

Richard Creme





Richard Crome

USED TO RUN

ONE OF MANCHESTER'S MOST EXCLUSIVE DESIGNER BOUTIQUES. Regular trips to Paris or Milan were interspersed with clothing some of Manchester and the world's most interesting and influential people, such as Bowie, Prince, David Beckham, and most of Manchester Utd. Then, in November 2007, the life that Richard and his wife Shelley knew was changed forever by a severe stroke that forced them to close the business that they loved. Strokes can leave people feeling frightened, isolated and alone.

After the stroke, Richard was unable to speak and had right-sided weakness and mobility problems. Life was understandably incredibly tough for Richard and Shelley; there is no hiding the fact that when they joined our Communication Support Service in Trafford, they were unable to see a way forward.

Yet over time Richard has learnt to communicate in new ways, using gesture, drawing, tone and emotion. He is now able and confident to express his thoughts and feelings. Finding support from a group of people who know and understand what they are going through has been instrumental in helping them to rebuild their lives. Realising Richard's love and talent for art and helping him to pursue this outlet for his creative side has led us to this point, an exhibition of his art work and the beginning of a new chapter in Richard's life. It's impossible to capture in this booklet the journey that Richard and Shelley have been on and what it has been like for them, but it is clear that this is an incredible example of achievement and triumph in the face of adversity.

May 2012 sees the launch of the UK's first Action on Stroke Month, when we turn the spotlight on stroke and try to raise awareness of something that is still hugely misunderstood by many. We are celebrating the recoveries that stroke survivors can make with the right treatment, understanding and support at the right time.

With budget cuts threatening stroke services for stroke survivors and carers across the country, now more than ever we need to show people how essential they can be to people's recovery. The challenges that stroke survivors face can leave them isolated and frustrated and it must not be allowed to continue.

More people than ever are surviving a stroke but it is the months and years after returning home that have to improve. Everyone who has a stroke has a right to make their best possible recovery.

Don't write stroke survivors off. Join us and together we'll give people a better life after stroke.

www.stroke.org.uk/strokemonth

Stroke
association

LAST SUMMER I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET UP WITH CHRIS LARKIN FROM THE STROKE ASSOCIATION (UK), to talk over the relevance of the arts in relation to stroke. It wasn't an area I had any great expertise in, other than personal experience within my family. Chris and I arranged to meet up at the City Gallery in Manchester and have a coffee to discuss ways we might work together.

A couple of days before the meeting, he got in touch to ask if he could bring someone along who he had recently met and who was producing work that I might be interested in. This seemed a great idea, and on the day of the meeting, I'd got there nice and early, because it was the middle of the Manchester International Festival (MIF), so I'd secured a table in the gallery cafe and was contentedly people-watching, settled down with a strong coffee.

The clock was ticking, and as I didn't know Chris, I wasn't quite sure who to be looking for amidst all the monochrome of the stylish MIF set. However, I soon spotted the artist that Chris was accompanying, a figure from my younger years, (before I'd a family and still had money to spend) who I'd secretly aspired to emulate! This was Richard Creme, of L'Homme and the self-named, Richard Creme - the most elegant men's boutique in Manchester; and the most charismatic, tall and immaculately dressed owner. I'm six foot three, and Richard is head and shoulders taller than me and far, far more elegant.

So I'm sitting calmly, waiting to meet Chris, when in walks this Manchester icon, and he is the artist, he is the man that has had a stroke and has come out of the other side, with something new, something that has fundamentally changed him and the way he sees the world.

Over the next couple of hours, Richard, Chris, Lorraine Longmore, (Communication Support Co-ordinator) and I, look through a portfolio of work he's produced since he had the stroke nearly 4 years ago, a stroke that's affected the right hand side of his body, but more frustratingly, has taken away his ability for word-finding and speech, leaving him with a million thoughts and ideas, but unable to converse in sentences. More often than not Richard gestures, his great arms grabbing hold of me, and his booming voice repeating 'why', to the things he wants to say. Imagine the scene; the great and good of cultural Manchester gathered to hob-knob, with their canapés and thoughts on culture and art; and a small gathering, centered around the largest of characters, who with consistent style, spreads out the most astounding selection of drawings and paintings, as we begin to share the significance of his work.

Lorraine and Chris, help me understand a little about what Richard has been through, and that following his stroke, he was - as you can imagine, at rock-bottom. Richard has subsequently expressed that he felt so depressed, he would most certainly have considered suicide, but for Lorraine's support to nurture the discovery of his creativity. This is powerful stuff. Our table is easily the most animated in these genteel surroundings.

