potentially bring back to life in the streets of London. That is, if you can find them...

POL FORRESTER, BETSY MILES

Gareth Mole

MRS. BERRY, MISS GODF-Y

Sera Maehara

MISS J-NS-N, MISS LOVEBORN

Jasmine Chiu

Images have been sourced from Wikipedia (Public Domain), Adobe Stock, or my own personal footage.

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The
Augmented
Reality



Performative
Walking
Tour

The initial Augmented Reality tour focuses on a particular subject that has captured my imagination for many years, HARRIS'S LIST OF COVENT GARDEN LADIES. This salacious pocket-sized guide to the harlots of 18th-century London can be brought to life through the means of DANCE and TECHNOLOGY.

THEATRE
TOURISM
TECH
EDUCATION



With the aid of an AR MOBILE APP, this performative walking tour invites viewers to visit sites where these women once lived and worked, much like the way LIST readers did centuries ago! In addition to a physical address, every LIST entry included informative details, such as prices, appearance, and special talents. With this candid text embodied through dance, the performative context allows for an objective insight into an individual's story, and reveals the broader socio-economic conditions of the day...

LIKE TODAY'S
SMARTPHONES,
THE LIST
WAS POCKET
FRIENDLY!



A
VIRTUAL
PERFORMANCE
ON
YOUR
PHONE!



EMRACE
YOUR INNER
FLÂNEUR,
DISCOVER
HIDDEN
STORIES.



EXPERIENCE
HISTORY
THROUGH
DANCE.

Much about the identity of these women has been lost to history, and surviving details remain fragmented. The embodiment of this text, made viewable through Augmented Reality technology, will encourage participants to view their predicament without bias. This may reveal the cultural heritage of London's streets, and also expose how the commodification of women was utilised, in turn allowing the LIST's characters a bit of strength and power in a patriarchally, material driven world.



Engaging spectators through PERFORMANCE and TECHNOLOGY creates an enlightening and entertaining history of the everyday characters that once walked the streets of London...



ENJOY A
SINGLE ENTRY,
OR A FULLY
GUIDED TOUR.



EXPLORE
OUTDOORS,
IN YOUR
OWN TIME.

THIS PROJECT
HAS BEEN
SUPPORTED BY...

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