

underwire

original thought for original women

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Creative therapies

The psychology of shopping

Friendship redefined

Lucy Casson

Parisian allure

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Original thought for original women.

We give you **Underwire**, the first women's magazine that uplifts and separates the significant stuff from the girly fluff.

We want to give you something different: a magazine to stimulate the mind and the senses. We promise to look beyond the obvious, with none of the prescribed feminine cliches we all know and yawn at. We give a fair bit of consideration to the little things that make a difference to the way you look at the world.

Andy Warhol once remarked: 'Time changes things but you actually have to change them.' It's about time somebody did. So we are.

Enjoy **Underwire**.
It's the thought that counts.

People who helped to make this magazine



Maria Fitzpatrick {Editor}

I have worked for three consecutive seasons as part of the team running London Fashion Week as well as at events such as Fashion Rocks for the Prince's Trust and the British Style Awards. During my time at LCF I have also done freelance work at The Times Newspaper, and for the new University of the Arts London magazine. I'm an enthusiast who needs some sleep.



Kim Halliwell

To walk in the sun and never the shade
To live with heart and mind open
To take the road less traveled by
- that makes all the difference



Emily Davies

Emily Davies has been The Times' Fashion Writer for three years. Before that she was a graduate trainee reporter in the Times newsroom, after studying English Literature at UCL. She says she loves her job because "it allows me to ask the most impudent questions of the most interesting people - and it just never stops being fascinating".



Mark Fitzpatrick

Mark Fitzpatrick lives in Paris. He has found that this saves him from seeking an impressive, career-driven job. His parents' friends are impressed enough when they hear where he lives. He is a struggling writer, with many unpublished short stories and a half-finished novel lurking in his background, as well as four produced plays, *If this is coffee...*, *Departures*, *lifeline*, and *Clowns*.



Lotte Jeffs

Having spent the past 17 years in education, culminating with a year at Camberwell Art College and a degree in English Literature at Leeds University, I'm now trying to make my mark in the real world. I have written for various publications including The Independent, AXt and The Sunday Times magazine. I'm available for weddings, funerals, Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs. Email: lottejeffs@hotmail.com



Tadhg Ó Súilleabháin

Tadhg Ó Súilleabháin is twenty five years old. He has led a moderately successful life, but would rather be able to draw more comparisons between himself and the Earl of Sandwich. His third place finish in the egg and spoon race in 1987 remains one of his proudest achievements. Tadhg works as a statistician (or some such) with a bank.



Katherine Francis

Katherine was born in London. She graduated from University College Cork in 2002 with a degree in European Studies and Italian. Having studied and worked for two years in Sienna and Florence, she grew to know and love the Italian way of life. She is currently working for the Irish Tourist Board.



Ian Logan

Ian Logan runs The Ian Logan Design Company, and designs for many top companies in the UK and abroad. He has always felt that designers would make interesting if not the best buyers and so opened a retail space at the front of his design studio. The shop has been a great success.



Ciarán MacGiollaPhádraig

Ciarán MacGiollaPhádraig is a writer, sometimes actor and musician, and a student of International Relations. For his piece, *Dysoapian Future*, he researched soap opera extensively as a genre. In his dressing gown, in front of the television, with cups of tea.



Colm Roche

This magazine was designed and illustrated by Colm Roche. He can now also command high fees for Motivational speech seminars due to the vast experience he gained while working on this project. He likes strong tea and strong type.

Thanks

Thank you so very much to everyone who helped to make Underwire a possibility, both in terms of your contributions and gestures of support. More than anything, I appreciate the fact that so many of you have given endlessly of your time, energy, enthusiasm and faith to something purely because it means so much to me. Thank you to Ian Logan, Emily Davies, Liz Hunt, Win Blackmore, Maeve Fitzpatrick, Ed O'Rourke, Stephen Spear, Mary Reidy, Tim Herlihy, Paul Bond, Paula Francis, Karen Blades, John Sinnott. Thank you individually to all my tutors, for being an inspiration and a friend to me this year. Particular thanks to my friends for going through it all with me (and pretending to still find me relatively interesting to talk to). And to my family. I won't begin to name you all, but you all know what a difference your love has made. I wouldn't be standing up without you.

Technical

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One:

Political correctness is getting the better of us. The European Commission has approved a new law which will force car insurers to enforce 'gender neutrality', meaning the end of cheaper insurance for women, despite the sustained difference between the sexes as regards driving habits. Premiums could rise by up to £500 a year once the present system of using statistical evidence to determine risk is banned. This movement is set to extend to other industries, the only exceptions being goods and services which are exclusively sold to either sex, such as hairdressers or private members' clubs. Thank heaven the 'groundbreaking' ban on sexual discrimination on tv and in advertising slipped through the net. Where is the room for humour or realism in a dictate like that? Former Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou, who drew up the proposed scheme, said it was intended to create 'gender solidarity'. Homogeneity more like.

Two:

The British film industry has been thrown into a state of panic with the announcement that from next month, any film co-produced with the UK will have to spend at least 40% of its budget here in order to be recognised as a British co-production. This dramatic move is based on the Government's belief that international film-makers have been reaping the benefits of a tax-loophole, using investment in British films as a tax-avoidance scheme and that the industry is being cheated out of the potential cultural and economic dividends of its involvement. An estimated 40 films are being planned or currently in production in the UK, and insiders are afraid that the projects will be stopped in the middle of production if financiers decide to pull out.

Three:

In other arts news, the Royal Ballet has committed to a new national effort to make arts and cultural

events accessible to a wider audience. A set number of tickets for each performance will be set at the price of £10 from this month to cultivate an appreciation in a younger audience, especially. Meanwhile, both the Camden Arts centre and the Southbank's Hayward Gallery have undergone radical makeovers, and plan to hold live music events throughout the summer in their newly refurbished and extended venues.

Four:

On the matter of all things musical, Apple have further delayed the global launch of the iPod-mini until July, because they don't think they will be able to produce enough players to meet consumer demand. Retailers in the US can't get their hands on any more to sell, although e-Bay is already doing fast business. Apparently Apple are buying up all the stock of hard-drives as fast as Hitachi can produce them, but there's going to be a waiting list ladies...