Before I see the first images he's created, there is a powerful smell of ink, and not some fine printers ink, but the smell of ink that I remember from school exams, the ink of a biro. Opening these first pages in one of the completed sketchbooks, was sensate and riveting. This was a man, who hadn't turned his hand to the arts since his school days. In front of me were the most dense and heavily worked drawings, produced from photographs and other artists images, but in blue biro. Some so meticulously over-worked that he'd patched up the other side of the paper, where he'd scratched through. Hours and hours of work and fine draughtsmanship in each piece.



But these drawings, often of celebrities who had frequented his boutique, were only the start of things, and provided an elegant time-line of a man refining his skills, which moved through different mediums and took on more startling subject matter. A group of drawings of the hand; a series of self-portraits and portraits of his wife Shelley; a collection of images in washed out grey of the photographer and one-time friend and collaborator, Norman Parkinson; abstract patterns in vivid colour, and stark, but elegant headless human bodies.

Without much hesitation, we discussed how we might exhibit some of the work, and Richard very animatedly let us know that this was exactly what he wanted! With bear-hugs and much passion, we agreed we'd meet again and make it happen.

Exploring potential gallery spaces in public buildings like the Whitworth, City, or Platt Hall appealed, but could take forever to organise, and talking with the curators of the Link Gallery at MMU, Elisa Artesero and Roger Bygott, it quickly became apparent that we had the expertise and passion to curate an exhibition, sooner rather than later, that would put a marker down in the trajectory of Richard Creme's work. We've met again a few times since that first meeting, and Richard and Shelley are a joy to work with. Both passionate, creative and full of excitement at the possibility of pulling off this first show.

So there we have it, the first exhibition: Richard Creme. This is a show about a man, and his life. It reflects something of him and no doubt, will be open to all sorts of interpretation. It's happening during Action on Stroke Month, so yes, we hope that we can all learn more about stroke, but for me, this is about one man, his incredibly beautiful work, and how art has the potency to reach out to us at the most difficult of times, enabling the expression of frustration and anger on one hand, but liberating us and enabling us to flourish on the other.

Clive Parkinson

Director: Arts for Health

www.artsforhealth.org
<http://artsforhealthmmu.blogspot.com>





"Clothes maketh the man," wrote Mark Twain. "Naked people have little or no influence on society."

Nor poorly dressed ones, either, Richard Creme might add.

Richard was the originator. He set the style for Manchester men's clothes.

His variously-located emporiums were for many years the only retailer in Manchester for men who knew about clothes.

They had been sartorially starved when Manchester had been a retail style desert. But Richard Creme's dream was to clothe them in the finest available in the world, and then see his clientele use the buzzing, fast-improving city as his catwalk.

Richard created a real trip – kind of an art-meets-commerce project combining fashion, performance, personalities, fun, media and money. And it was all very, very Manchester.

Hard to believe today, with our abundance of designer diffusion stores, but in the 80s the city centre really was like a village.

Richard first brought the street theatre of the buzz-and-enter door to the St Ann's Square store. A retailer who sized you up before he let you in? Outrageous. You couldn't help but notice the gaggle outside and the curious people inside.

Later I got to know him better. The door thing was just a bit of fun. Richard the retailer was a man who had turned down a conventional career as a corporate high-flier.

Here was a man who respected the quality of the cloth, the skill of the tailor, the creativity of the designer, as much he respected the tastes and knowledge of his customers.

This was not the schmatte which my rag trade relatives used to refer to. When he showed you one of his 'pieces,' he took the garment with his gigantic hands and talked to you about it with reverence and love.

I observed his Manchester client base with compulsive curiosity – the urgent-looking street kid with more cash in his pocket than was right for his age; the self-made men looking for advice about how to wear their new money; the smooth lawyers and accountants. If you popped into see Richard, you were introduced to someone interesting.

Richard's mission to bring quality and style to Mancunians raised his city's horizons and helped us to get rid of our cloth cap image. I quoted him in the Manchester Evening News: "When I first went to the collections the designers laughed. They'd never heard of Manchester. They never knew the north existed. Now, slowly but surely, we have built an international reputation."

He gave the famous new reason to talk about Manchester, and gave me great tales for the paper. About Gary Oldman, Amanda Donohoe, Bowie, and the day he opened up at 6am for the 5ft 3ins Prince. "It was like," he said, "shaking hands with a small child". Richard gave good copy.

He is, after all, the man who showed Bruce Springsteen how to look good in a suit. Think about that for a moment. The artist who to me, and a worldwide army, is a god-like genius. Yes, Richard made The Boss dress better.

