





LOREDANA DENICOLA

# THE THEATRE OF THE MIND



Dedicated to all human beings



I would walk around London looking for subjects who interest me. I would approach them in the street or wherever I went, telling them that they interest me, that I am doing a photography documentary video project called 'The Theatre of the Mind'.

If they agreed, I would enter their life, just for one day. I would visit them in their home, make a video interview and take photographs.

We would play. Nothing staged. I am driven by intuition.

I want to know whether other people's inner worlds reflect mine. I want to talk about the meaning of life, lies you might have told yourself, your secrets, your childhood, life, sex, what keeps you up at night, love, your depth, you.

What is a mind? And what is a theatre?

The two words together make me think that perhaps, what we believe, we create. Then, what is imagination?

Do we create reality?

Do we have a fate?

Do we choose who we are?

Are we conditioned by society, politics, religion, education, fear of people's judgements?

Do we know our own power, who we really are?

Have you ever asked to yourself – Who Am I? An actor or truly you?

**ALAN**, the Cross-dresser





**Who are you?**

I am Alan, I am sixty four years of age. I had a quite traumatic life. Now I have this flat. This is the first time I have one in my life. I furnished it by myself, I paid for the flooring, there was nothing in here where I came the first time. I bought everything by myself, furnished it, cleaned it. I am the happiest now that I have ever been in my life. This is a happy time for me.

**Why do you dress like a woman?**

I feel more comfortable dressed like this. I first started cross-dressing forty years ago.

**Did something happen to you that made you want to dress like a woman?**

I don't know if it's because of the abuse ...

**Been abused?**

Yes, I was abused as a child. I was brought up in an orphanage. I was taking a walk by myself, when I was kidnapped by a pedophile guy and continuously raped, every night for over two years or nearly two years, sorry and ...

**How do they kidnap you?**

Off the street.

**How old were you?**

Eight, I was a baby, a child. They tied me to a bed at night. Many men raped me, hundreds, hundreds, hundreds ...

**Hundreds?**

Yeah! Because they had me for long time. More than two years.

**Did they blindfold you?**

Yes, during the day they used to keep me locked up in and tied up under the stairs, you know like a cupboard under the stairs. At night they used to bring me out and tied me to a bed.

**Did they feed you?**

Yes, they fed me.

**But were you alone?**

Yes, I was.

**What does an eight year old child feel in that situation?**

Terrified, absolutely terrified. I thought eventually they were going to kill me, it's what I thought. I had no reasons to think otherwise. This happened for two years.

**Did you ever see their faces?**

Never

**Was it a house? Were you alone or were there other children?**

I never seen anyone else, I never seen anyone else.

**All of this happened for two years. After two years what did you do?**

I escaped, I lived on the streets.

**At ten years old?**

Yes. On the street of London, alone.

**Begging?**

Yes, I was stealing, I was stealing food, stealing money from tourists, anything. Any way that I could.

**So, you grew up in the streets?**

Yes, I grew up on the streets. I had friends on the streets, maybe one or two. And I lived on the streets from when I was ten to forty years old.

**Did you have friends?**

I did have friends on the street, maybe one or two. I didn't like a lot people at that time, but you get to know people when you live in the

street like that. At that time I wasn't a drinker but I used to smoke cannabis.

### **At ten years old?**

No, no, later on.

### **Then, what did happen?**

Then, I tried to get off the streets. I went into a homeless hostel. As to being a cross-dresser, I've been doing this virtually all my life. I feel more comfortable dressed like this. I've got men's clothes but I don't wear them anymore. They're there in my other wardrobe.

### **So you found yourself?**

Yes I found myself, I am more comfortable dressed like this. I don't wear facial make up, I don't wear a wig, but I love the clothes.

### **You were saying that you were trying to get off the streets.**

I went to the hostel to try to get off the streets, and I had to share a room with someone in the hostel, and that person whom I shared the room with tried to rape me.

I think he bore the brunt of everything that happened before, because no - one's ever going to touch me again.

### **What did happen?**

I killed him.

### **How did you kill him?**

I beat him to death, I used no weapons, only these (showing his fists). I just beat him into death. I knew while I was doing it, I knew that man was not going to get up from the floor.