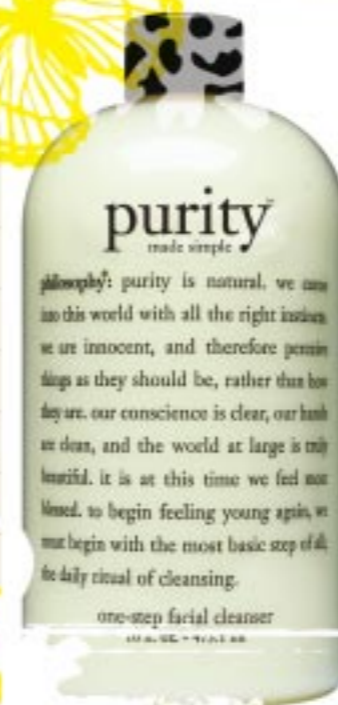
Five:

Science is tipped to be the next big 'arena' for entertainment. Please let it replace reality tv. Programmes based on live autopsies and cosmetic procedures and those featuring revelations about genetic technology have sent ratings soaring, and are indicative not just of our voyeuristic culture, but an increasing appetite for information about ourselves. A new 'taboo-free' science discussion venue, the Dana Centre, has been set up alongside the Science Museum to cater for this interest. A joint venture between the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the European Dana Alliance for the Brain and the Science Museum, the Dana centre provides a forum for people who want to discover more about challenging, controversial or spectacular issues in contemporary science. Recent topics under discussion include: 'designer babies', artificial intelligence and the psychology of gambling, part of a series of lectures themed around the seven deadly sins.



**Vivienne
Westwood**

treats



A Fortune-cookie future

It's part and parcel of modern life; the constant quest for truth and meaning. We've become accustomed to taking advice wherever we can get it, in the hope that the all answers to life and love will become clear, as well as the answers to things we don't have time to even stop and question. More than ever before, we're absorbing mantras and sayings, old wives' tales, philosophy, poetry,

and the doctrines of ancient cultures in order to attribute purpose and depth to ordinary, seemingly superficial things, everyday actions and habits. And there's no harm in it. Particularly special are those words of enlightenment that you find at times and in the places you least expect to ... if nothing else, they're good for a smile.

Baci Perugina chocolates available from Selfridges Food Hall

Beauty products by Philosophy available at Liberty

Pearls of Wisdom by Pinkie Jones at House of Fraser

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Buying yourself

Contrary to what most of us would like to believe, a new study by an expert in the psychology of shopping insists that in today's consumer society, you really *are* what you own. Emily Davies investigates.

Are you what you have in your wardrobe? Does the essence of your being rest in the perfection of your new bag, your fuchsia-coloured shoes, your retro-printed full-circle skirt from Zara? However hotly you follow fashion, you would probably hope not. But Helga Dittmar, a psychologist at the University of Sussex who has spent 20 years researching the impact of consumer society on our identity, thinks it does.

Dr Dittmar's point that "material goods are frequently used in the quest for identity" is hardly a new revelation; but the most interesting point of her latest research is the shift she has identified in the balance between need and want, in which the economic and practical value of buying and owning material goods that is, the old purpose of shopping - has become outweighed by the psychological benefits of doing so, which is the new motivation to shop.

In a report published in April's issue of *The Psychologist*, the British Psychological Society's journal, she highlights three key beliefs of materialistic contemporary consumer culture, which are that material goods are: a central life goal; the main route to identity, success and happiness; and the measure by which we evaluate ourselves and others.

All of which the fashion industry knows -and loves. It's clear that in a consumer society, shopping has come to stand for much more than buying things: it is your ticket to an idealised self. Charles Revson, who founded Revlon in 1932, knew this well, saying: "In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope."

The economic and practical value of buying and owning material goods that is, the old purpose of shopping – has become outweighed by the psychological benefits of doing so, which is the new motivation to shop.

But it is in recent years that the culture of shopping -of acquisition, of ownership -has become increasingly about image rather than substance. Dr Dittmar points how advertising has changed in the past few decades. "If you look at advertising in the 1950s, it's much more about the product and what it does: a soap that cleans well, for example. Now advertising is all about young attractive people doing something aspirational. Shopping has moved away from the consumer model. It's not about obtaining goods but about buying identities."

Part of the problem is that consumerism for its own sake has become so glorified.

Recent research by *Elle* magazine indicated that 55 per cent of women in Asian countries preferred shopping to relaxation or spending time with their partner. A disheartening statistic, perhaps, but it is important to note that if you are able to choose shopping over relaxing, you are probably one of the many people among whom shopping is considered glamorous, not utilitarian.

The lifestyle of the female urban sophisticate, as idealised in *Sex and the City*, revolves around a fetishistic obsession with fashion and its acquisition (particularly shoes), and of the glamour of forging a sense of self through what you own. The eternal dissatisfaction and vacuousness of this culture are encapsulated perfectly by the L'Oréal catchline "Because You're Worth It" -in which money and beauty are somehow equated with self-worth. The consumer is encouraged to declare her worth

by spending money on a lipstick that will help her to look like the model in the ad -who is, presumably,"worth it" because she is beautiful. This lifestyle has become common currency among advertisers; even the latest adverts for Marks & Spencer feature sleekly clad women sipping expensive-looking coffees, surrounded by shopping bags. To be constantly seeking for the newest, hottest thing is now seen as desirable.

If it is women in particular who have been most seduced by this, it may be because shopping is associated with an evolutionary instinct to nurture and provide for the family, which has traditionally been a female role. But the psychological benefits that the shopping experience promises centre on improving one's personal appearance -no longer just a female concern.

However, Dr Dittmar's research shows that men have yet to catch up with women in the way that they approach shopping and goods. She discovered that men typically see shopping as work and view possessions as practical, activity or control-related items, whereas women see shopping as leisure, and consider possessions to be symbols of interpersonal relationships, loaded with emotional significance. If there is some truth in this, it's most likely because the market of material goods aimed at women is so much bigger and more prolific than that for men.

Manolo Blahnik's patent Mary Janes, described by Kate Moss as "classic, yet punk - you can be whoever you want to be in them", are so hotly hunted that they sell on eBay for double their retail value and, indeed, eBay is the only place you can find them because the official waiting lists at stores everywhere are closed.

The modern and insidious phenomenon of waiting lists has added to the totemic status attributed to clothes, especially accessories. Take Gucci's snaffle bag, which was its hit of last winter. In fashion terms, accessories are entry level items -they attract customers to the brand and hook them in -and thus there's never a shortage of them. The snaffle bag's success has much to do with its combination of the old Gucci snaffle with the new shape and colours, and its use of a trademark (the snaffle) that is recognisable to those in the know but crucially not so obvious that everyone can decode it.