And his sense of humour...there were times we both had tears in our eyes as he spied away, telling tall tales. He always made sure I knew exactly what I could publish, and what I dare not print.

Sometimes it was a fine line. He always had the benefit of Shelley there for a vital second opinion on his visits to the catwalk shows, his meeting with Madonna, what the footballers were wearing, and who Tony Wilson had annoyed this week.

Not forgetting Yohji Yamamoto, Dirk Bikkembergs and Ann Demeulemeester. The designers meant nothing to me at first. Eventually, I was wearing them.

In the summer of 1989, Richard had the chutzpah to commission the late royal photographer Norman Parkinson to shoot the L'homme brochure, working with the serious young Lancashire graphic designer he admired, David Kirkwood. The modelling shoots took place at Agcroft power station, Southern Cemetery and the Esso refinery at Carrington.

'Parks' responded to this creative brief: "I was fascinated by that fellow called Creme," he said. "I so liked his attitude that I said I would do this one."

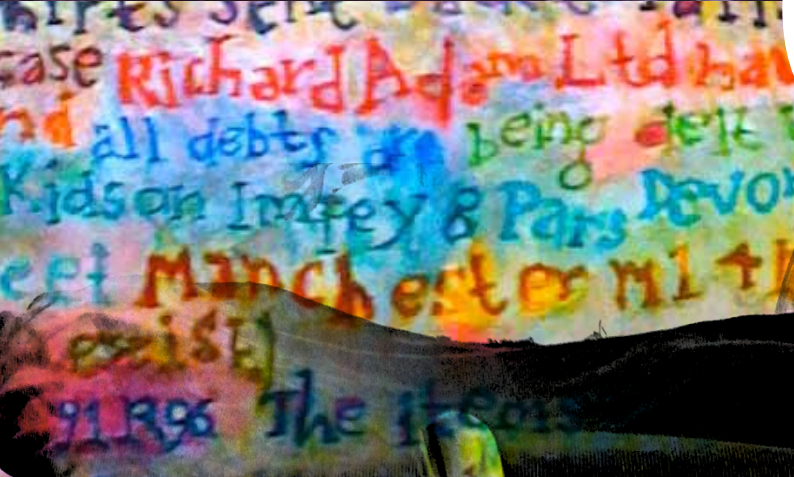
Richard said "Parkinson has never been let loose before. For four days he did what he liked. We un-caged him." I could tell Richard was getting colossal pleasure from making such a creative project happen in dear old Manchester. "We are producing an important document."

Richard Creme is a great man, a fact which has absolutely nothing to do with his height.

He's a visionary and a pioneer, ambitious in all the right ways for himself and his city.

But above all, he is an intensely creative man whose artistic spirit is now expressing itself through painting, rather than fashion.

Andy Spinoza



Right to the Point Through KISS

Richard Southern and I always used to visit his shop on Christmas Eve late in the day and we would always leave with collections of outrageous gear. We did this for well over 20 years! Tony Wilson was always there too.

Dave Hodgkiss



Richard had an amazing gift of spotting strong labels and choosing the most beautiful pieces from within their collections. His eye was pure genius. He introduced me to the likes of Ato from Japan, and he always had choice items by Dirk Bikkembergs - my favourite designer. You could haggle with Richard too, although he was a hard task master. I even took my mom to meet him.



I used to love popping into Richard's 'L'Homme' shop back in the late 80s/early 90s. He was so passionate about music and clothes, much like most of his clientele. A striking and memorable chap, not least because of his immense physical stature. Always great to chat to, attentive charming and very courteous. I still own every piece of clothing I bought from him. They're almost like pieces of art to treasure. To pass down to my own kids. Including...

A rubber, hooded, reversible Gaultier bomber jacket

A pair of white Helen Storey track suit bottoms with black sequins down the sides and chrome referee whistles on the ends of the waist ties.

Some black suede zip up ankle boots by Patrick Cox.

He sold me another Gaultier piece, one of my favourites in fact (a pretty impressive gold fronted top) with the line "only two in Manchester. Morrissey just bought the other". Just had to have it didn't I.

Always the great salesman.

I miss seeing Richard strolling round this beautiful city which he was such a massive part of. I wish him all the best, in life and in the world of art.

Much love Richard. **Clint Boon xxx**





‘Richard is the king of style, the first person to bring the likes of Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and many more to Manchester.’