I went to court, I got a life sentence with a minimum term of twelve years. I think the judge was lenient really, because I could have got a lot more. You get what they call a tariff, I got a twelve years tariff.

### **What is a tariff?**

A tariff is the minimum that you will serve.

### **And you have been in prison?**

Yes, I have.

### **How was your life in prison?**

Okay. I had a single cell, I wasn't a cross dresser in prison, they wouldn't let me. I had to wear normal clothing but I had a single cell. I didn't have to share with anyone.

Yes, it was all right. I used to work when I was in prison. I worked in the prison kitchen, I worked on the prison gardens, I worked in the prison library.

### **So you kept yourself busy in the prison?**

Yes.

### **Nobody tried to abuse of you in there?**

No, no, I had no troubles when I was in prison. No trouble at all, I felt safe.

### **That's quite weird isn't it, that you felt safe in a prison? Why do you want to dress like a woman?**

Because I feel comfortable, I feel it's me. I don't dress to impress other people, I dress for me and I buy what I like.

I've had people laugh at me in the street, but I don't mind, because I look at them laughing at me and I think - Well, I put a smile to your face!

### **What's your sexual orientation?**

Bisexual. I am not more on one way than the other. To be crude, I like vagina as much as I like cock. I have no preference. I am completely bisexual.

### **That's the best option I think ...**

If I am with a girl I enjoy that, and if I'm with a man, I enjoy it equally.

### **Now you are not working, but what was your job before?**

I have done driving. I worked in kitchens, because when I was in the





**HUMAIRA**, I choose my Religion, Islam





### **Who are you?**

My name is Humaira. I am eighteen years old, currently studying in college.

I have just finished my A-levels this summer after two years of school. I also study part-time, Islamic Theology and Jurisprudence at an Islamic College. Next year will be my final year.

The qualification is the equivalent to a B.A., and that would lead me to be a female 'Iman' in the future.

### **What is Islam?**

Islam is a religion. It started 1400 years ago, when the prophet Mohamed came down to the Earth and God revealed his new texts to him. We believe that every religion makes the last religion void - it cancels the previous rulings.

The reason for revelation was that the previous religions were on an astray path. To lead people to guidance a new prophet had to come. So Islam is a religion that is brought by the new revelation from God 1400 years ago.

### **Is hijab the same thing as a burqa or are they different?**

There are many cultural words. Hijab is a full covering that covers the eyes and all body. It doesn't include the hands or the feet, but it's a full covering that Muslims wear for modesty.

What is the difference between the hijab and the burka?

They are just cultural words, every culture has different words. Some people say it's just the body covering. People don't always say you have to cover your face, it's just a variation in cultures of what you call body covering.

### **Why do you wear a burka? Why is it black?**

There is no actual colour that you have to wear. Islam it doesn't say you have to wear black. The reason I wear it is more modest, it is a barrier between me and the outside world, the sins that are there.

So if I wear it I feel like I'm shielded from the corruption of the outside world. It's a form of modesty. The only reason we wear black

is out of convenience, we can wear different colours, there is no restriction on that.

### **From my side, looking at you, you seem a very mysterious female figure.**

I don't think it was intended to create a lot of mystery. The purpose is just for modesty, so people don't see your figure.

We wear loose clothing for this purpose.

It is not that we are mysterious people in society, it is not meant for that. We are normal people and we do integrate.

### **How do Muslim men dress? Do they follow some rules as well?**

Men are also encouraged to adopt modesty, even if they are not told to cover all the body. Men and women have different regulations on what part of the body to cover. Women have to cover the whole body except the hands, face, and feet. And men have to cover from the navel to the knee.

They cover that with loose clothing, so people from outside can't see their shape. Men have a little more freedom in what they wear, and they cover less.

They are also told to adopt modesty. When they walk they should look down, and they shouldn't look at women.

### **What is the Quran, and what your does religion say?**

The Quran is a revelation. It's actually the book from God that was revealed to the prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. It is more a book made to remember God, as opposed to a book of rulings, or a history book.

