

The London Coffee Festival 2018

A highlight of the coffee calendar

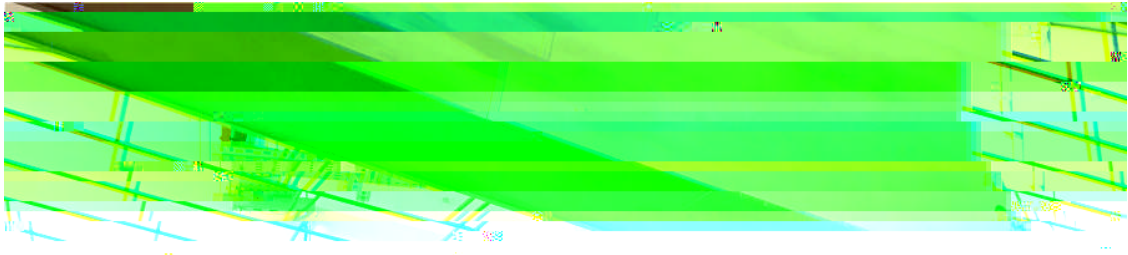
Undoubtedly a highlight of the year for specialty coffee, and for me, is the London Coffee Festival. Even if you don't think of coffee much beyond the cup you buy in a coffee shop (preferably not from one of the chain commodity coffee shops such as Costa, Starbucks and Nero), the festival is a fantastic way of getting a sense of the world of coffee beyond the chain.

The rise and rise of the coffee festival

The first London coffee festival took place seven years ago at a point when London was establishing itself as one of the significance speciality coffee cities of the world. In its first year it had 7,000 visitors across 4 days and 100 exhibitors. This year it had 31,897 visitors and 261 exhibitors, and a lot of music. It has inspired other coffee festivals around the UK: Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Belfast, and this September, Bristol. The inaugural Dublin Coffee and Tea Festival was in 2014, and there are festivals in Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague, Barcelona, Helsinki, San Francisco, New York, Seoul, and more. The inclusion of the word 'tea' in the Dublin Festival indicates that while coffee is certainly the major focus, tea gets a significant look-in as increasingly it is treated as a speciality drink. Oh, and there's often a lot of cake. And water.

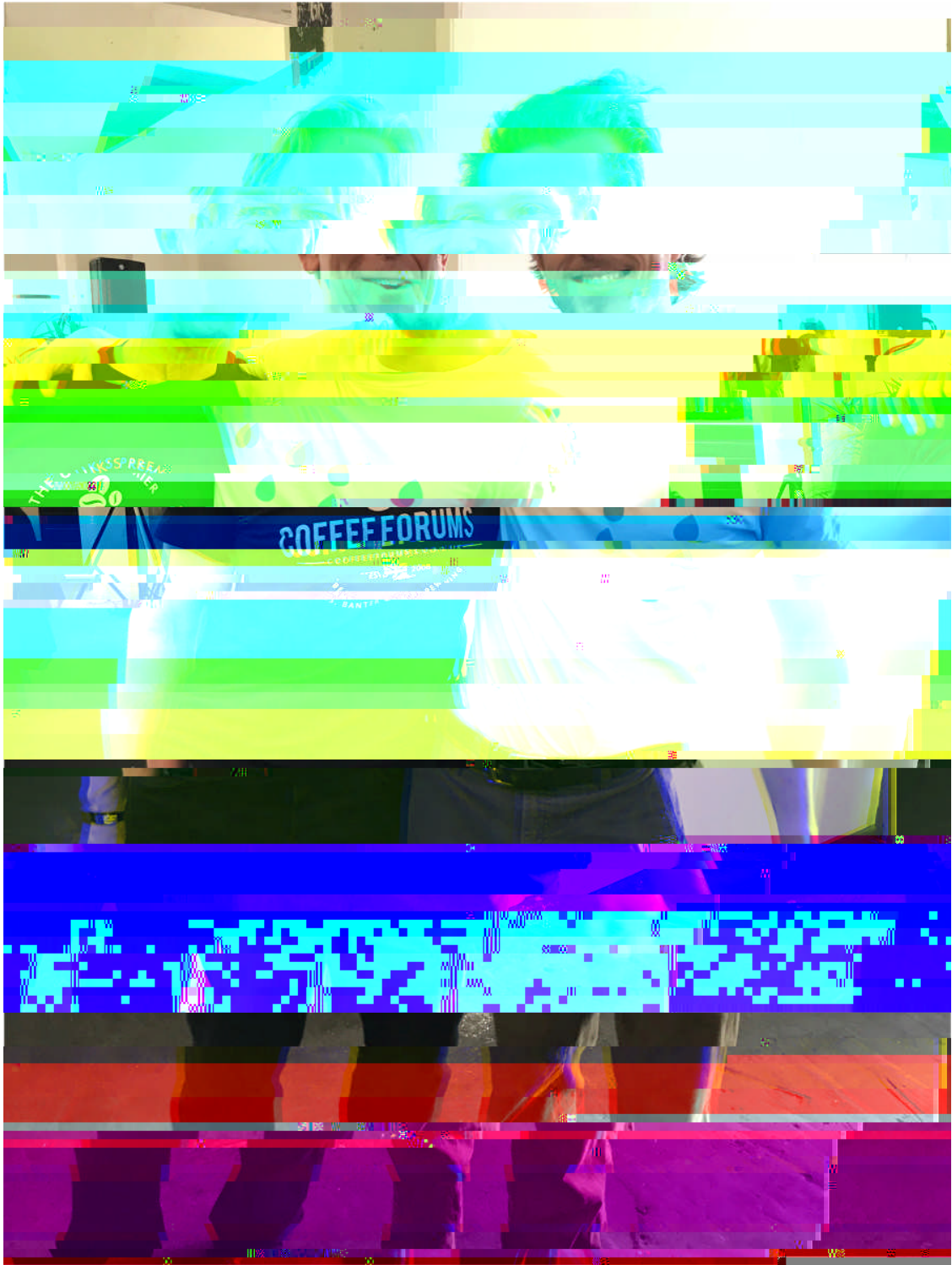
All coffee festivals share similar features. They provide an opportunity for generally local micro-roasters to showcase the coffee that they produce and, as I know from experience, it's entirely possible to emerge blinking into the daylight as a completely caffeinated wreck following multiple tastings. There are barista competitions (often forming heats for the world championships), talks from key figures in the industry and interactive workshops. Oh, and coffee cocktail demonstrations (in hindsight not a great idea at 11.00 in the morning although I'm inclined to attribute responsibility to my daughter's enthusiasm and my own lack of will power in the