Frankie Cohen



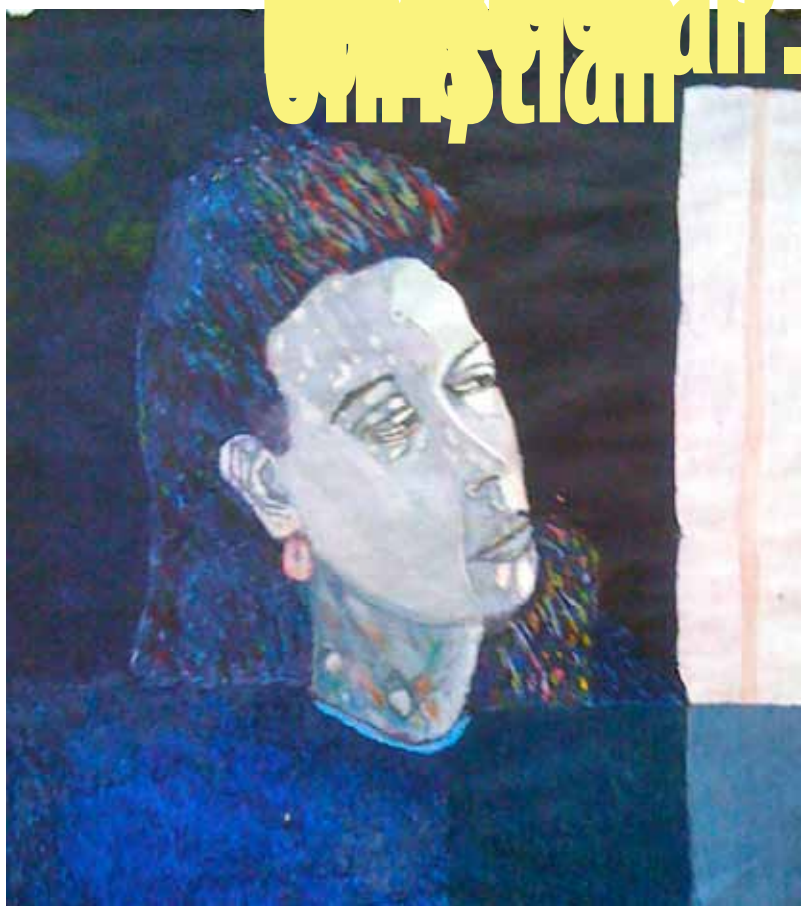
‘I was not too far from a stroke when I was 21. I was so sad and shocked to hear that Richard had a stroke, especially at such a young age; but equally delighted to hear how much he has achieved since his stroke using art as a form of expression. I have very fond memories of Richard; I remember he was a keen swimmer and where he used to share his fashion expertise with me, I used to give him swimming tips (I think I probably got the better deal in our advice exchange though!) I really do wish Richard every success with his art exhibition, supported by The Stroke Association, what a fantastic example of what can be achieved in life after stroke - best of luck Richard!’

Steve Parry

‘Richard is the king of style, the first person to bring the likes of Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and many more to Manchester.’

Legend in manc one of poshest (expensive) blokes clothes shops ever and taught me shaving brushes shud be chinese badger hair.