The Bible goes through the order of history, from the prophet Adam to Jesus, or in the Old Testament to Moses. But in the Quran it is very different, every single verse is revealed, because of a thing that happened in society. It is a response to that. Then it was all compiled into one book. It is very different to the previous books, and it can be very hard to understand this concept.

**MADKILLERMILLER**, an unimportant person with a business card





## **Who are you?**

I am Sean, I am a human, and quite a unique one, like everyone else on the planet.

I like making people laugh. I am quite creative. I've had a quite interesting life, I've a lot of stories from that interesting life. There has been a bit of a tragedy, a bit of a comedy, a bit of action, adventure like a film.

Most of the time I do comedy. But apart from that I don't know how else to describe myself.

No one has bad things to say about me really. I am also one of the rare people that has been around Hackney since I was born.

## **The first time I met you, a week ago, you gave me your business card. Why did you write 'an unimportant person with a business card' on it?**

I first thought about getting business cards when I was with friends in a restaurant, they were exchanging each other's business cards.

They all have got trades, one of them is a make-up artist, one of them is an IT engineer. And I thought, 'I feel left out', so I went online, on Vistaprint, and I got some cards made up. And I thought, 'What shall I put up on there, what's my trade?'

And I just thought, 'Oh well - an unimportant person with a business card', because I couldn't think of a trade or any other thing to put on there. So that seemed right, and it makes people laugh, so it's good.

## **Where were you born?**

I was born at the 'Mothers Hospital' which is on Lower Clapton Road - which isn't there no more - forty years ago, no thirty years ago.

## **Really?**

Yeah, forty years ago. When I was born my parents were living in Stoke Newington. Yes I was born in Hackney and brought up in Hackney.

## **May I ask, how was your childhood?**

It was a bit rough, from what I could remember. I can vaguely remember my real dad. Then he disappeared for some reason.

My mum had multiple sclerosis, she can't walk. It wasn't that bad at first. My sister, she was living with her dad, a different dad to mine. So for several years it was just me and my mum, and I'm a little, and she's disabled. So it was kind of looking after each other. And then she met one of her old flames from Ireland.

My mum is Irish, she started dating him. Then she got married, so he became a stepdad. They had a kid together, my little brother, and then my stepdad turned really violent and nasty and started beating me and my mum. So I ended up in care, foster homes.

Then, I met a crowd of friends, ended up getting in legal troubles with them, all sort of stuff. Mainly like stealing cars, then prison a few times.

## **All of this in your teenage years?**

Yes in teenage.

## **So what did you do in your teenage years?**

Mostly criminal stuff. I started about fifteen I think. Up till then, it was just nothing really, just going to school, actually the second school. I got kicked out from my first secondary school for setting up fire to the French teacher's foot. And so they put me into a special school for naughty kids. It was individual tuition which was a lot better for me.

I seemed to get on with it a lot better.

I done that, but it was nothing really exciting about it, it was just much better than a normal school that had thirty children to one class. And so I done GSCE's and left there. And that was when I started getting in the criminal stuff as well. I lost the GSCE certificate on the train.



I met Sean at my local, in Stoke Newington.

I was a bit sad that day. I went to a bar, to sit outside and drink a glass of wine alone.

The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. A couple of ladies came to the same table, began to chatter loudly, so I decided to move to a quieter table. As I was supping the wine, a black crow appeared in front me.

It said, 'How are you? What's your name? Mine's Russell Crow'. Then a face appeared from behind the puppet with a smile.

He said he had a collection of puppets that he carried around. He liked to make people smile.

He was very funny, bright, confident, spontaneous. I trusted him. He scanned the tables as we were talking, with an air of someone who has been in trouble.

I introduced myself as a photographer and I told him a bit about 'The Theatre of the Mind'.

He agreed to be interviewed, and gave me his business card which read, 'Mad Miller: an unimportant person with a business card'.

I had a laugh looking at it, and I looked back at him wanting some explanation.

'You'll tell me why next time we meet' - I said.

The arranged day I went to his flat, not far away from mine.

He picked me up from Clapton Station. He showed me his wardrobe full of costumes of different characters. Games for children. Puppets, animal masks, mini cars, pin balls.

