



PERMANENT RECORD

UNCONVENTIONAL BY NATURE

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: RED UKACHUKWU

BLURRING THE
Kate Clark
BOUNDARIES

VOLUME ONE

SUMMER 2025



PHOTOGRAPHY: RACHEL JENSEN

Purpose

At *Permanent Record*, we celebrate the solemn beauty and allure of alternative culture, embracing the unconventional with both passion and respect. Our magazine isn't truly "about" anything in particular, but we do believe there is a through line that is tangible, albeit slightly elusive. We delve into the dark and shadowy worlds of body modification, peculiar taxidermy, paranormal investigations, gothic horror, bizarre oddities, outsider art, unusual vocations, death positivity and other denizens of the remote recesses of human culture and imagination—the kind of stuff polite society turns away from and only whispers about. Welcome to a realm where curiosity is contagious. Welcome to *Permanent Record*.

A Letter From the Publisher



TO OUR READERS

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Permanent Record* magazine. While our hope is that the stories and images you will encounter on the pages that follow will speak for themselves, I think it makes sense to take a moment to understand how we got here in the first place. In other words, certain questions may come to mind at the outset, such as "Why a print magazine?" and "Why is it called *Permanent Record*?" And, perhaps most importantly, "What is the 'big idea' that ties all of our content together?"

Let's start with the easy ones. There is no doubt that we live in a digital age, and the concept of launching a print magazine seems like an anachronism out of touch and arguably out of place in the current media landscape. In a relatively short period of time, social media companies and other digital platforms have established themselves as the primary publishers and distributors of content on a global scale. In doing so, these platforms have risen to count themselves among the largest companies in the world, all in a category that did not exist just a couple of short decades ago. The dopaminergic rush of joy that we experience as we scroll through our social media feeds, auto-populated by some of the most sophisticated AI-driven content curation algorithms on the planet, is no accident.



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COLLECTOR'S CABINET

ILLUSTRATION BY DR. DOUGLAS ARBITTIER



FROM LANCETS TO LINCOLN: THE MUSINGS OF AN OBSESSIVE ANTIQUE MEDICAL DEVICE COLLECTOR

By Sebastian Bernard

A PASSION IGNITED BY A CHILDHOOD GIFT

In the world of collecting, few individuals can rival the passion and expertise of Dr. Douglas Arbittier, a former anesthesiologist and current medical historian and healthcare executive with a collection of over 2,000 antique medical and surgical instruments. From spring lancets to ornate leech jars, his collection brings to life the intricate (and occasionally bizarre) histories of an array of medical procedures,



Arbittier's creation of the museum was a labor of love that grew into a hub for enthusiasts and scholars alike.



THE BIRTH OF A MUSEUM: A SANCTUARY FOR MEDICAL HISTORY

What began as a personal collection displayed in his home quickly outgrew its initial confines. Recognizing the need for a dedicated space following years of meticulous collecting and curating, Arbittier transformed a historic building into The Arbittier Museum of Medical History in 2016, located in York, Pennsylvania. For the sake of clarity, the museum wasn't open to the general public, but Dr. Arbittier would enthusiastically host private tours for charity and frequently open it up to medical personnel, friends, family and others. Arbittier eventually founded...



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HÉRIDA, MEXICO JOANNA EBENSTEIN

MEMENTO MORI

THE ART OF CONTEMPLATING DEATH TO LIVE A BETTER LIFE

By Joanna Ebenstein

A *memento mori*—Latin for “remember you will die”—is a practice, object or artwork created to remind us that we will die, and that our death could come at any moment. By evoking a visceral awareness of the brevity of our lives, it was meant to help us remember to make choices in line with our true values. This use of *memento mori*, which seems so counterintuitive today, is a practice that was found in cultures all around the world and for many millennia; it even lives on today.



From *MEMENTO MORI: The Art of Contemplating Death to Live a Better Life* by Joanna Ebenstein, published by Avery, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House, LLC. Copyright © 2024 by Joanna Ebenstein.

VANITAS STILL LIFE
HERMAN HENSTENBURGH DUTCH
N.D.

