

ELLEN STONE

The CEO and founder of the photographic arts agency Public Offerings Ltd guest-edits our art section.

Portrait of Ellen Stone Sofia Wilkinson-Steel WRITER Megan Wallace

In the words of the American sculptor Carol Bove, "Becoming an artist is not a good business plan." The figure of the impoverished artist is a tired cliché, undoubtedly, but for many it's also a sad reality. In today's world of rising tuition fees and slashed funding, where a handful of established galleries reign supreme, the art world is an increasingly hostile place, particularly for early-career artists. But it doesn't need to be – at least according to this issue's guest art editor, Ellen Stone.

A curator, creative and the founder and CEO of photographic arts agency Public Offerings Ltd, Stone makes it her raison d'être to nurture artists at every stage in their journey, sheltering them from the harsh climes of an industry that can, as she puts it, "completely eat up and disregard people's real passion". For anyone not up to speed with the responsibilities of running an arts agency, Stone's work at Public Offerings Ltd includes curating exhibitions, negotiating high-profile publications, organising events, developing collector relationships and appraising archives, all in the best interests of the artists she represents.

If it sounds like her schedule is crammed, that's because it is. As she admits, hard-working arts professionals are in demand in the art world – even if they draw less attention from the public. "People often think of the art world as just the artist, but it's an incredibly collaborative industry that needs gallerists, curators, academics and people to write and talk about it," Stone explains. "That's really where I found my place."

The journey towards finding that place was, Stone says, less than conventional. "I grew up in the northeast, spending most of my teenage years just outside Newcastle, which meant I wasn't part of the traditional art world. So I looked at it from a slightly different perspective and found myself exploring it through curating and interacting with other people's creativity, making it into something more," Stone says.

Performance of Myself ©Kirsten Barnett







It's this desire to participate in the artistic zeitgeist that turned of photography, because it is the primary medium we use to express Stone onto Public Offering Ltd's unique selling point: its focus on ourselves as contemporary beings through social media." the undervalued but culturally influential medium of photography. moment" that led to the company's genesis.

White Cube she went on to become Rankin's Head of Books, photographer Crummy Gummy (Mauricio Murillo). Exhibitions and Archive - it's clearly also a passion that transcends the professional. "You can define different periods in art history Yet despite being a truly eclectic mix of artists, a common thread

"I realised that there was a need for a company that was looking at The democratic nature of photography is a clear motivator for Stone photography as a very serious art form, offering all of the support and informs the Public Offerings Ltd ethos of prioritising women, mechanisms that blue chip galleries offer classical painters or LGBTQIA+ and ethnic-minority artists, whose perspectives have sculptors, and really thinking about it as an important curatorial been historically shut out from galleries and textbooks. Giving you medium for the modern age," she notes, explaining the "light-bulb" a taster of Stone's diverse roster, the Public Offerings Ltd online gallery houses a cacophony of artistic voices, featuring surreal parodies of the beauty industry, courtesy of London-based fashion While Stone's enthusiasm for photography as an art form is partly photographer Jasmine De Silva, in casual co-existence with portraits rooted in her career history - after working at contemporary gallery of queer youth, captured by Floridian street artist and documentary

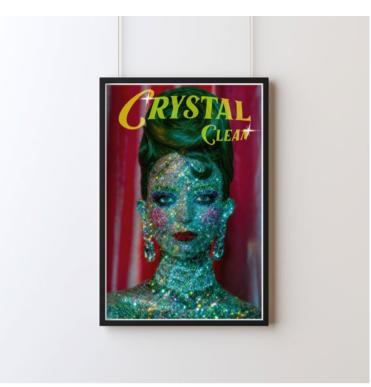
through different mediums that really defined how people were is evident: Stone doesn't shy away from art with an opinion. "There viewing the world. Photography is that for the contemporary era," is the traditional face of the art world, and we don't believe new she says, every inch the art history enthusiast. "Everyone can access collectors want that anymore. Emerging collectors want to see photography, everyone has an understanding of the visual language themselves reflected in the work they buy. Whether finding someone

who shares a gender or sexual identity with them, or finding someone Much like Allan, Rowan has an ambivalent attitude towards convention. from a similar economic background, we are living in a time when A self-described "rock'n'roll love child", the photographer grew up in the personal identity is coming to the forefront and at Public Offerings bohemian, post-summer-of-love era in California before spending her Ltd we are advocating for diverse voices to be heard, because if we twenties as an actress on Broadway and in Hollywood, gathering firstsupport diverse artists now we can shape what representation looks hand experience of the critiques of sexist media culture now visible in like across the art market of the future."

Public Offerings Ltd are also shared by British embroiderer Holly Allan using it as political critique," says Stone. and American photographer Amanda Rowan, the artists highlighted by Stone as part of her guest edit. A long-running collaborator of However, it's Rowan's voracious cultural appetite that makes Stone Stone's, Allan tackles the gendered history of her chosen medium of believe that her work is so well placed on the pages of this issue. embroidery, traditionally carried out by women and long dismissed as a simple hobby, by juxtaposing it with tenderly stitched naked women burlesque and pin-up to classical painting and the Dutch masters. as a reference to the nude's prized place in western art history. "The She has this understanding and wide artistic vision that HUNGER visual language that Holly has is soft yet loud, which is very difficult to started out doing. It's not just fashion or documentary or beauty, it's create," notes Stone. "It's something that I really respond to. The pieces everything. Amanda really does the same thing." are touchingly feminine but at the same time are very expressive, which is such a contemporary take on a traditional medium."

her work. Rowan's colour-drenched still lifes and portraits explore ideas of female sexual power and domestic confinement. "Amanda knows The political preoccupations common across the artists represented by how to play with sexuality, with colour and with expressing the self, but

"Amanda is someone who can pull together different influences, from



(Right) "Crystal Clean" ©Jasmine De Silva

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