While we were talking, he took a knife at some point and wanted me to take a picture of him with a knife.

Of course he was playing!

Honestly, Sean is a great character. He is a grown up child dressing up with costumes and props like children do.

He has so many costumes that you cannot imagine. His place is like a horror museum, believe me!

I had much fun talking and being with him. We were playing like children do and I felt at ease.

He wants to make people laugh, for free, wherever he is.

He is really super energetic and he is a lot of fun. He does everything in a really spontaneous way as a child does.

And I am intrigued by his creativity and his way to be.

Do you like making people laugh? What is imagination?





### **Who are you?**

Who am I? I am a forty-five year old trans-woman from the north of England, who wishes she'd had her operation a lot sooner.

### **What's your name?**

Stephanie Jane Findlay.

### **What is the difference between sex and gender?**

Oh, big difference. People automatically assume that your gender would determine your sexuality, and because I went from man to woman, people assume I would be interested in men.

Whereas truthfully, my sexuality hasn't changed, and I would now be classified as a 'lesbian'.

### **What is transgender and why are they called transgender?**

'Trans' implies switching, changing over, that's where the trans word comes from, obviously. So, transgender - switching gender.

Ninety-five per cent of the time, what it means to be transgender is the person feels that they were born with the wrong outward appearance.

In my case I grew up, developing through puberty, as a boy. But I never felt that I was that boy. And then I tried to live as a man. One of my partners considered that as an excuse for infidelity, because I wasn't man enough. My answer to that one is that I never was a man.

### **How did you know that you are transgender?**

I knew when I was eight years old, but that was in the seventies, so it wasn't recognized in the way it is now. It was portrayed to me as a passing phase.

Back in those days, transgender, as well as homosexuality, were taboo subjects - they weren't discussed or recognized as they are now. I knew at eight years old that I didn't feel like a boy, I didn't feel that being a boy was right.

### **Do you think that being 'transgender' is genetic?**

**I read somewhere that 'gender identity' seems to be fully formed before age six, and then becomes very difficult to change or influence later.**

Yes, the way I would describe being transgender is that during foetal development, months five to nine, a little switch didn't quite click the way it should have. One quirky chromosome caused my body to go one way and my mind to go another way.

### **What do you mean, is there a conflict between your mind and your body?**

There was. There was. A major conflict and it can be a root cause of depression in many transgender people.

### **But how can such a young boy - you were eight - realize that he is not a boy, and live with that kind of understanding, or awareness?**

Your awareness isn't fully formed at that age. You know you don't feel right, you're not as aware as an adult would be, you know there is something. Trying to articulate those words, especially at a young age, at five through till puberty, it's very hard to find those words.

So at eight years old I was told by a child psychologist it was a phase, I would grow out of it. Whereas at nineteen - although I knew, looked into it, and understood what being transgender was - I was still being told by a locum in a hospital in Aberdeen, 'You've not lived as a man yet, or been a man'.

### **What is the origin of gender identity, and when did you start to know?**

What is the origin of gender identity?

Probably what's been impressed on you by society, as you go through your developmental stages, up to puberty. Society's constantly saying, you need to do this, you need to be that, you need to act in this way.

A little boy playing with dollies is highly frowned on, because society says a boy shouldn't play with dolls. But an Action Man and Spiderman, they're still dolls, just geared to male orientation. Does it matter if you play with a Barbie or if you play with Action Man? If you play with a pram and a dolly, does that not mean that the boy would make a better father?

And if a girl wants to play with a gun, she gets called a tomboy. If the boy wants to do it the way around, it's wrong.

### **How was your childhood? Did you have supportive parents?**

No I had a really rough childhood, an alcoholic abusive father, and then sexually abusive stepfather. My mother suffering from a history of mental breakdown. I am the oldest of five siblings, it was a hard slog, very hard slog.

### **Wasn't your mother supportive?**

Back in the day, no. Now, if you were to speak to her she would say, 'Oh he was always a girl!'. She had the same pressures as myself really. Society expected me to be a boy, then to become a man.