Dr Dittmar's research suggests that the cult of shopping is still growing. She is convinced that today's adolescents are more materialistic than those in the past and that what's more,"the gender differences in attitudes to shopping is much narrower in the younger generation".

Which, of course, works brilliantly for the fashion industry. Fashion changes every season, breeding the hunger as quickly as it fulfils it, so an increased appetite can only be a good thing.

Comme Des Garçons recently opened a store the Comme Des Garçons Guerrilla Store -in Berlin which it plans to close in a year, even if it's making money, the idea being that the style of the shop will expire with the style of the clothes, creating the need for something new.

The eternal dissatisfaction and vacuousness of this culture are encapsulated perfectly by the L'Oreal catchline "Because You're Worth It" -in which money and beauty are somehow equated with self-worth.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir called shopping "a profound pleasure, a discovery, almost an invention". But there is also something in the view of Germaine Greer, who called shopping a "festival of the female oppressed".

"Greer's point is similar to what Susie Orbach and others have written about the fetish of being thin -about how a culture that seems to give women what they want, in fact, disempowers them," Dr Dittmar says. It's difficult to argue with the suggestion that women could be doing something more empowering than fighting over the last Prada-style dress in Topshop.


Emily Davies is The Times fashion writer.

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Handle with care



To the untrained eye, a society dominated by disposables makes for a pretty grim landscape. Maria Fitzpatrick talks to Lucy Casson, a sculptress who finds beauty in what the rest of us throw away.

If you think for a second about the hollow existence of a baked-bean can, you can begin to understand why the Tin Man needed a heart. Soulless, dead, dull, doomed for rejection once their contents have been stolen from them; tin cans are the quintessential rejected object of our times. Line them up and throw stones at them, crush them, or as is often the case, leave them in the gutter. Tin isn't meant for keeping. Which makes the work of sculptress Lucy Casson all the more poignant and precious.

Lucy creates figurative sculptures from tin, capturing humorous and touching daily moments in the form of an invented race of bizarre little 'creatures'. The vulnerable quality of her material only adds to the fragility and humanness of these strange little artworks, and the wonderment that she can create something so expressive and animated from a cold, limp, 'useless' piece of metal.

"They aren't meant to be human, just to express a sensibility that reflects human behaviour", says Lucy. "I'm often asked what they are called. I just call them my 'creatures' ". With their large hands and feet, wiry bodies and exaggeratedly long faces, her characters could be part dinosaur, part animal, a cross-breed of every animated species other than human. But instead of finding their qualities alien, people identify with them, finding them endearing. They see a reflection of their own thoughts and emotions, soldered into an intricately detailed gesture or stance.

"I rely on movement and gesture to a great extent to put feeling and expression into my sculptures," she explains. "You can't achieve the detail of expression with tin that you can with, say, painting or sculpting in clay, so I've learned to observe really carefully the whole body, and to

describe the feeling of the moment with shape, the suggestion of being caught in motion.” This is something that makes her work a particular point of fascination for actors, and people involved in the theatre, who appreciate more than most how gestures can be used to betray thoughts and create atmosphere.

Lucy bases all her sculptures on observations, of both people and animals that are lost in thought or in the middle of an everyday action. “My inspiration comes from watching everything around me. It could be just a glimpse of someone in the garden just stopping work to lean on their spade.”

In fact, a sense of aloneness creates a large part of the atmosphere of her sculptures. She likes the idea, particularly of people acting unselfconsciously, when there is nobody there: “It’s something that started to crop up when I was cleaning up objects I had found, the characters evolved so that they started cleaning too, scrubbing off the surface to make something new out of the raw materials. I relate this to people who clean for a living; they live and work unseen, slightly outside our waking hours, making their alone time a bit surreal and self-absorbed. That time is special time, and very basically human.” The language of cleaning has found its way into the sculptures’ make-up, they often have the ends of wire bottle-cleaners for hair.

Despite having created hundreds of little creatures over the years, ranging from ten centimetres to one and a half metres tall, Lucy insists that there is no story behind them. Although there has been interest from a prolific animation studio, and various children’s authors to develop the characters, she feels reluctant to put what she calls “a beginning, middle and end” to them, concentrating instead on the “instances” that are so powerful in figurative form, involving the person looking at the sculpture in the imagination process.

Not working from sketches or plans, Lucy’s work is dictated by the objects that she finds at car boot sales, and junk -yards. Ideas come together often triggered by an object that a helpful friend has brought her, a plastic switch, a dog’s ball, or in the case of the cheery little guy that she fondly calls ‘the regulator’, a cooker knob that stopped regulating long ago.

“I’m like a magpie in a frenzy most of the time,” she laughs. “You can see I keep everything.” She gestures around the studio (which was, for fifteen years and up until recently her home), a delightful, colourful chaos of bottles and coils, pans, cake tins, and objects I couldn’t begin to identify. “I think it’s great when people bring me stuff to use. It means all the sculptures have history and novelty in them, they’re a mix of factory and hand-made.”

It helps having always had “a frugal lifestyle”. But, while she does see creating art by recycling as



responsible and the ethical option, there is no hint of the eco-warrior about Lucy, nor does she try to convert you to changing your wasteful ways, admitting that it’s a lot to do with a mentality rather than a concerted effort to “be good”.

The majority of the tin she uses is ‘found’ in the street, but occasionally there are large, loose pieces available from factories where they have misprinted olive-oil logos on the outside. Using a ‘non-precious’ material allows for a certain freedom for experimentation. However, there seems to be an even greater creative challenge to working with found objects, because you aren’t starting from scratch but working with what you’ve got, having to work with what surfaces, and to breathe life into it. It’s astonishing to see that the appearance of clothing detail and body segmentation is achieved by careful choice of the appropriate piece of metal; she never paints the finished figures.

The individuality of her characters is something she takes very seriously, and to this trait she attributes the origin of the ‘plume’ given to each figurine: “I didn’t want them to have animal ears, or hair, but something different. Something a bit more unusual.”

“I think that any object, crafted for a function or entirely natural can be beautiful. Everybody has a spatula, we’re saturated with spatulas. Why not make the spare ones into something to look at?”