Terry Christian



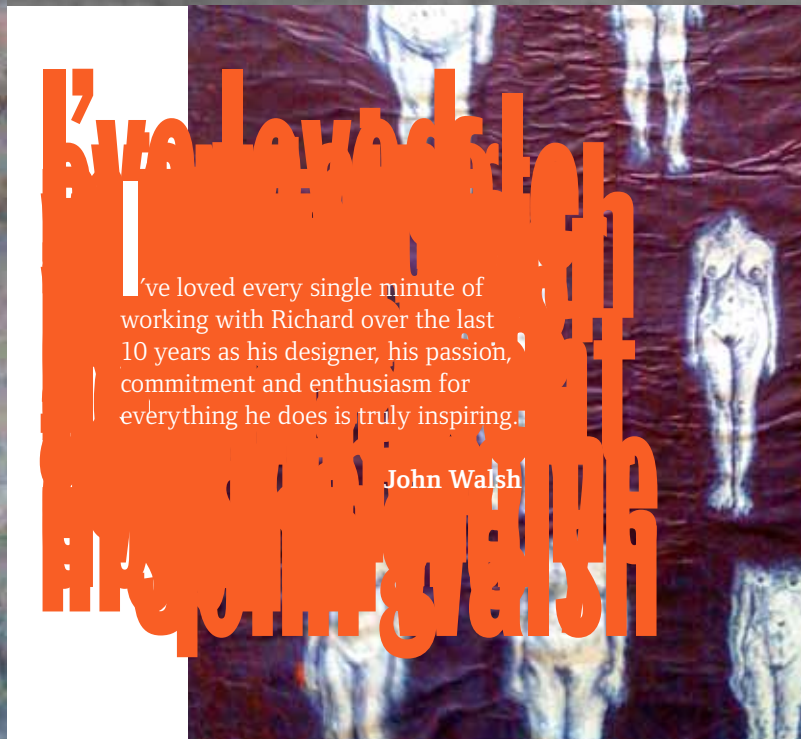


Richard Creme

Richard Creme was the man, and the shop to go to in Manchester; he was a fashion guru that channelled style like you've never seen, through the streets of Manchester and beyond. I was so gutted to hear that Richard had to close his Bridge Street boutique after having a serious stroke when he was just 50. Ever the creative genius though, it didn't surprise me to hear that Richard, having taken up art after his stroke, is now back on the comeback trail. This guy has serious style and this is an amazing story so get down there, check it out and support a great cause.

Rio Ferdinand

Rio Ferdinand



I've loved every single minute of working with Richard over the last 10 years as his designer, his passion, commitment and enthusiasm for everything he does is truly inspiring.

John Walsh

The Stroke Association

We're for Life After Stroke

Stroke used to be regarded as one of the inevitable consequences of ageing – an awful disease that either killed you or left you with no hope for recovery.

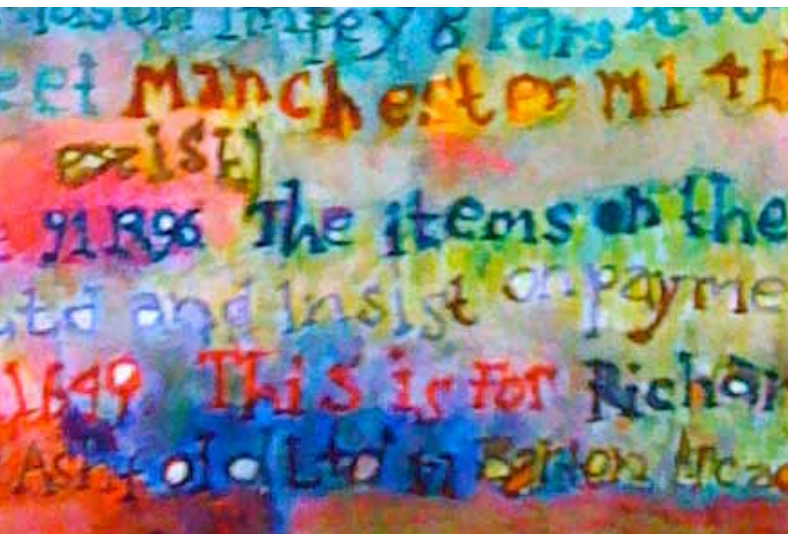
The world has changed since then. In the last 20 years the numbers of people dying of stroke has halved while the number of major strokes has decreased by 40 per cent. More people than ever are benefitting from cutting-edge treatments and making full recoveries. And more people now understand the need to seek emergency treatment for stroke.

The Stroke Association has been at the heart of every one of these developments, championing the cause of stroke and stroke survivors. Our research has helped to improve treatments and care which has saved tens of thousands of lives. Our services have helped hundreds of thousands of people to get through one of the most frightening experiences of their lives and build a life after stroke. And our campaigning has touched the lives of even more people through initiatives like the FAST campaign which the Government took up in 2009 and promoted to millions of people.

But there's still more to do. 150,000 people have a stroke every year in the UK. 50,000 will make a full recovery, 50,000 will be left with a severe disability and 50,000 will die. These figures remain shocking. In this, our 20th anniversary year, we are calling on all our supporters and friends to work with us to change the world for people affected by stroke. If you believe in life after stroke; if you want to support people to make the best recovery they can; if you believe in the power of research to save lives and prevent stroke, then we are your cause.

The Stroke Association is a charity. We rely on your continued support to change lives and prevent stroke.

www.stroke.org.uk



Throughout our meetings we have enjoyed Richard's warm heartedness, endearing wit, and undeniably strong presence. He's a man who knows what he wants; when we put the 'Parkinson' pictures together he grabbed us and shook us vigorously by the hand, a big thumbs up and a playful glint in his eye. Moments of affirmation like this confirmed for us that, despite Richard's speech difficulties, the process of curating the work was a way to mutual understanding.

We are really pleased to have had the opportunity to also work on this exhibition together with Richard's wife Shelley, Chris Larkin from the Stroke Association, and Clive Parkinson from Arts for Health. This has made it an altogether more enriching and interesting experience.

Elisa Artesero & Roger Bygott
Link Gallery Curators



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Kindly supported by:



Richard Uneme

