

The Xtra Diary

Venue is my cup of tea, says artist

AN artist is taking Hasidic Jews "out of Stamford Hill and putting them in a Soho tea shop".

Actress Sara Sugarman, who is best known for her film work – she directed *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* starring Lindsey Lohan – is bringing the quirky new exhibition to the gallery upstairs at one of the area's oldest cafés, Maison Bertaux in Greek Street.

Ms Sugarman, who is Jewish herself, said: "I'm a chaotic person and not good at rituals, they [Hasidic Jews] live their life by rituals. It couldn't be more opposite to me yet we share this culture. "I've met some and they are really good people, they do everything for charity and I find them to be very generous, but they get a bad rep."

The show is full of light-hearted, cartoon-esque portraits of

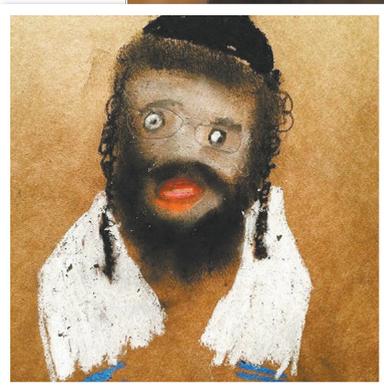
orthodox Jews, inspired by people she met in Stamford Hill.

"They don't mingle, so I thought this tea shop is a good place to get them out," she said.

Ms Sugarman's own connections to Soho go way back – she attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, which she said "put her off acting" – and lived in Soho, in a flat "across the street from Lily Savage".

The traditional tea shop is also run by Rada graduates, Michele Wade who is in charge of the patisserie, and Tania Wade (Hooligan Art Dealer) who runs the upstairs gallery.

The "bohemian" vibe of



Above: artist Sara Sugarman; inset left: an example of her work in the exhibition

the shop attracted Ms Sugarman. "There aren't many places that aren't corporate any more," she said.

Not quite Velázquez

Former Turner prize nominee George Shaw draws inspiration from the National Gallery's unique collection and has done since he was a child.

He used to take day trips from his home in Coventry and spend time looking at the artworks and dreaming of emulating the Old Masters.

He lost out on some more common youthful activities, he admits, such as going into the woods for a smoke or a drink... or to burn motorbikes.

Well, he's sort of gone back to make up for lost time. Since 2014 he has been the National's Rootstein Hopkins Associate Artist, based in a studio in the heart of the Trafalgar Square gallery and rubbing shoulders each day with the likes of Velázquez, Titian and Rembrandt.

It's obviously been daunting and took him some while to adjust. Yet what has emerged can be seen in *George Shaw: My Back to Nature*, which opened there on Wednesday and will run in the Sunley Room until the end of October.



George Shaw, *The Old Master*. 2015-2016, enamel on canvas, 46 x 55cm © Courtesy: The Artist and Wilkinson Gallery, London

His inspiration has taken him back to a neglected bit of woodland near his Coventry home, and his detailed studies of the beauty, detritus, and changing heart of the place. More than 50 paintings and drawings, mainly of the woodland, are referenced by Shaw against the gallery's collection. He says the longer he spends in the gallery "the earthier and more profane the collection gets".

"In the woods I played in as a child I found Calvary, nymphs in the forest, the gods of drinking and naughtiness, rituals of

transformation and transgression and the futile attempts to leave something behind that said I was here."

And in the woods, what's left behind, whether a crisp packet or condom, a mattress or a stash of porn, can form part of his art.

The paintings are delicate and vibrant, but Shaw is not directly aping the Old Masters.

For about a quarter of a century his preferred medium has been Humbrol enamel paint, despite the fact that he wasn't into Airfix modelling as a kid. www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Labour plea to public: please endorse Rita

THE Labour group is calling on the public to "endorse" Councillor Rita Begum to be the new Lord Mayor of Westminster.

Critics say that the way someone is picked for the civic role of First Citizen of Westminster leaves the chosen one indebted to one party or the other – the Conservative and Labour group each making a nomination, which is put to a vote.

A Labour mayor has never been chosen.

Labour councillor Barrie Taylor said the current process was "biased" and "clouded the civic role by making party political nominations".

He said Cllr Begum, would be a "breath of fresh air" as mayor and invited the public to back her.

Calling on the public to get involved, he said: "It's a little bit like reviews for a restaurant on the web," he said. "We can't say you can vote, but you can endorse."

Cllr Begum, who has lived in Westminster her entire adult life, has worked at the Stowe Club and the Beethoven Club and is a mum.

If chosen, she plans to promote inter-generational activities, introduce a mayor's medal for young people and bring in a monthly meeting with the mayor, where she would meet the public over a cup of tea.

The new Lord Mayor of Westminster, taking over from Cristabel Flight, will be announced on Wednesday. Visit <http://bit.ly/23GFHQ8> for more details.

Officially 'good' and on our way to outstanding! Ofsted praise for WAES



WESTMINSTER Adult Education Service (WAES) staff, governors and students are delighted at the outcome of the recent inspection by Ofsted which determined all aspects of the service as 'good'. This is a testament to the high quality work that is done to meet the education, training and learning needs of people in Westminster and across London.

WAES Head of Service, Barbara Holm, said: "It is most encouraging to receive such recognition and praise. We are particularly pleased that positive learner outcomes have been recognised and the high quality teaching and learning acknowledged. The significant contribution that WAES makes to Westminster residents and the wider London learning community has also been highly acclaimed in this Ofsted report"

A number of areas were singled out for high praise, including the really significant improvements made by learners for whom

English is not their first language and the effectiveness of the support to learners with learning disabilities. In addition, inspectors highlighted the very good progress made by the vast majority of the colleges' 10,000 annual learners who are extremely successful in their studies and develop a wide range of vocational

and life skills. The report, completed and published in April, also recognises the high proportion of learners achieving their qualifications, an example of which is reflected in the college's 100% success rate among last year's cohort of apprentices.

Cllr Louise Hyams, Westminster City Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development said: "As London's largest local authority adult provider, and one of the

largest in the UK, it is great to see that our adult college has once again been rated so highly. WAES will continue to develop its provision for Westminster residents over the coming years in line with local priorities."

Since the last inspection in October 2011 - when the service rating was also 'good' - WAES, the adult education service of Westminster City Council, has relocated to purpose-built centres with state-of-the-art teaching facilities and also delivers programmes in up to 80 local community venues.

Carolyn Keen, Chair of the Board of Governors, added "Governors are delighted that the dedication and hard work of WAES staff has been recognised by the Ofsted inspectors. The report provides an informative advert for what adult education is about in the 21st century".

Enrol with Westminster's Adult College
www.waes.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7297 7297