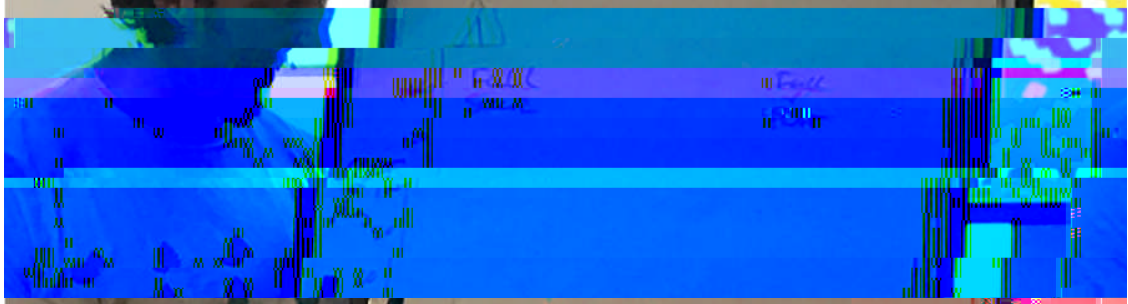
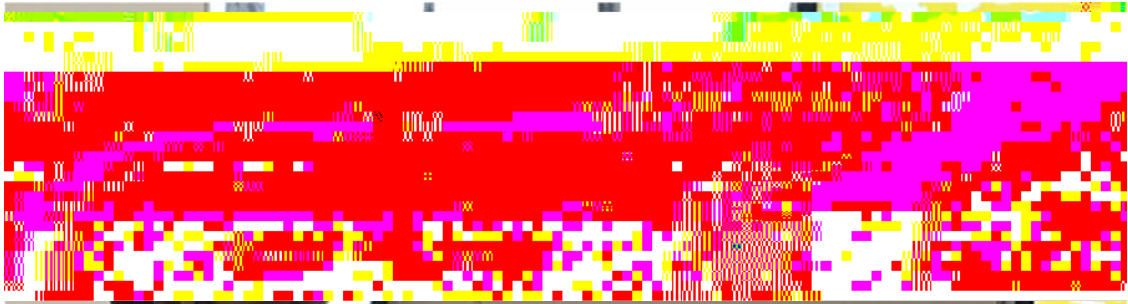
the people of the speciality coffee world the more that I've come to value what a strong, close and open community it is. I have come to recognise some of the



