

INTERSECTION

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AT SEA & IN THE AIR
WINTER 2006

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£3.95 ISSN 1473-7622 PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



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GUERRILLA GARDENERS THEIR WEAPONS: SEED BOMBS, PALM TREES AND AN OLD PORSCHE

It is 8pm on a cold October night, on a suburban street. Under the orange glow of streetlights and next to a barren municipal flowerbed, bundled-up locals wait for a bus. The first sign there is anything unusual here comes a little later, when an MG car noses its way onto the sidewalk, a pile of pink and white flowers visible through the back window. Then more people arrive. A bucket of trowels appears, along with something very large wrapped in black binliners. They gather round the dead grass and plan their attack. Leading the charge is an unlikely revolutionary: a tall ad exec with a wide grin called Richard Reynolds. Back in 2004, he was a frustrated gardener, living in a sixth floor apartment in South London's Elephant and Castle area. The only flowerbeds nearby were long-neglected receptacles for kebab wrappers and old needles. One night, he just couldn't take it any longer, so he snuck out. Seven hours later, dead ferns had given way to neat rows of carnations and lavender. It was addictive. He grew bolder, moving outside his neighbourhood, started a website and began recruiting. Far from conceiving guerilla gardening, Richard is carrying on an ancient tradition: the practice was invented in the 17th Century by an English group of activists, and has been going on ever since, covering everything from hippy gardens in New York squats to making 'seed bombs': balls of mud and flower seeds that are lobbed from car windows. Tonight's turnout comprises a primary school teacher, a tax advisor and a student. Richard himself has a large carbon footprint to make up for - he combines gardening with a love of classic cars. The MG is only here tonight because

the love of his automotive life, a 1973 Porsche 914 convertible, has a flat battery. This problem had been uncovered earlier at the *Intersection* photoshoot. Richard knows he has only himself to blame: he bought the car cheap on eBay. His defense is that, apart from being gorgeous, it is ideally suited for gardening. With its two trunks, he can get water containers in the front, stick a Christmas tree in the passenger seat and fill the back with "plants like lavender, which don't mind being squashed." With the plants on the back seat, the team starts digging. A group of teenage girls on a pub crawl stop and stare, giggling. "Are you those guerilla gardeners?" asks one. They take pictures. "Make it pretty, guys!" they shout as they leave. Two policemen turn up looking confused. "Very commendable," says one, eyeing the garden forks. "Don't stab anyone, will you?" The plants go in: a baby olive tree, lavender, and the large thing in the black binliner that turns out to be a small palm tree. A couple who live nearby bring a round of sweet coffee and Mars bars. The local drunk turns up and insists on planting, with great concentration, a pink anemone. By 11pm, the job is done. Quite what the authorities will have to say isn't clear. Richard is ignored by councils, who won't acknowledge what he's doing in case they have to admit responsibility. In Elephant and Castle, his first encounter with the local council happens during the photo shoot, when two officials turn up to ask if we have a permit. Obviously we don't. They are about to throw us off when, in desperation, the art director says, "but he's the flower guy, the garden guy." The two look taken aback. "Blimey, are you really?" asks one. "You're the gardening guy?" They grin and stare like a pair of Nottingham bureaucrats who have just laid eyes on Robin Hood. "Yeah, I am", says Richard. "In that case, mate, we haven't seen you. Good on you." And they turn and walk away.

Text Imogen Wall Photography Jennifer Arnow



STUCK ON YOU BLANKET AND COVERAGE

One man's club flier, annoyingly stuck to his car's windshield, is another man's art. Or so is the case with photographer Jonathan Glitsen. After moving across the street from 'The Funky Buddha'

Lounge, a popular nightclub in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood, Glitsen would inevitably wake to find his car peppered with club fliers advertising upcoming live performances. Rather than discarding the "expensively printed instant garbage," he gathered up the papers and began collecting in earnest. Within six months he had 1000

fliers, which he diligently spent three months hand-sewing into a cover for his car. 'The Car Project' consists of eight large-scale digitally printed photographs of the cloaked vehicle parked in front of various venues. The photographs have been exhibited along with a metal sculpture aping the shape of the car, along with the original cover.

Our burning question: what lies beneath? The car is a 1999 black Honda Civic hatchback (DX). I'm still driving her around town, however, I need to get her an oil change, pronto! he reports. Ironically, Glitsen never attended any of the announced performances. So much for advertising. Text Avis Candelaria