

Rumour Has It

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Collectif Je t'aime, Aileen Lambert and Michael Fortune,
Joanie 4 Jackie (Mary Billyou, Tammy Rae Carland,
Miranda July, Hellin Kay, Ryder Cooley and Rachel Mayeri),
Laura Paloma, Joana-Maria Peralta-Ferrer, Fanny Vaucher
22.08–11.10.2025

The French Realist Gustave Courbet, with a flair for drama, once scrawled “Ste.-Pélagie” in the corner of a still life of apples. That was the name of the prison where he’d spent six months in 1871, locked up as a political dissident. The apples in the painting? A little bruised, a little rotten. A subtle code for his own mental state at the time. But here’s the twist: the “Ste.-Pélagie” label was so successful on the market that Courbet later started adding the prison’s name and date 71’ to other paintings he made the following year. Call it an early case of artistic self-mythologising: post-dated bruised apples, prison aura included. Buyers lapped it up. It’s the perfect reminder that rumours, legends and little narrative embellishments stick to artworks like varnish, whether or not they’re “true”.

Long before YouTube, TikTok, or whatever platform you’re glued to now, there was Joanie 4 Jackie. Born out of Miranda July’s bedroom-slash-brain in 1995, it was a female-only underground video chain letter. It worked like this: send in your film, get a VHS back with yours plus nine others. A feminist postal network stitched together through chain letters, stickers, badly rewound tapes and a lot of trust.

The very first compilation, *The Velvet Chainletter* (1995), pulled together everything from Tammy Rae Carland’s tender pixel-vision crush diary, Mary Billyou’s punk-art-making party manifesto, Ryder Cooley and Rachel Mayeri’s gothic Alcatraz tale, Hellin Kay’s fractured take on engagement and identity, and Miranda July herself, rounding off the chain letter with an *Intro* and *Outro*. What started in bedrooms and basements soared into a catalogue of more than 200 women filmmakers, showed everywhere from punk clubs to MoMA, and was cheekily spotlighted in Sassy magazine’s “She’s Way Sassy!” section. Decades later, the archive landed in the Getty. From bedroom tapes to the museum vaults, what a journey.

From chain letters to chain reactions: when Laura Paloma’s Instagram account was hacked, she lost all access. Friends thought it might be a performance, but no, this was someone else in control, and she was left documenting the whole messy affair from the outside. Screenshots of her friends’ confusion, snippets of the hacker’s activity, and fragments of chat turned into an oddball anthology that she assembled in a Google Doc with the title 🍷invest🍷and🍷thank🍷me🍷later🍷the🍷blockchain🍷says🍷its🍷mine. A side joke “Who killed Laura Paloma?” quickly spread, echoing Twin Peaks’ Laura Palmer. The 74-pager ends with an image of Debbie Harry in THAT t-shirt: “I killed Laura Palmer”. The document’s title stretches loud and proud across the wall in vinyl letters, while the actual document stays online, slippery and alive, forever one tab away.

Access the Google Doc through our homepage marytwo.one/rumour-has-it/

marytwo

+41 79 959 47 07
office@marytwo.one
www.marytwo.one

marytwo
Mariahilfgasse 2a
6004 Lucerne

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For her lecture, Joana-Maria Peralta-Ferrer arrives in costume as Sylvia P. Greenwood, the NIT foundation's head curator and expert on "the" artist Rafael Alcampo. Greenwood's marine blue suit is sharp, the lipstick precise, the updo hairstyle stark. The artist, she tells us, worked in dialogue with Duchamp, echoing his ready-mades and ideas. The images embedded in the lecture of course are Duchamp's, tweaked, reframed, and slyly repackaged as Alcampo's. The lecture slides by with the gravity of a symposium but the content is entirely fabricated. Every phrase drips with overcooked "International Art English", that infamous dialect of biennials and press releases. It's deadpan comedy for anyone who's ever sat through a too long artist talk and thought: is this for real?

Collectif Je t'aime, a group of eight artists who completed their BFA's at ECAL in Lausanne in 2024, collaborate less as a brand than as a reason to stay together. Their sculpture, *If the collective was a tattoo, how many laser sessions would it take to erase it?* (2025) squats in the space like a leather-skinned arachnid on turned wooden legs with two embedded screens. The artist's eight sweaty faces take it in turns to answer questions on the first screen that tumble out of the second, all to that recognisable buzzing and clicking sound of a tattoo machine. "How do you define an artist's success?", "What will be the end of the collective? Should we set one, like Art Club 2000 did?", "Did ECAL make you a good artist?", "What's your favourite way to forget?", "Which work by another member of the collective would you have liked to make?". Each question stencil transferred to the artists skin, all but ready to be tattooed. The out of sync answers are sometimes funny, yet sometimes painfully familiar. This close-up of Collectif Je t'aime is messy, intense and alive. Just like friendship itself!

From this four-legged creature we move to another creature entirely: the banshee. This newly compiled version of *The Banshee Lives in the Handball Alley* (2005/2025), recorded and produced by Aileen Lambert and Michael Fortune between September 2004 and February 2005, shows Irish schoolchildren in Limerick retelling ghost stories passed through generations. The camera lingers on fidgeting fingers, wandering eyes, giggles that suddenly shift into wide-eyed seriousness as tales of wails in the night or figures in alleys spill out. The beauty of it all is in the telling itself: the way children bend and embellish the stories, adding their own flick of imagination until the line between the ancient and the brand-new disappears. The banshee lives on not because she's preserved in a book, but because she's passed between friends, carried through classrooms, whispered in playgrounds. Maybe that's the best definition of a rumour we've got: a story that survives by never staying still.

