

City Insider **UK Finance**

UK Finance chief lets cat out of bag in video conference call

Unwitting homage to James Bond villain Ernst Stavro Blofeld



Ernst Stavro Blofeld.....and his cat © PA

Matthew Vincent MAY 1 2020

Stephen Jones **Spectral vision**

Video conferencing amid the coronavirus lockdown continues to have unintended consequences — even for City titans. One chief executive of an Anglo-Dutch consumer group had viewers admiring the Scottish comic-strip character on the wall behind him as much as his cleaning product sales. A housebuilder’s boss caused some to ask whether his urban-chic backdrop was really just an old air-raid shelter. And the trending hashtag during one media CEO’s call was “#isthatatubaonhissshelf”? (apparently, a trombone). But the greater risk is gaining a nickname. While the aforementioned trio could probably live with being called “Oor Wullie”, “ARP Warden” or “Oompa Man”, the head of lobby group [UK Finance](#), Stephen Jones, has given himself more of an image problem. During a live webinar with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Fair Business Banking, he made the mistake of picking up one of his cats. And stroking it. Quite possibly in a leather swivel chair. Ever since this unwitting homage to James Bond baddie Ernst Stavro Blofeld, colleagues say he is now exclusively referred to as “Spectre”.

Banksy

Virtually real assets

Missing your trips to Mayfair galleries for private viewings? Feeling socially distanced from the [Banksys](#) stencilled on EC2 concrete? Then the Artcels art investment platform can help. On Friday, it will preview a virtual-reality contemporary art exhibition, featuring works by the UK graffiti artist as well as Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, George Condo, Kaws, Retna, Ilhwa Kim and Joseph Klibansky (just nod and say something about “the hierarchy of cultural values”). Artcels has made a 3D architectural model of its Bruton Street gallery, placed high-definition images of the works in 3D frames and rendered the space with lighting and shadows to create an “immersive, interactive and realistic” show. You can even put virtual orange stickers on works you’d like to buy: £390 fractional ownership shares are offered in the exhibition portfolio. But it seems technology can only go so far: you have to provide your own VR headset, warm white wine and obligatory florid critic in red specs and bow tie.

Michael Mainelli

Sheriff’s starring role

Who better to bring together ancient and modern than the Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation? This week, it put the Aldermanic Sheriff of the City of London on to YouTube. Said Sheriff is not perhaps as antiquated as the title suggests: he is actually Michael Mainelli, chair of finance think-tank Z/Yen, and emeritus professor of commerce at Gresham College. City Insider hopes he inspires other Guildhall officers to embrace social media and looks forward to The City Remembrancer on Insta, the Three Esquires’ WhatsApp Group, and the Chief Commoner’s TikTok skits. Another few weeks of this and it will happen . . .

Barristers

Brief Skype encounter

In his book *Confessions of a Barrister*, the pseudonymous Russell Winnock describes a typical silk as “uber-confident and prone to pomposity”. But in a City regulation case a few days back, one poor defence counsel found his uber-confidence undermined by his suboptimal connectivity. With his Skype connection to the courtroom dropping out, he was left with no option but to relay his comments to the judge via a mobile phone call to . . . the prosecution counsel. One can only hope his client’s plea was rendered correctly. And the prosecution counsel was pompous enough for two.

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