This is a process that speaks of great devotion: “It’s a big responsibility. Not like gardening, where you plant something, nurture it and then it does its own thing without your intervention, the sculptures are static unless you are there physically making them into something. They can’t evolve without you.”

She does find it consistently surprising, though, when it comes to people’s attitude to recycling in art: “They assume that it’s a fashionable thing, since the eighties, to use recycled materials, but they aren’t aware of a great tradition of recycling in this country. It has always been part of life here. It’s a very industrious place.”

There are those, too, who see her work somewhat like a righteous mission. The Japanese have a philosophy called ‘wabi sabi’, which is a strong belief that there is something almost sacred about reinvesting life in the things we have, as humans given to waste, or rejected. Lucy certainly embodies the idea of celebrating even the things that are not automatically beautiful to the eye. A common motif in her work is that of a ‘carrier’, all sizes and

shapes of creature with ‘found objects’ which they are either holding aloft, or carrying on their backs. They have expressions of childlike, or primitive joy, clinging desperately to a plug or a cheese-grater lawnmower somewhat unnecessarily, since no-one else has recognised its worth.

This childish expressiveness is most likely the outlet for a need for praise that Lucy attributes to childhood: “I was never academic, but when I made something, created something everyone would say how clever I was, and how good I was. I think that stays with you and drives you to create and please those around you.”

Regarding her rather clever ability to turn objects that were designed for functionality (and redundant for that purpose) into something of purely aesthetic value: “I think that any object, crafted for a function or entirely natural can be beautiful. Everybody has a spatula, we’re saturated with spatulas. Why not make the spare ones into something to look at?”

But there’s no direct comparison when it comes to, say, Damien Hirst’s rubbish collection ‘installation’ that famously got swept into a bin by a gallery caretaker. The difference lies in the ‘transformation’ of the material from waste to art, rather than displaying waste *as* art. Although one might expect her to be quite dubious of anyone casually using waste materials in a way that could be seen as a ‘stunt’, or shock-seeking tactic, Lucy is as pragmatic as you get. She explains that, in the art world, while only a few people are ever going to be able to put their name to an unaltered found object and display it as art, the natural course is for artists to act on the impulse that they see as being meaningful, and follow that path.

But there are sometimes limitations. When art is your livelihood, commercial concerns are very real: “Everyone needs to do what they can to survive. Art is determined to an extent by the funding you can get, and especially when you’re starting out, you take all the work and all the commissions you get, you experiment and find your feet. I’ve been lucky that I’ve tried lots of things during my career that have allowed my work to evolve quite naturally.”

While she still teaches workshops occasionally, (usually directly linked to the production of public artworks) the variation in her work was a different matter when she first graduated from Camberwell College of Arts. With a degree in textiles, the first step was working in a textile mill in Somerset, developing weaving looms. But the seriousness of the textile work and the appeal of working in three dimensions led her to start putting together bits of scrap with nothing but long-nosed pliers, a hammer and some soldering material. Lucy “tried her hand at anything” for a while, working on projects as diverse as making desks for Paul Smith and public artworks including a house built

underwire :

entirely from washing machines. And then it all took off. She now has an average of three solo exhibitions a year, both here and in the United States, and many public artwork commissions, including large scale copper, plaster concrete and cast-iron sculptures for places as diverse as the Bristol Healthy Living Centre, Aberdeen Children's hospital and the Sustrans cycle network.

Growing up in Buckinghamshire, she didn't ever question that she could make art her livelihood: "Both my Parents were potters. I grew up used to seeing them make and sell their art, used to the transaction of it, and I suppose I just thought that was how it worked. My Dad did teach too, but as far as I could tell, you made art and sold it. It gave me a real sense that art was what I had to do to survive as well as something I loved doing."

Although she enjoys the variation, Lucy does hint that she wants to change her approach so as to ensure that she can follow her own direction as an artist and retain the integrity of her concept rather than have her work governed too much by outside influences. After all, it's the unusual nature of her art that makes it desirable, and being able to put a unique twist on traditions of figurative representation is where the excitement comes from. A recent work, commissioned and now owned by the Crafts Council was an entire chess-set, made from tin. Pretty standard, you might say, except that the two armies were "pretty reluctant", according to its creator. The thrones for the King and Queen pieces were replaced with swivel chairs and the pawns were all surrendering. Such intelligent observation of human nature should go its own way, without doubt.

As for the future, she doesn't see her career as a constant search for acclaim, she is more interested in having a balanced day to day life, and enjoying the thrill of creation:

"I think the anticipation is what drives me most of all. The most frustrating thing about this work is being constantly struck by big ideas which don't necessarily translate into a substance or colour, and trying to impart them into something that makes the feeling tangible to people. Maybe that's the creation, though, just the idea. A dream. The vision is the fruition of creativity, the creation itself."

Which is pretty much representative of Lucy. Making something of value where there appears at first glimpse to be nothing worthwhile. She turns people's throwaway moments and the throwaway actions into something real and lasting, which can't be discarded without a thought.

To contact Lucy Casson at her Stockwell studio, call 0207 720 1443.



"It's a big responsibility. Not like gardening, where you plant something, nurture it and then it does its own thing without your intervention, the sculptures are static unless you are there physically making them into something. They can't evolve without you."