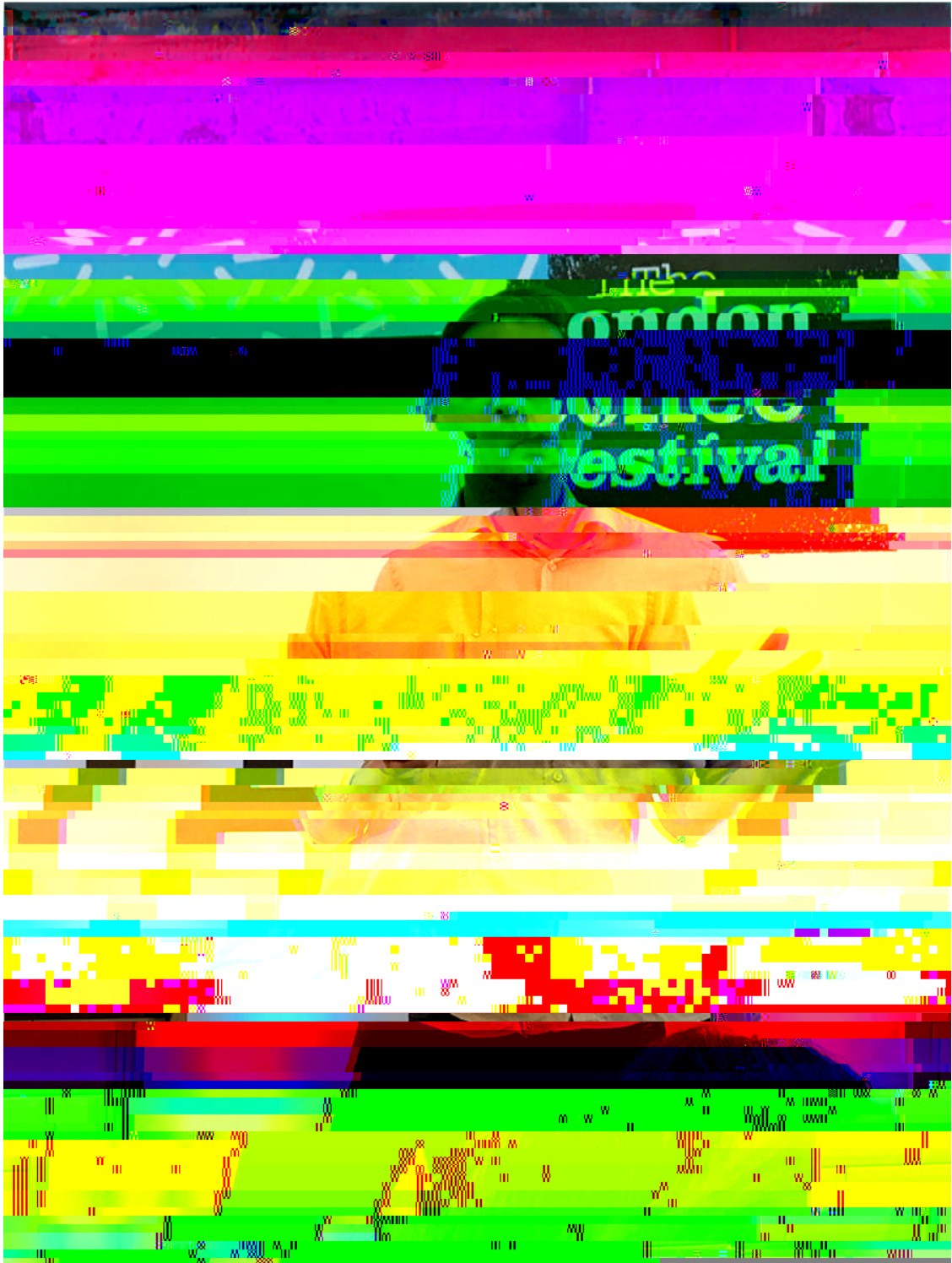
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2. Meeting Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood, three times UK Barista champion and in the top five of the world's best, and also attending his talk, mainly about the importance and nature of the ideal water for making coffee. He has a coffee shop and roastery in Bath and has written a book with Christopher Hendon, a computational chemist at Bath University, *Water for Coffee*. The coffee shop is worth making a special visit to Bath (as I have done) and the coffee he roasts is sublime, so much so that I have a regular subscription: <https://colonnacoffee.com>