### **I read about having an internal experience of gender identity, how this happens when you realize that you are a woman, and not a boy?**

As I said, I kind of knew when I was eight. At nineteen I knew that my sexuality was fixed. I was into women, but to be loving women as a man didn't feel right. The whole experience of intercourse using male equipment, it didn't fit. I didn't feel that was part of my body, so using it didn't really arouse me in the way I would have wanted.

### **How can someone feel their body isn't their body?**

I will give you an example. A woman is diagnosed with a breast cancer and she has to have a mastectomy, she no longer has breasts. For many women that becomes an issue, they feel they're not actually women anymore because society tells them that a woman should have nice breasts, a good figure, do her make-up, have her hair right, wear certain types of clothing.

Whereas to me, the main thing is to be comfortable within your body. If the outward appearance of your body doesn't fit, what would make you comfortable? It's all part of being transgender. I had no breasts. I had a penis, which I didn't want to look at, I didn't want to touch, I didn't want to know anything about.

You can be aware from such a young age, but unfortunately under age twelve, people aren't willing to listen to you. It's like you are not responsible enough to say – I feel like a woman but I've got a man's body, or I feel like a man but I've got a woman body. Because it does happen in both directions of course, male to female, female to male.

At least in nature there's certain creatures where, if there's too many males, some can change sex. For us as human beings to do it, people have such fixed ideas about gender and sexuality, unfortunately.

### **What's a difference between a transgender and a transsexual?**

Transsexual means that they are willing to switch between sexual orientation whilst playing a role.

A transsexual could be a man who for the sake of sexuality would rather dress as a woman and make love. Whereas transgender is somebody who truly does feel that they are in the wrong body. So they are not going to get the same sexual gratification as somebody who is transsexual.

### **What is Identity for you?**

Identity is just to be me. Being Stephanie the woman is my identity, which I finally achieved two years ago. It was February 2014 when I had the operation.

### **Is your identity who you really are, or there is something more than that?**

No, my identity is me. And since I became me, and not that me that was trapped in that male shell, people have certainly have seen the difference in me. I am a lot more genuine. When I was trapped in the male body I was constantly trying to be what other people wanted me to be.



NORMAL  
PEOPLE  
SCARE ME

I first met Stephanie at a psychology workshop in July 2016.

She was invited by the speaker on stage to talk about her personal experience.

Her physical appearance and her words fascinated me. She is very intelligent, emotional, tall, red-haired, physically strong, dressed in jeans and shirt. I felt a good energy from her.

During the break, I saw her outside smoking a cigarette, at the entrance of the hotel, where the workshop was held and I approached her.

I told her I'd appreciated what she'd said on stage, and that I'd like to interview her for my photography project – The Theatre of the Mind - to visit her and hear her story.

She agreed.

She said she comes occasionally to London to visit friends. Next time she would be in London, she'd call me. And that is what happened.

A month later she texted me, to say she was visiting London for fifteen days and we could meet at her friend's flat in Oval.

On my arrival she was welcoming and gentle. She picked me up from Oval's station and we walked down to her friend's flat.

She prepared me a cup of Italian coffee.

The smell was very good, and the taste was delicious.

I felt like at home.

We talked a little bit before the interview, to know each other.

She was complementary, and said I should be proud of myself.

Then we begin the interview, while a cat was walking between the camera and her all the time.

At the end, she said she thought the interview might help people that had similar difficulties.

And that is my aim through 'The Theatre of the Mind'.

How much can your mind influence your life?

Do you follow your internal dialogue?





## **Who are you?**

Who am I? My name is Stephen. I'm originally from Lewisham, South East London. I was born illegitimate. I'm the son of an unmarried teenager mother, which was a very taboo thing back in the fifties. So my mother was very stigmatised and ostracized by her stepmother.

My mother's mother died as well. And, to make matters worse, my real father was (I was told later on in life) a guy from Scotland who had a brief liason with my mother when she was a teenager.

Then he left my mother alone, pregnant carrying me.

So from day 'nine months', I'm off to a bad start in my life really. Up until 1958, when my mum found another guy who used to live in Wandsworth Road. In 1958, when I was two years, they got married and he adopted me as my stepfather.