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Imagine a pastoral Bernese Jura landscape: crisp breeze, pine-dotted slopes and a farmhouse with a modest name, *La Bise noire*. Behind its unassuming walls, someone had the audacity to wallpaper an entire room with a Parisian luxury: a sweeping 15-metre strip glimmering with scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Daphne bursting into a tree, Orpheus charming the beasts, Eurydice bitten by a snake. All stitched together with such refined harmony you'd swear the motifs were designed to distract you mid-conversation.

But how did this kind of grandeur land in a Jura farmhouse? Enter Charles-François Robert, supposedly a wine merchant, but maybe also a smuggler doing a brisk side hustle. He married in 1795 and, with his new bride, decked out his salon with this über-fancy wallpaper from one of Paris's top makers, Arthur & Robert. Priced, scrawled in ink on the back, at 15 pounds. Overall, the cost from purchase to hang clocked in at something like 2000 pounds. That was about five years pay for a factory worker in the region at the time.

Smuggling, a wine merchant, decades hidden in an attic. The story is as layered as the wallpaper itself. In 2011 it entered the Swiss National Museum, hailed as a treasure of international importance. For the 2022 exhibition *Ovide dans le Jura* at Château de Prangins, illustrator Fanny Vaucher drew the whole tale into a graphic narrative, with panels of drawings tracing its improbable journey from farmhouse wall to cultural jewel. These thirteen original drawings hang framed, like comic windows into a history that almost slipped through the cracks.

Because really, isn't that what binds these works together? The slip, the side-story or the anecdote whispered on opening eve. Courbet's bruised apples, July's VHS chain letters, Paloma's hacker, Peralta-Ferrer's alter ego, Collectif Je t'aime's eight-faced Q&A, a banshee shrieking in a schoolyard, a wallpaper going unnoticed for decades. Anecdotes, embellishments, twists: they give the work a shimmer of closeness, as though you've been let in on something. And of course, there's always more to tell. If you want the rest, just ask. We'll happily spill the tea.

A special thank you to all the artists, the Swiss National Museum, the Getty Research Institute Los Angeles, Museum Bellpark and Kunsthalle Luzern.

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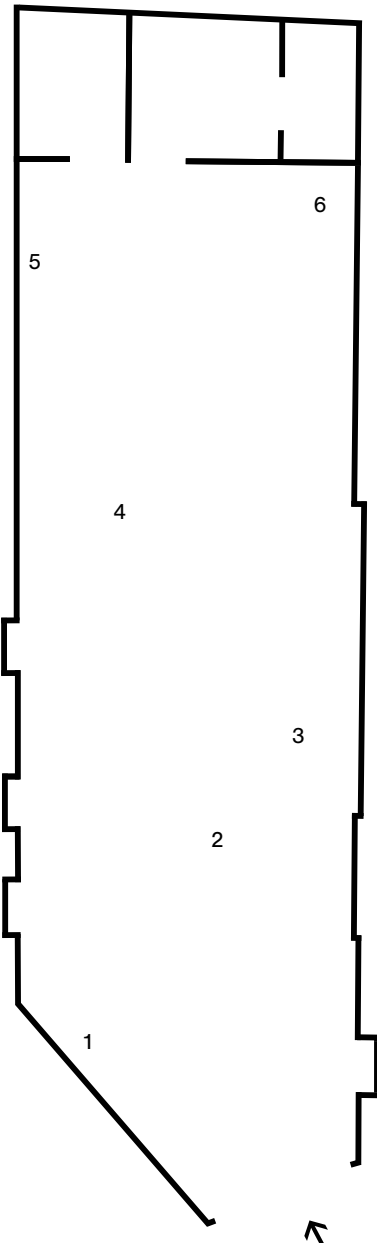
+41 79 959 47 07
office@marytwo.one
www.marytwo.one

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1. Laura Paloma
invest and thank me later the blockchain says it's mine, 2023/2025
Vinyl print
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KeMoKKlwpKcift5hj3OgoHlrUHPH-r4yuvMZWi6F4m4/edit?tab=t.0>
10 × 310 cm
2. Joanie 4 Jackie Chainletter tapes
Intro by Miranda July, 00:13'
Jug Town Road by Tammy Rae Carland, 02:58'
Women's Punk Art Making Party by Mary Billyou, 06:49'
Bird Cage Wedding Cake by Ryder Cooley and Rachel Mayeri, 14:50'
EVERYWOMAN... was once a little girl... DREAMS by Hellin Kay, 22:18'
Outro by Miranda July, 00:13'
from *The Velvet Chainletter*, 1995
All 4:3 (Black and white and/or colour, sound)
Courtesy of ©Miranda July, Tammy Rae Carland, Mary Billyou, Ryder Cooley and Rachel Mayeri, Hellin Kay and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2016.M.20)
3. Joana-Maria Peralta-Ferrer
Lecture on Raphael Alcampo by Sylvia P. Greenwood, 2025
Performance, slideshow, chairs, plynth
20:00', dimensions variable
4. Collectif Je t'aime
If the collective was a tattoo, how many laser sessions would it take to erase it?, 2025
Turned wood, faux leather, and 2-channel video
82 × 160 × 200 cm, 15:31', 09:15'
Video credits: Lester Kielstein. The collective would like to thank Romain Deriaz and the Workshop Studio in Lausanne for the help.
5. Aileen Lambert and Michael Fortune
The Banshee Lives in the Handball Alley, 2005/2025
4:3 (colour, sound), 50:20'
6. Fanny Vaucher
Dessins originaux n° 1 à 13 de la bande dessinée retraçant l'histoire des chambres tapissées de papier peint de La Bise noire, 2021
Watercolour on paper
42 × 29.6 cm
Courtesy of Fanny Vaucher and the Swiss National Museum