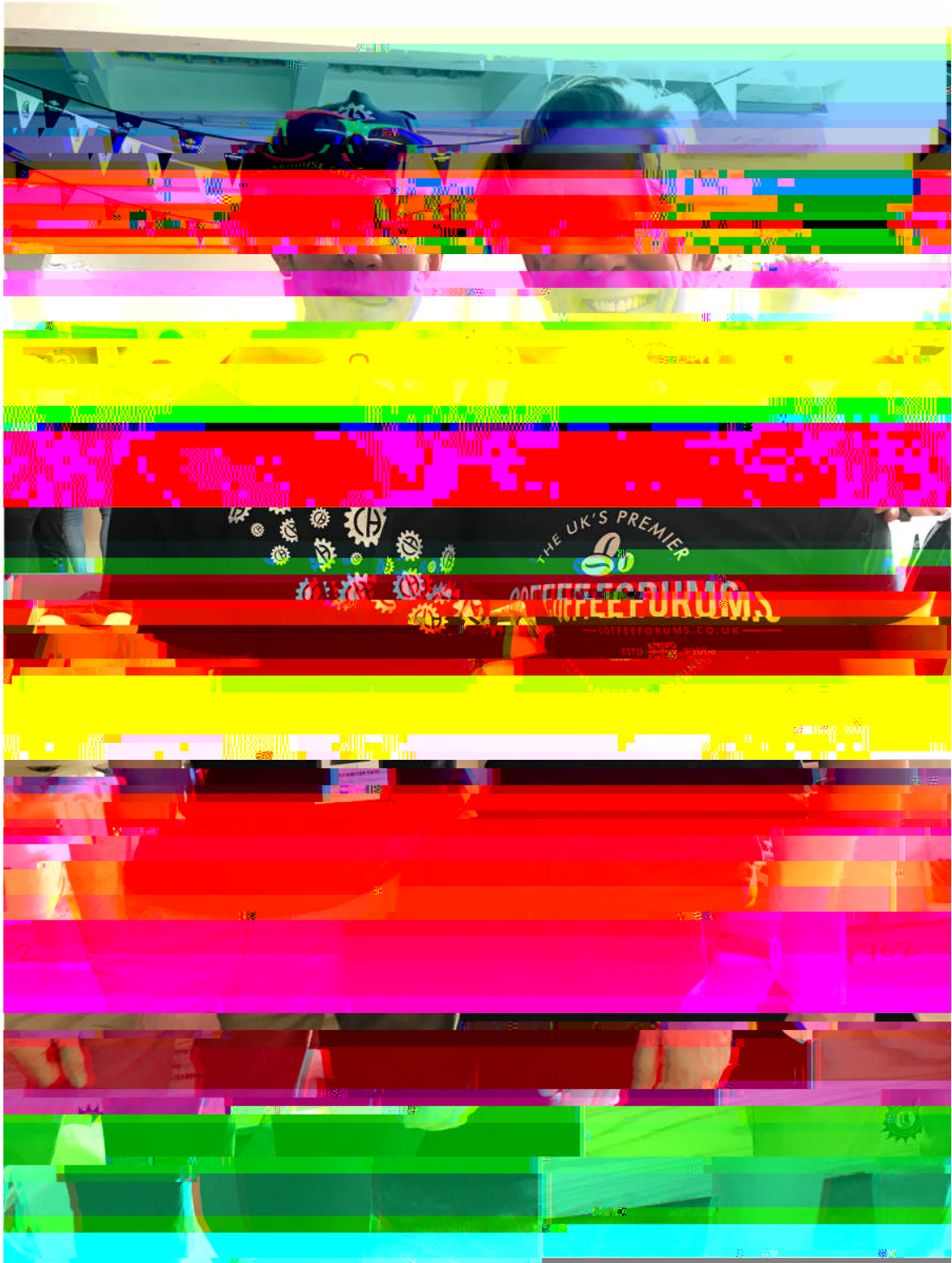




3. Listening to Tim Wendelboe talk about his favourite methods of making coffee at home. He is a leading Nordic roaster and owner of a coffee shop in Oslo