LIFE AND DEATH



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A SKELETON IN FINE ATTIRE.
LUTHERBURGH

Memento mori could even take the form of actual human remains. To this end, wealthy gentlemen often displayed a human skull in their library or cabinet of curiosities as a poignant reminder of the brevity of life. And sometimes—in a time before permanent Internet—would dig up defuncted skeletons and exhibit the bones, frequently in artistic arrangements, to remind the visitor of their own death.

A contemporary manifestation of memento mori can be found today in New Orleans's Mardi Gras, as part of the festivities of the Black Masking Indian boys. Their annual procession begins at dawn when the so-called Skull and Bones Gang—dressed as skeletons—knock on the doors of neighborhood homes to remind them of the transience of life and invite them to join the festivities.

In a similar vein, Tibetan Buddhist festivals often incorporate so-called charm dances. These are theatrical performances that often feature costumed skeletons intended to remind viewers of the presence of death.

A fun and surprising modern manifestation of memento mori is a smartphone app called WeCross. The app—inspired by a Buddhist proverb asserting that the key to happiness is contemplating death five times daily—asks you several thoughtful questions related to mortality throughout the day. In the words of the app's official text: "Contemplating mortality helps spur needed change, accept what we want, let go of things that don't matter and have things that do."

Far from morbid, contemplating death in this way is the best method I've found for revealing, with clarity, what it is we really value. I have also found no better tool for inspiring us with the will and courage to make the changes necessary to live a life that is true to ourselves and in accord with our real values; one that will, or so we can hope, leave us with the fewest desolating regrets.

Michael Glandese is the founder and creative director of *Memento Mori*, an educational and cultural institution dedicated to exploring the histories of memento mori, mortality and the human condition through an interdisciplinary lens. An internationally recognized death expert, she is the author of several books, including *Memento Mori: The Art of Contemplating Death to Live a Better Life*, *Awakened: The Spiritual and Scientific History of Death*, *Death: A Spiritual Companion* and *The Anatomical Muse: Mind, Body, Death & the Cosmos*. She is also an award-winning writer, photographer and graphic designer, and the creator of the many times sold-out show *When Your Skin Shimmers With Belonging* (with Art, History and the Anthropocene). The director of *Unsettled Territory*, she travels her message back to Judith Lurie (see below), credited with creating the *Skull* in 16th-century Prague.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL GLANDESE

ART BORN FROM NATURE'S REMAINS: THE ROGUE ETHEREAL CREATIONS OF

MIKE GLANDESE

By Sabina Benard

In the world of alternative art, Michael Glandese stands out as a master of transformation. His eerily stunning phantasies bridge the gap between life and death, using elements of nature that most would overlook, discard or discard. Hailing from the sun-soaked deserts of Arizona, Glandese's distinctive approach to art combines ethical sourcing with a deep respect for nature, resulting in pieces that are both haunting and captivating.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL GLANDESE

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

The Safety Coffin Craze of the 18th to 19th Centuries

By Cole Boney

Arising from a Romantic-era cultural fascination with death and the supernatural in literature and art, the fear of premature burial, or *taphephobia*, overtook Germany, England and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries. Limited medical understanding, as well as actual cases of accidental entombment, exacerbated these concerns, sparking the invention of "safety coffins," designed with means of escape, should the prematurely buried revive post-funeral.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL GLANDESE

WHAT'S THE APPEAL OF AMERICAN GHOST TOURS?

(THEY'RE NOT EVEN THAT SCARY)

By Amber Amortegui

Ghost tours are popular tourist attractions in the most notoriously "haunted" cities across the U.S. Whether this niche tourist experience involves participants walking alongside their headless ancestors late at night or exploring a city on a historic sound track, the ghost tour



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL GLANDESE



*Blurring
the Boundaries:*
THE MESMERIZING,
"HYBRID" ART OF
Kate Clark

By J. Gerard Legagneur Jr.

With her striking sculptures, Kate Clark explores the hybrid relationship between humans and animals, creating works that challenge perceptions and spark deep reflection.

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