



# Austin Osman Spare: The Life & Legend of London's Lost Artist

*Baker, Phil Baker*

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London has harboured many curious characters, but few more curious than the artist and visionary Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956). A controversial enfant terrible of the Edwardian art world, the young Spare was hailed as a genius and a new Aubrey Beardsley, while George Bernard Shaw reportedly said "Spare's medicine is too strong for the average man." But Spare was never made for worldly success and he went underground, falling out of the gallery system to live in poverty and obscurity south of the river. Absorbed in occultism and sorcery, voyaging into inner dimensions and surrounding himself with cats and familiar spirits, he continued to produce extraordinary art while developing a magical philosophy of pleasure, obsession, and the subjective nature of reality. Today Spare is both forgotten and famous, a cult figure whose modest life has been much mythologised since his death. This groundbreaking biographical study offers wide-ranging insights into Spare's art, mind and world, reconnecting him with the art history that ignored him and exploring his parallel London; a bygone place of pub pianists, wealthy alchemists and monstrous owls. "...an elegant and comprehensive biography... [Baker's] deep sympathy for his subject is nicely balanced by his scepticism towards some of Spare's sources of esoteric thought. There is a wealth of detail here ... A stunning tribute to an unjustly neglected artist." - Noel Rooney, Fortean Times 'I cannot recommend Austin Osman Spare too highly. Phil Baker has done a wonderful job of bringing the complexities and contradictions of Spare's life to the fore, and in making the London of Spare's time come to life vividly and richly. Hopefully this book will encourage a reassessment of Spare which is long overdue' - Phil Hine

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