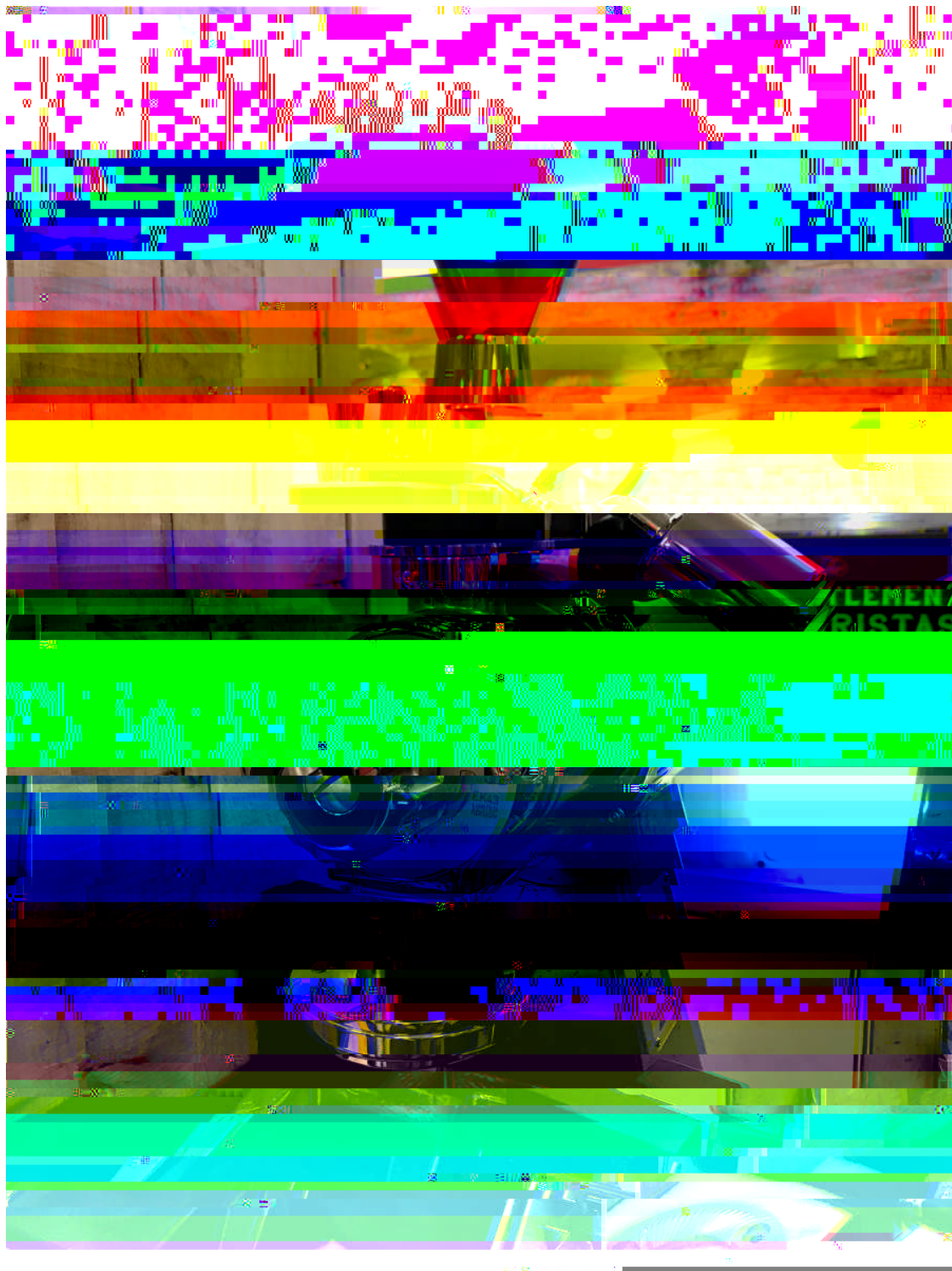
4. I frequently buy coffee from Dave Stanton, who is a micro-roaster running Crankhouse coffee, from Exeter. His coffee is always amazing and he's an amazing man, too, with the advantage of being a keen cyclist and with a lot of knowledge about the biomechanics of cycling. As well as tasting (and buying) some of his great coffee on the day, he also gave some useful advice about my ride to cycling recovery after my lower spine imploded on the slopes of Alpe d'Huez last summer.
<https://www.crankhousecoffee.co.uk>



5. Finally but by no means last, an annual highlight is meeting up with Frank Durra, who trades as Titus Grinding. Along with his engineering partner, Markus, they operate out of a workshop at the bottom of Frank's parents' garden, near Stolberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. They have an unparalleled reputation for their work in building and customising grinders and customising espresso machines. They mix staggeringly precise engineering, a quest to produce ever better coffee, and an eye for beauty (accepting that it is the eye of the speciality coffee lover). A clue to Frank's character and stereotype defying sense of humour and irony is his



Frank in conversation with Gwilym Davies. Gwilym is another leader in the specialty coffee world. He is founder of Prufrock Coffee, winner of the world barista championship in 2009, and often asked to judge in barista championships.
<https://www.prufrockcoffee.com>



And one of Frank's creations – a customised EK43, a top end grinder found in its original version in many speciality coffee shops.