Things seemed to be going reasonable well in my life basically. I have very few memories of my tiny tot days.

Then we moved from Wandsworth Road to New Cross.

One memory is of spinning my potty, and clearing up the mess using a library book, ripping up the pages, putting them over the floor. And a Christmas party at a chemist's shop across the road in Folkestone Gardens. Then we moved to Harlow in Essex, when Harlow Town was a building site. And then in August 1964 began the days of what I call my demise.

Even at the tender age of seven and half, on my first day at school, I was severely bullied, and ridiculed. So much so I would not go back the second day, and it culminated in me going to another one in my area where my sisters were sent. I was severely bullied there too.

## **Why?**

I don't know.

## **So you were bullied without knowing why?**

It is the way kids actually are. It was happening at Hackney Wick

at that time, from 1964 onward. Maybe there were a lot bad vibes in the area, because of the recent migration of West Indians to London, the legacy of the HMS Windrush migrants. My stepfather was blatantly racist.

## **Can I ask, when we first met at the Underdog Gallery, you were dressed as a ballerina. Now I meet you in your place dressed as a man. I'm interested — who's the real you?**

Let's fast forward to more recently. Let's say 1955. Sent to children's homes for special needs, bullied into adulthood. After one failed marriage, I was introduced to the alternative culture by three guys in Leytonstone. They introduced me to a club called Slimelight.

On my first day there I remember wearing a pair of black jeans and a black T shirt, and I thought, this is the place for me. I could see around, people that were very creative. Even though they were all Goth and dark, I found them very appealing.

In 1981, I watched 'Top of The Pops' one day, I saw Steve Strange and Visage doing 'Fade the Grey'. This was the time of the 'New Romantic' era. And when I saw all the costumes that he was wearing and the makeup, well, I thought, I absolutely adore this guy.

It was like a root planted. I thought, this is something that I would really like to pursue, so I started attending Slimelight more often.

Whatever you do in life, there's always high and lows, emotional, physical whatever. One night I went to the Slimelight and I was standing in the main entrance by myself, when, all suddenly I started bursting into tears, because at that time I was alone like.

Previously I wouldn't talk to anybody, and nobody would talk to me.

I found my own sort of personal security in keeping myself to myself. But that was something I didn't really want for the rest of my life. It was something I wanted to break out of, to re-create myself, to draw attention to myself, to dare to do something different.

If I were to have burst into tears anywhere else — in what we call normal society — I'd have been laughed out of town, if not worse.

But no, there was this guy called Matt who is a goth, and he came over and he reassured me. He was very kind, uncondescending, non-judgmental. That consolidated that Slimelight had become my second home, where I could feel comfortable and liked, maybe loved by my peers.

### **What is Slimelight?**

Slimelight is London's longest running alternative goth nightclub, which originally started as the Kit Kat area in Westbourne Grove, before they moved to an ex paint factory warehouse, based on the back of Angel tube station.

### **How old were you the first time you went there?**

When I first went to Slimelight was 1998 and that would be just before my forty-second birthday.

### **So at that time you wanted to re-create yourself ...**

To re-create myself was something that was not predominant, until one day I went to this club in Soho, Club Tarantella, where I met a woman. She was in her thirties, her name was Angel.

Now, normally, women do not approach me. I was quite surprised when this woman actually approached me, and she took interest in me. She was goth, in the way that she dressed. Also, tragically she had issues, she had heavy drugs problems, she was within the attention of the mental health services with some kind of bipolar problem.

I used to go and visit her when she was living in her bedsit in Brockley, South East London.

### **Did you have a love story with her?**

I was hoping that it could turn in something like that, a full relationship, but it never happened. We were just spending time together.

We were quite spontaneous, but she was a very defensive person. She was quite dominant, and also I was quite insecure and naive myself at that time. One day we parted company.

For a while she ended up in some mental care hospital in South London. When she came back on the scene, she had lost her place in Brockley, so I put her up.

The flat next door had turned into a squat, occupied by some Israelis who were fleeing all the problems going on in the Middle East. He was a rock musician, so she kind of fell for him. And then her behavior started to change.