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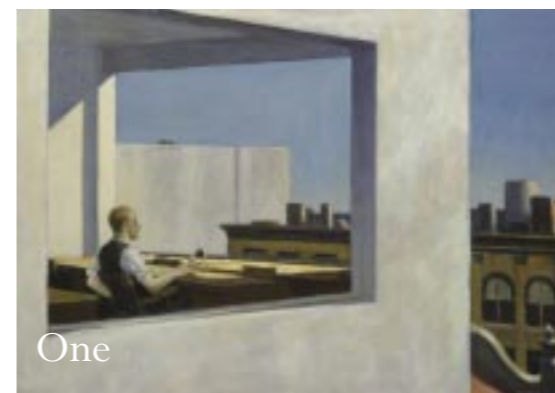
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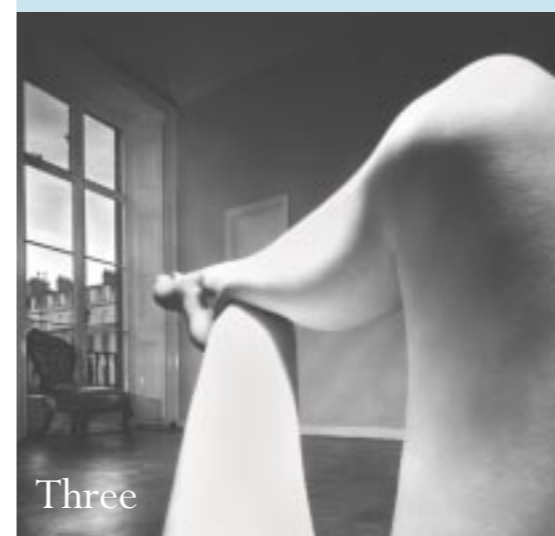
Edward Hopper is considered to be the pre-eminent painter of modern America. This exhibition, spanning Hopper's entire career is an important reflection of the extent to which his paintings are iconic and representative of the twentieth century. There is no mistaking his dramatic use of light and shade and the unerring atmosphere of isolation and loneliness created with muted planes of colour, cropped composition and spacious foregrounds. His subjects could almost be seen to be contemplating their fate within the complex changes taking place in the early half of the century. We can also see the influence of film noir in the sense of the uncanny and the psychological tension and unease within his treatments. Hopper is very accessible, as he concentrates on real people in real predicaments, which despite the time and place hold much in common with our own. **Edward Hopper will be at Tate Modern, Address, until September 5. 0207 887 8888.**



Two

Two:

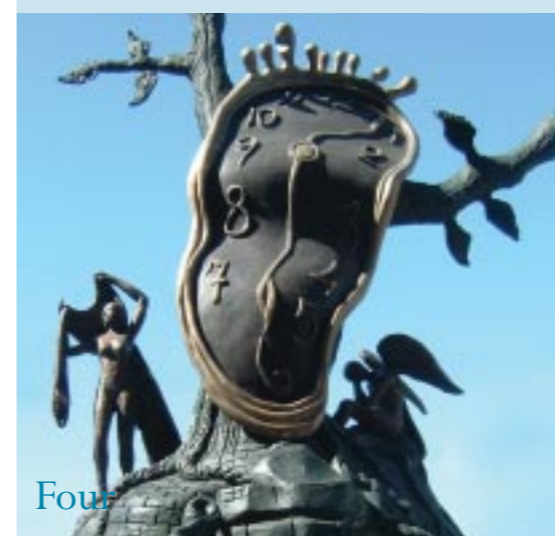
Coming soon to the Hayward Gallery, an exciting new exhibition which brings together 100 works by 70 International artists whose subject matter is the human face. In comparing these works with conventional portraiture, we are provoked to ask whether the representation of the face by contemporary artists and photographers can still be seen as expressive of the subject's identity or present any imagistic truth, in a generation of miracle drugs, plastic technology and genetic engineering, but perhaps more significantly in this debate, digital manipulation technology. Are we witnessing the death of the portrait? Featured photographs range from the celebrity look-alike narratives of Alison Jackson to the bizarre self-portraits of performance artist Orlan, whose surgically altered facial features are blended with pre-Columbian pottery imagery using computer manipulation. This promises to be an awakening, an important step towards really challenging our notions of truth and beauty. **About Face opens on June 24 at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank Centre, London SE1. 08703 800 400.**



Three

Three:

Best loved for the humorous realism of daily life that he captured during the years between the world wars, Bill Brandt's photographs are at once portraits of the contrasts in society and documentary of the unseen moments that summed up the spirit of an era. Despite being rooted in history, the sentiments in his photographs have a timeless quality which is quite powerful in their original state. In celebration of the centenary of his birth, the V&A is displaying over 150 beautiful vintage gelatin-silver prints from the Bill Brandt archive, the best collection of his work to be seen in Britain for 30 years. The Perspective of Nudes series is particularly striking, tracing the development from studies of landscapes in England to surreal experimentations in which dramatic images of nudes merge with landscapes. The exhibition also boasts a number of post 1940 portrait photographs, of figures such as Graham Greene and Francis Bacon. **Bill Brandt, a centenary retrospective is at the Victoria & Albert museum, address, until July 25. tel.**



Four

Four:

The gallery devoted to the work of Surrealist artist Salvador Dali is putting on a great show for his centenary year. Alongside the infamous Mae West 'lips' sofa, his existentialist bronze sculptures and an impressive collection of paintings, the gallery has obtained a collection of Dali's book illustrations, which are as uniquely stylised and bizarre as you would expect. Appropriately for an Artist of such intellectual standing, the gallery is arranged thematically, into creations representing 'dreams and fantasy', sensuality and femininity' and 'religion and mythology.' **Dali Universe has late opening throughout June. Country Hall, South Bank, London SE1. 0207 620 2720**

Prints charming

Maria Fitzpatrick asks why we're all suddenly going for print

Once upon a time we had Paisley, Pucci and Liberty; a handful of eponymous prints which were recognised the world over, less for capturing the mood of an era, but because they were used, with little or no variation as a signature. It seems that the rest of the fashion world has caught up. We are surrounded with prints, repeating patterns whose influences span innumerable cultures and epochs and which are swiftly replacing the logo as the international code of recognition for fashioned garments.

This heady whirlwind of florals, geometric graphics and vintage chinoiserie isn't just any coincidence. It has been a gradual process, a logical step for fashion. Towards the end of the 1990s, the blatant use of logos for status was increasingly seen to be ostentatious and tacky, no longer symbolic of the quality of a design, or the values of a brand, but a cheap trick. Before they cottoned on to this, however, the world-famous fashion houses seemed determined to stamp their monograms indiscriminately on all their designs. This resulted in repeating patterns of logos, morphing to create the effect of a signature print, which became more recognisable than the logo in its own right. And hence these prints are becoming increasingly widespread, as designers take advantage of the opportunity to transcend appealing to the dedicated few who can recognise a coat by its cut.

The current state of cross-fertilisation between the fashion industry and interior design certainly has had quite an impact. The success of textile and soft-furnishings designers like Neisha Crosland, and fashion designer Jonathan Saunders, who have taken printmaking back to a very organic, hand-worked screen-printing process has prompted a renewed interest in textile and print design as a much more credible pursuit in its own right.

Belford Prints, based in Cheshire, process print detail onto fabric, and count Matthew Williamson, Eley Kishimoto and among their fashion clients. According to Patricia Belford, it's a technology based revolution as much as anything:

"The arrival of digital printing has opened up the scope for print in fashion. Unlimited colours and very imaginative prints are now normal, whereas a few years ago this would have not been possible because of screen costs."

