

COMMENT



We deserve more than stereotypes

It would be wrong to leap to censorious judgement about Jeremy Deller's Procession, which will be a key feature of Manchester International Festival next month. By its very nature, we cannot assess the artwork before the event.

But it is easy to understand the dismay in the town hall at the discovery that the carnival-style parade will feature a group of "unrepentant" smokers. The case made out by Coun Pat Karney - director of Smoke Free Greater Manchester and a long-time ambassador for the city centre - is that thousands of children will see this parade and perhaps take the wrong message from it.

He has a point. The daily death toll from smoking-related illness in Greater Manchester is 14. That is certainly no joke. Strenuous efforts and huge amounts of public money have been expended over a number of years to promote the anti-smoking message. Smokers and their deadly habit have been relegated by law from all public spaces to the pavements and street corners.

When children see smokers raised up, brandishing their allegiance to the weed as an integral part of so prestigious an event, do they perhaps take the message that smoking is OK?

Even leaving that aside, a piece of public art which makes humorous reference to smokers doggedly clinging to their filthy habit is one thing. A piece of public art which does that with taxpayers' funding, via the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, is quite another.

As we report today, Manchester's communities and neighbourhoods committee is understood to have condemned the smoking element of Procession as "an appalling waste of taxpayers' money".

That said, art has always courted controversy and provoked debate. The inclusion in Procession of a piece of music played through the throbbing sound systems of boy racers' cars may also cause some hackles to rise. Perhaps we may also be discussing whether this artwork properly represents all that Manchester has to offer, or whether, with smokers, boy racers, a homage to the chip shop and Happy Mondays fans, it conjures a Shameless-style version of Manchester.

If so, that would be a unfortunate, particularly since, as the name suggests, Manchester International Festival is the art by which we want the whole world to judge us. One would not expect a pure advertisement for the city's undeniable delights. But we hope for more, from a Turner prize-winning artist, than a parade of hoary stereotypes.

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Angela Epstein

CLARITY BEGINS AT HOME



Football's playboys are rubbing our noses in it

WOULD you buy a used car from this man? As Cristiano Ronaldo puts his Porsche on the market for £70,000, I'm sure there are likely to be a few takers, keen to bag the ultimate Manchester United souvenir.

And though, for that kind of money you'd have thought the interested punter might want to buy something brand new, selling his two-year-old Porsche may mark only the beginning of the ultimate car boot sale.

For the Reds star apparently owns a range of stunning cars - though for the tedious task of nipping down to Old Trafford and other run around jobs, the star striker apparently favours his 202mph Bentley Continental GT Speed. Nice.

Personally I hate flash cars for the look-at-me signature of extravagant wealth. But what I loathe even more is that we continue to pay our pampered soccer stars a disproportionate amount of money to play the beautiful game.

Think about the £80m price on Ronaldo's head for his fabled move to Madrid. It's the kind of sum that is so monumentally huge, you can only really understand it if you break it down into the sum of its constituent parts. That's nearly 12,000 Porsches.

There's no doubting that the Portuguese is an extraordinarily talented player and that his presence on any team ensures goals are scored, tickets are sold, merchandise moves. The accountants must think he's worth it.

But shifting this kind of money - particularly during a



➤ LIFE IN THE FAST LANE Moneybags Cristiano Ronaldo is looking for a buyer for his Porsche a result of his impending world-record transfer to Madrid from Manchester United

recession when some people don't know how they'll pay next month's mortgage on a house valued at the cost of a second-hand Porsche - is simply unpalatable.

It's bad enough that the once proud lads of our national sport, think the England 66 team, have morphed into a bunch of mincing metrosexuals with a disproportionate image issue. Can you imagine Bobby Charlton within a mile of a nail file? Yet now we have Rio Ferdinand, pictured this week in tiny denim shorts, who has launched a digital lifestyle magazine, Beckham flashing his smalls in the latest Armani adverts and, of course, Ronaldo with his burgeoning fashion business. Football is important

to so many, not the least in Manchester which is home to still the most famous club in the world. It offers escapism, particularly in harsh economic times, but it should do so without rubbing our noses in the amount of cash being sloshed around.

Clearly something needs to be done to staunch the flow of this unacceptable level of wealth being soaked on our Premier League surgeons. They're not brain surgeons or teachers. And many of Ronaldo's peers aren't even role models - unless you call brawling with a paparazzo after a night on the lash a good example to our young people.

Ronaldo may well be hoping for a lucrative transfer deal for

his fast car collection. But I economic downturn would be nice to remember that a few are able to enjoy life on hard shoulder let alone a la around the fast lane.

Simple pleasure is best way to enjoy millions

MY sincere congratulation Brian and Joan Caswell of Bolton who have just won a eye-watering £25m on the Euromillions lottery.

And what do this hard-working couple plan to do with their money? Joan was to have her hair done every while her husband plans to bring in a 'professional' to dig grow carrots on his allotment.

Most of us play mind games about what would happen if netted the big prize. Though the recent story of Plymouth winner Michael Antonucci blew his £2.8m win on a jet existence and ended up in over a £400 debt is a salutary lesson in lottery economics.

Paul McCartney, who celebrates his 65th birthday today, was once asked why, after making millions he continued to produce rock. He answered that if he stopped he'd have to find something to do.

Allotments, hairdos and few tunes about Rupert the Bear. It sounds good advice me if your number comes

MY, MY... I REALLY HAVE NEEDED POOR OLD NOEL

I DID think it was time to put the Oasis in Heaton Park debate to bed. I had my say ("keep out of my park"), the band retaliated with a dedication to me at one of their concerts and I then gave my final verdict ("still keep out of my park").

But no, it seems I must have really needed those Burnage boys since the lovely Noel Gallagher has been blogging about me on the Oasis website. He used a very rude word to describe my articles before dismissing me as a "ginger whinger" and a "joyless old husk".

Well, Noel, I'm all for free



INSULTS Noel Gallagher was outspoken about Angela on the Oasis website

speech, though have always sniffed a weak argument when the opposition has to resort to insults.

I'd also call my hair auburn, not ginger, I don't feel in the slightest bit old (see pic above

for reference) and look nothing like the outer covering of a fruit.

As for joyless, well... Noel, honey, you just don't know me. Do a quick straw poll round my nearest and dearest, and they'll tell you quite the opposite is true.

If you don't believe me, you name the watering hole and I'll get the booze in.

But if you're too busy taking inspiration for your latest album from a replay of Revolver to take up my offer and prefer to stick to internet insults, keep an eye on the libel laws.

I have a pal in the know who is doing exactly the same on my behalf.