I couldn't handle it anymore so I called the NHS to help us. That night the consultant came along, the police was also called because of her erratic behavior. So she was faced with a choice — go back to the hospital to receive care treatment, or probably get in trouble with the law — so she left the house that night.

I couldn't cope with it anymore and I said, 'Please do whatever you want whatever you choose to do, do whatever'.

Next morning I got someone knocking at the door, the police said that she was dead. She committed suicide.

The strange thing about it is, I've had three deaths in my family, I never even uttered a breath for my family. But Angel, not being my own flesh and blood, I went to pieces — Who can answer that? Who? — Everyone was saying, 'Stephen, don't blame yourself, it is not your fault'.

Anyway I believe that Angel was a turning point, for my creativity. She had left behind some kind of clothes and accessories which I began to use to re-create myself.

Since then I met a musician from the Czech Republic, who gave me the name of Gothic Wizard. She has since moved on. By some good fortune, she is now session musician with a British legendary rock musician Arthur Brown.

At the time I met her, she used to go out busking with her keyboard, and every day she used to come home with three figures sums of money, never less than £100 per day. So that speaks for itself.



TACCO MATTO, the Performer, I am my emotions





**Who is Tacco Matto?**

Tacco Matto is someone who was born in Italy, and then by chance went to UK. Firstly, I have been to Scotland, and now I have been living in London for nine years.

**Which part of Italy do you come from?**

I come from Sicily, the biggest island of the Mediterranean sea.

**How was your childhood in Sicily?**

Well, I think it was nice, I was very lucky. I remember there was an old lady, a neighbour. She brought me up and she gave me amazing love, that love that even my mum she couldn't show me as much as she did.

She gave me lot of attention.

I'm sure my mother she loved me more perhaps, but my auntie — I call her my auntie, auntie Rosina — she gave me everything she could.

**Was she your auntie, or was she just a neighbour?**

She was a neighbour. I was fifteen days old, and my mum said, 'Auntie Rosina, would you mind to look after him?'. So I just pop into the shop. Since that day, auntie Rosina she asked, 'Anna if you have to go somewhere please leave the child with me'. So from that moment she took care of me for thirty years.

**Do you suffer of any mental illnesses?**

Not that I think so, but lots of people think that I am crazy.

**Did you have any depression, anxiety in your life, addictions?**

I don't think so but I am a deep thinker. Maybe I over-analyze things. I'm much better now, but when I was younger I over-analyzed.

I think it is part of being oversensitive.

**What is your job? How do you support yourself?**

I have done many jobs. At the moment I am assistant manager of a luxury boutique, in Covent Garden, a very exclusive area.

**I met you at an art exhibition called 'FLUX exhibition'. You were performing, dressed up very nicely, with a big hat made of teddy bears. Why do you perform?**

I think it just happen naturally, you know. It is the same thing when you ask people, why do you go and see a football match, or why are you cooking pasta today rather than something else.

I love to create things, I love to make things. It is not just making something. You enjoy doing it, and then become a sort of performer through pictures, videos, through going out with people and performing on stage sometime.

**What is a performance for you?**

A performance is something that is not necessary for your life, but for your emotions. So, when people say you are performing something that not necessarily happens at that time, you simulate the emotions.

I think that is what a performance is, something I care for, not necessarily to show off, or shock people, but really try to give the meaningful thing, which is good.

**What does a performance say about you?**

It can mislead people, because people think I am a performer all the times. I make people smile, always happy.

I am always out there, outrageous. But when people know a little more about me, sometimes I have the impression that people can see through me.

Maybe behind the smile they can see there's something sad. Which is part of myself as well. I am not covering that sadness or what happens, but I think if you are vulnerable, you allow people to get through to you.

**What are you expressing through your performances?**

Even this costume is not something that I wouldn't wear every day. I come out with the idea to have something huge, things that I have

GRAÇA and her little dogs



I LOVE  
EMMA

I Hate  
Muttilda

am  
Kof...



**Who are you?**

I am Graça

**How old are you?**

Six years old, almost seven.

**What do you normally do every day? How is your life?**

Normally I go to school, but on weekends I go to shopping with my mum, or I am staying at home or drawing.