And it is a very welcome change. Prints can convey so much about the personality of a designer. They can be evocative of both their mood and cultural heritage, so much so that choosing to put yourself out there with a print emblazoned on your bag is tantamount to pledging allegiance to a clan or tribe, as in the tradition of tartans. It may be rooted in the British tradition of school uniforms, but if so it must have some sort of eccentric appeal, as this trend for proclaiming allegiance to London labels, especially, is being taken up all over the globe. Overseas sales from the apparel and textiles industry have risen to £5.5 billion.

But it is in successfully finding the one pattern that simply and effortlessly expresses a design sensibility that signature prints show a designer's true colours. If you want those around you to know that you are modern-minded, inclined towards convention but with a fun, quirky edge, the decision to paint your bathroom with Paul Smith stripes is a subtler approach than socialising with your labels on the outside.

You have to wonder, though, are we just being kept in check as consumers, programmed to buy affiliated products with the 'royal seal' print of our favourite designers? As Patricia Belford says, "name and marketing is everything now", and the almost hypnotic optical attraction and easy-recognition of prints is excellent marketing.

Paul Smith himself, has emphasised that the decision to put his signature prints on chairs and umbrellas is not just an exercise in brand extension, but a simple way for the fashion designer to experiment with entirely different design disciplines. Coming from anyone else, you wouldn't believe it, but we'll take the word of a designer whose true essence has been notoriously, tantalisingly hidden in the prints of colourful clouds and thumbprints inside cuffs and coat-linings.



design

One:

If you haven't been to see it yet, the Designer of the Year exhibition is well worth a visit. The work of the shortlist of four designers' up for the £25,000 prize is on display only until June 13th. Go to gaze in wonderment at an ergonomic football boot that has taken Craig Johnson ten years to design, with over 1000 prototypes, and to understand where the internet imagery we know and love evolved from: Daniel Brown's digital animations could almost be described as sensuous, not technological at all, pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved in experimental multimedia. The complex and intricately detailed design of Sam Buxton's 3D portrait business-card, made in stainless steel has to make his idea the world's most innovative piece of self-promotion. We can't help but marvel at the intelligence of this Styrene light, by Paul Cockledge, made by applying heat to vending machine cups until they moulded into an orb with a translucent effect, which softens the light's glow. The contrast between the nature of the entries is astonishing, and having such a high standard of entrants to choose from is testament to the Design Museum's constant efforts to successfully promote and acknowledge areas of design other than fashion and architecture. **Designer of the year is at The Design Museum, Shad Thames, SE1 2YD. 0870 833 9955.**



One



Two

Two:

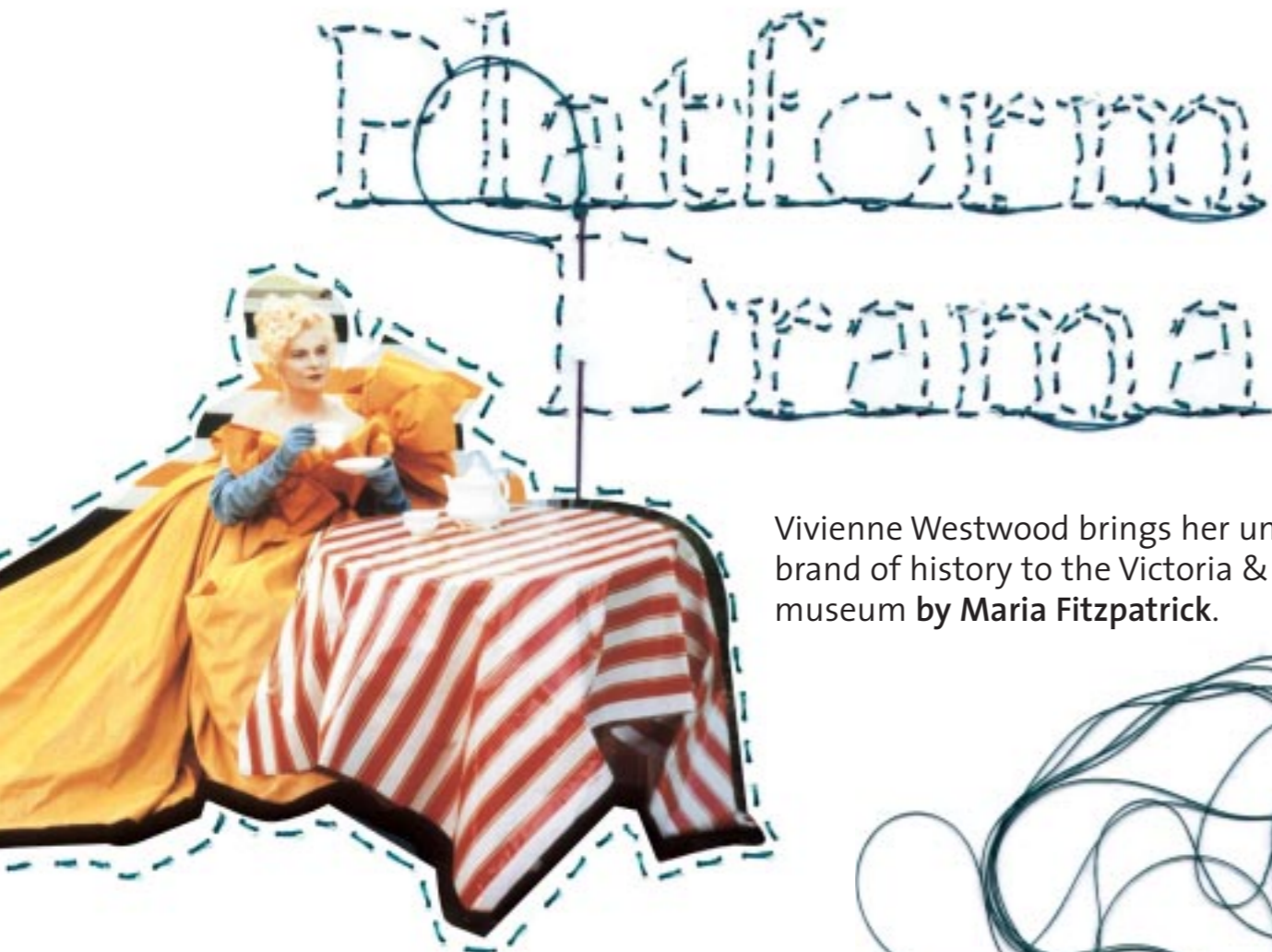
Once in a while a strangely anti-materialistic product designer comes along and just puts everything back into perspective. This is what we like about Marti Guixe, the quirky Catalan who famously gave us 'HiBye' in 2001, a vision of all the elements of modern life in packaged pill form, and who creates the interiors of the Camper retail outlets. He's irreverent and smart, and his designs make consistently simple yet humorous and effective anarchic statements. He's on strong form at the moment: We're really into the idea of Do: Frame masking tape illustrated with faux gilt corning so that you can make your own gallery at a moment's notice. And the beach towel that instructs you on how to determine (by their position) the political ideology of the person lying on it. The 'screaming t-shirt', from the 'Design against trend' label, however, is just brilliant for its simplicity, commenting wryly on the 'communicative power of the t-shirt'. Also available in 'thinking' and 'speaking' versions. **Marti Guixe Designs are available from Trico, Japan, www.bytrico.com**



