

# Her Chambre Bleue

*This was a performance of two discrete but simultaneous parts by Ilona Dorota Sagar with text and spoken word by me, that was performed at the closing party of Frieze 2010. Dancers dressed in blue moved around the space (a bar and socialising space in a relatively exclusive members club in Covent Garden, London) blocking people's paths, dividing the crowd, slipping between and under people, and splaying themselves along the walls, bar and carpet; at the same time four actors dressed anonymously approached people as if they were acquainted, and eagerly told them one of the three pieces of text below, which weave together the space of the Hospital Club and its cheap furnishings that only look acceptable at night, its paid membership, together with the Salon of Mademoiselle De Vivonne in the Hotel de Rambouillet, and all of its refined luxury, selective membership and bristling conversation. You can see a short video of some of the even there over on [HandBin](#).*



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Don't mind them, or rather do, but only so much as you might mind a well-positioned crystal chandelier or framed piece of art... let them be in the periphery, like a thought that reminded you of something, but you can't remember of what, or like a smell that takes you somewhere precise and vivid, but nowhere that you can actually place... or rather I think it is them that are trying to remember all of it for you: each time they line up and their legs lift in unison it looks like they might have once been at a ball, an evening that they cannot quite recall, and whenever their arms lift out and they lean forwards it's like they are trying to recollect the movements of a formal greeting, a movement of decorum, but, poor decorative things that they are, they can't quite bring it all back to mind, and little do they seem to realise, poor dolls, that it's the Prussian summer-evening-sky-blue of their leotards, and the gold smeared on their lips, which is what they are trying to grasp. It is the Chambre Bleue, and its sparkling gilded domes, the dances and discussions with little flutters of tiny pouting lips which they think they can find here, somewhere in this room, but they don't even remember what they are looking for, poor souls.

...

Cobalt blue, Azure, deep and dazzling all at once don't you think, particularly when they dance around with it like that, so much ease in their movements, but it really isn't that easy, what they're doing, they just make it look like it is, a lot of training you see, the kind of training that used to be expected in places like this, one couldn't just say what came to mind, it had to be said beautifully, one needed wit and no little charm, now they don't even open their mouths, and that blue, it wasn't always just a pleasure to look at, it was a deadly game Cobalt was, named after a German sprite, an angry little gremlin that lived in the mountains and hated visitors so much that the Arsenic in the Cobalt mixture would eat away at the miners' feet, and tear apart their lungs, but it looked beautiful on the canvases on the walls of all the Salons, and on the hemlines of dresses, and on letters that they would write to each other in intrigue that would look blank until they were heated and their

slanderous words would appear by candle-light, blue lines written beautifully about the blue room, hard work and dangerous though it was.

...

I have a little vignette to paint for you, it's helpful you see, an instruction on these dancers, and their delicate moves. It's a scene, an atmosphere, you see, that they are repeating, again and again. They speak as one, dance as many, and they have a nose for luxury, I tell you they can always sniff out what is genuine and what is not, they have an eye for elaborate artifice and no patience for dreary imitation, in you and me, whoever they come across, and they let you know. Somewhere past, in a room like the inside of a rock of Lapis Lazuli, somewhere between the Tuileries gardens and the Louvre, four men approached them in greeting, hoping for a dance to a fashionable minuet, and, like judges at their own court of subtle suggestion they delivered their verdicts by hand and foot and mouth for everyone to see: Leg up and hand outstretched they delightedly say "Monsieur, I am honoured to present you my most humble respects in this dance"; leaning to the left with their hands pointing up they respectfully twitter "Monsieur I am your most humble servant, follow me"; shoulders slouched and falling to their left they politely retreat with "Monsieur, I am honoured to greet you. Perhaps another time"; and finally, in the presence of ill-concealed pretension and failed elegance, collapsing into one another they say with ice "Hello, Monsieur".