**What is your ideal life? What would you like to do, if you had a chance, every day of your life?**

Every day I would stay in my bedroom, drawing or sleeping.

**Sleeping?**

Yes.

**Everyday ...**

Yes, or drawing.

**Why?**

Because I do maths.

**Do you like maths? There are lots of numbers out there.**

I like numbers.

**Why?**

I don't have any idea.

**You just like them**

Yes, I do.

**How is your day?**

Every day my mum brings me to school, and then she picks me up, but only once per week my dad takes me from school and I sleep with him in his house, and then my dad brings me to school again with my mum.

**And what do you do in the evening?**

I draw, I do puzzles, I eat, play my toys, play piano.

**Who is your best friend?**

I don't have a best friend.

**You don't?**

No

**Why not?**

Because I left all my good friends in the old school. I moved school.

**Don't you keep in touch with your old friends?**

Yes, on and off.

**Do you use technology?**

Yes, I have a telephone, you can see behind you. I can send emails to my sister, my mother and my father.

**Do you have any imaginary friends?**

I have imaginary dogs.

**What do you mean?**

I have imaginary dogs.

**Imaginary dogs? What is his name?**

Buster

**Is he a colourful dog? What is his colour?**

He is black and white

**Does he talk? What does he say?**

He speaks like humans. He says what human say.

**Like what?**

If I ask him something he would speak like human.

**Ok tell me what do you normally ask to this dog?**

'What shall we do? Shall we talk to that person again because you have been rude to me, or we just leave her?'. And he just answers.

**And what does he say? Does he give you good advice?**

Yes he does.

**Is he with you every day?**

He is right here now.

**Now? He is sat next to you now? What is he doing?**

He is licking my face.

**I know I can see him actually. Is he a male dog?**

Yes male. He is a Collie, a kind of dog.

**Is he a real dog or cartoon dog?**

Real dog.

**Real? I like it. Is your dog an imaginary friend or he is real?**

Imaginary friend. Soon I'll forget about him in one year, because I'll have my own dog.

**Ah you'll have a real one?**

A real one. In one year I'll have a real dog, so I'll forget about him.

**So where is your real dog now?**

I don't have a real dog now.

**You have him**

Yes

**What is his name again?**

Buster

**Strange name**

The Ghost Busters.

**Do you have any favorite toys?**

Shall I get them?

**Yes can you show me some? Who is this one?**

He is Timmy.

**What does he do?**

I always talk to him when I am sad. He sleeps with me, I always hug him because he is fluffy and I stay with him. This other one was my favorite toy, he is a young Spider Man. And who has made this guy is called Scott, so that is why his name is Scott Young.

**Is he still your friend now?**

Yes he is still my friend.

**When do you talk with him?**

All of them I talk when I am sad, but the things I do with most of them, I sleep with them, and I play with them.

**And who is the other one?**

Where are you? There you are! These two.

**Who are they?**

They are Fabbies.

**And what do they do?**

This guy is called Spark, the other is called Rock. They just doing this, they fly, they do little fly, like this. (She throws them in the air)

**Do you like flying? Do you fly with them as well?**

No, I help them to fly. But they always fall with their face on the floor sadly. So every time when they come back to me, they always have a bruise on their faces.

**Do you like to play alone or with friends?**

Alone. And we forget about this guy?



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I am always hopeful that these stories will have a transforming effect on other people's life in a positive way. That they become more in touch with themselves and they can find places within their minds that they have never visited before.

A scary process but challenging and exhilarating.

I believe in a world free of judgments where everyone is free to express himself or herself freely, for what he or she is.

Life is a unique expression of this purposeful miracle.

Respect life, revere life. There is nothing more holy than life, nothing more divine than life.

There is no other greater ecstasy than to know who you are.

'Interviews and photographs are created by Loredana Denicola and may not be used or copied without her written consent'.

Pictures are taken with a Canon 5D Mark III

Digital Prints available, limited edition of (10) with Coa (certificate of authenticity)

### The Theatre of the Mind

A photo video documentation project by Loredana Denicola © 2016/2018

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