Three

Three:

All our ideas about wallpaper are about to change; it has been resurrected in the name of art. Deciding that it has been condemned for too long as the hallmark of conformism, a few designers have taken it upon themselves to invest some creative energy and give wallpaper new potential for creating highly original interior effects. Crafting their media onto each flat sheet, as if on a canvas, they have come up with some modern, funky variations on the theme. Claire Coles uses a collage technique to break up large, flat surfaces of colour. Her designs are like small patchwork artworks, made from leather and paper, all sewn on to the hangings with embroidery thread. Deborah Bowness creates a 'trompe l'oeil' effect by processing photographs of objects that might be in your bedroom onto the paper, with special edition pieces featuring clothes by hot young designers like Emma Cook 'hanging' on the wall. These ideas are on display, among others at the Geffrye Museum's current 'Flock 'n' roll' exhibition. Alternatively, if you want to dive right in to the most kitsch versions available, have a look at Mousseshop's green grass or sunset styles. Instead of indiscriminately shrouding your walls with a plain, tolerable pattern, wallpaper designs should be seen as a way to add volume and character to a space with selective wallpaper 'features', such as a single wall papered to create a point of distinction from minimalist furnishing. 'Flock 'n' roll' runs until 31st August at the Geffrye Museum, 136 Kingsland Rd, E2. **Deborah Bowness' designs are available at Selfridges. 08708 377 377.**



Vivienne Westwood brings her unique brand of history to the Victoria & Albert museum by Maria Fitzpatrick.



When it comes to putting gowns in glass cases, there will always be opposition from traditionalists. The public consciousness seems bound to the role of our museums as the resting place for the immobile artefact, that which embodies and preserves notions of an untouchable, distant time and place, valuable primarily as a solid frame of reference for dramatic subsequent changes to our culture.

And then we have twentieth century fashion, so fickle and transient by nature, regarded by many as totally unsuitable for this mode of historical reverential display: Viking tunics have a significant place in history, pretty frocks worn by celebrities do not.

But what we tend to forget is that while contemporary fashion is often viewed as a chain of fleeting fads and momentary sartorial preoccupations, it was not always the case. Prior to the late twentieth century, mainstream fashions changed slowly, assumed very gradually in imitation of the aristocracy and upper classes', driven forward by their constant pursuit of further distinction from the people on the street.

Vivienne Westwood played a crucial, if not *the* crucial role in changing this cycle, interrupting its gentle flow by inventing anti-fashion. She admits that she fell into fashion quite reluctantly at first, but under the influence of Malcolm McLaren, the voice of anarchy in the 1970s, manager of the Sex Pistols and her then partner, she started to create hand-made clothes that summed up the feeling of the anarchist movement. Disillusionment, unemployment and the sense of emptiness in society were given a confrontational, controversial expression in the form of Punk clothing; even knitwear looked aggressive. Daring parodies of the trappings of royalty and blatant sexuality were the answer to "the one thing that would provoke Middle England most of all", not only to dissent and anger, but into looking for freedom.

Almost by accident, and not without irony, anti-fashion, with its roots in 'street-style' had, and continues to have the most significant impact on the nature of high fashion than any movement of the last century. The trans-gender style of the Punks and New Romantics challenged gender conventions and introduced the idea of androgyny,

but more significantly, catwalk designers now take their inspiration from the mood and the whims of the people on the street, this 'bubble-up diffusion' totally reversing the previously unchallenged didactic role of Couture and giving birth to many an independent style-bible since.

Westwood claimed fashion for the individual, a concept that was previously unworkable, unthinkable. In customising clothing with pins, rubber, chains and chicken-bones, she tore away from rules, the idea of a single garment of 'correctness'. With its origins in the working class, street fashion made fashion accessible to everyone, not just the people who could afford it. We now speak of the individual's taste over 'good taste', of interpretation of trends and self-expression rather than collective imitation.

When the Victoria & Albert Museum acquired an outfit from Westwood's 1981 'Pirates' collection late in 1983, they were ahead of their time in realising the importance of her work, because it seems that it is only in retrospect that the significance of this collection has emerged. In fact, Piracy is perhaps the

best motif for a designer who falls upon costume history greedily like unearthed treasure, plundering where she wishes, and steering us into new territory.

And it is this fearlessness which is certainly the reason Westwood came to be celebrated as a true original. While her designs can be seen as perverse, or at the very least outrageous, the common thread in all her ideas is what Curator Claire Wilcox calls: "deliberately pursuing the unfashionable." She brought tweeds and tartan back from obscurity, and English eccentricity into the limelight. In the 1980s, when femininity was almost a dirty word, she was exaggerating and sexualising the female form with corsets, crinolines and bustles. Rather than giving in to the simplistic (and fashionable) interpretation of these as garments of repression, she concentrated on emphasising and celebrating the body, while cunningly 'power-dressing' her own clients in jackets tailored to resemble armour, and platform shoes, which quite literally put women on a pedestal.

But how can it be that we *still* speak of Westwood as subversive and shocking, that her reputation



endures when, in this Postmodern era, the new is very rare, and rarely shocking? Because she continues to surprise us. When everyone else is just recycling the safe, commercial options, she gambles despite what has often been the brink of bankruptcy.

This consistent rebellion against established tradition has made it possible for the 'anything goes' mentality of today to exist. From the frock-coats of the 19th century clergy to Baroque fine art, from imagery of the Belle-épouques to the French Revolution, the brilliance of her creations comes from the boldness to infuse the modern and everyday with the nostalgia of polite societies and their conventions. These strange juxtapositions paved the way for Gaultier, McQueen and Galliano, (all the so-called 'bad boys' of fashion) to shock and delight with transformed historical motifs and twisted meanings.

But it's not just the slash-trousered or comically-bustiered among us that have fallen under her spell. It is testament to Westwood's continual innovation over the past 34 years that her most prevalent inventions are almost forgotten; they have passed into everyday language to the point where we forgot that they weren't always there. Tube-tops, platform shoes and slogans on t-shirts, trainers on the catwalk: all in a day's work.

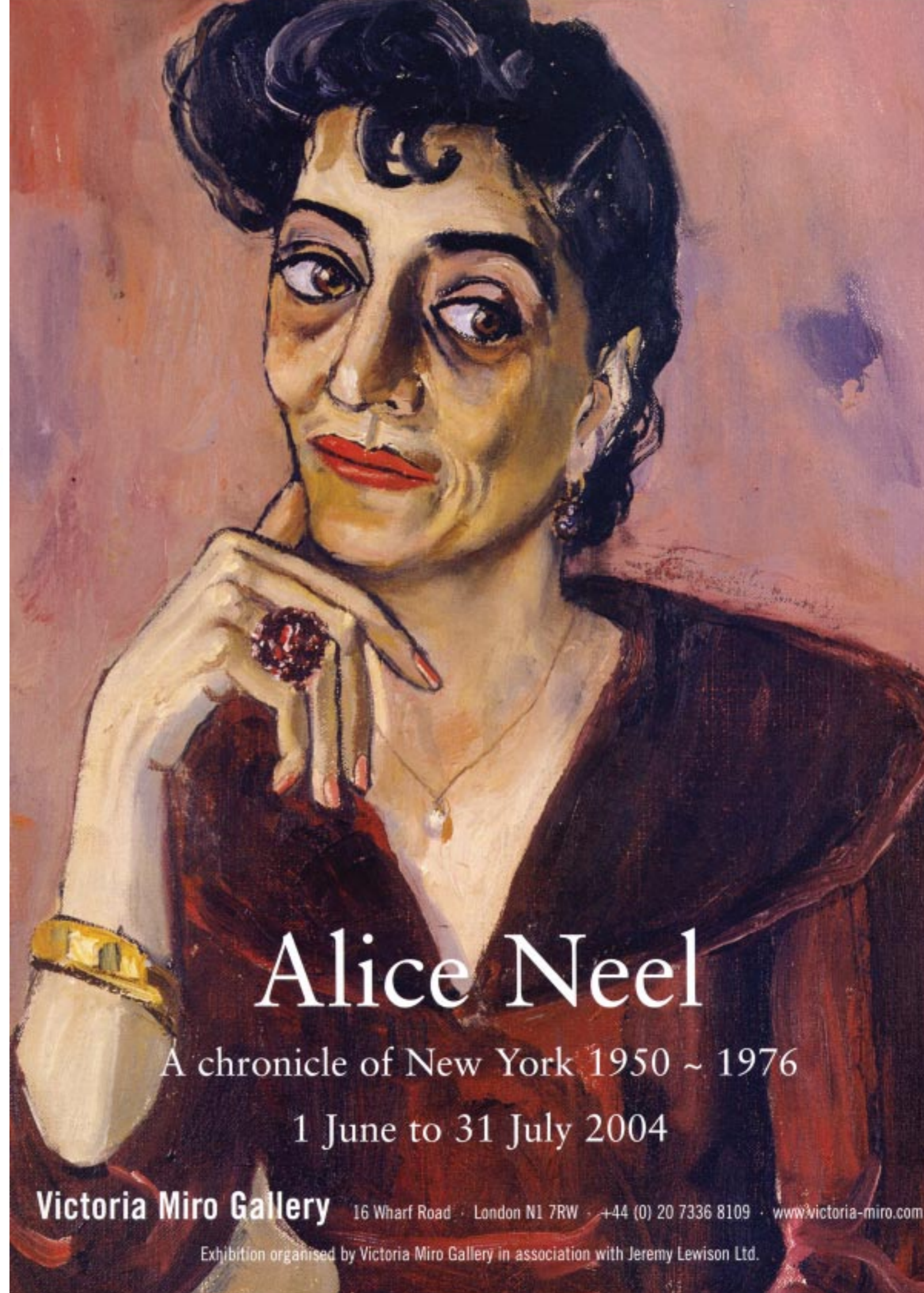
While the exhibition acknowledges the Punk era, as the root of Westwood's love of fashion, her eagerness to distance herself from the movement that happened almost by accident is apparent. Westwood's skills as a seamstress and

her ability to "push fabrics to the limit" solicit open-mouthed admiration from visitors, particularly upon learning that she never had any formal training. Claire Wilcox sees this as being far from a hindrance, but an essential ingredient in her freedom to create, "free from discipline". Her circular seams and tailoring of taffeta were all self-taught, purely for the love of creation. We can see in the scope of her intelligent yet wildly eclectic ideas a refreshing vision of fashion as intellectual and sincere, rather than superficial and incidental.

The archived, 'static' presentation of Westwood's work is not really in keeping with a charismatic energy that can't be held down. After all, as she says herself, "clothes are meant to be worn", but the film footage of landmarks in her career alongside the displays replaces some of the lost verve.

However, drama and staged 'slips' aside, it is perhaps the intention of the retrospective for us to view Westwood's contribution to culture not as simply fashion, but as history: a solid standpoint for the twentieth century, as nobody has yet surpassed her. A legacy that is not cold, preserved and waiting for the next big thing to replace it, but one that is still sending ripples to the outskirts of the pool, driving us to see that we are not just changing our clothes but future ideas about ourselves and what fashion should be.

Vivienne Westwood Retrospective runs until July 11th at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7. 020 7 942 2000. www.vam.ac.uk



Alice Neel

A chronicle of New York 1950 ~ 1976

1 June to 31 July 2004

Victoria Miro Gallery

16 Wharf Road · London N1 7RW · +44 (0) 20 7336 8109 · www.victoria-miro.com

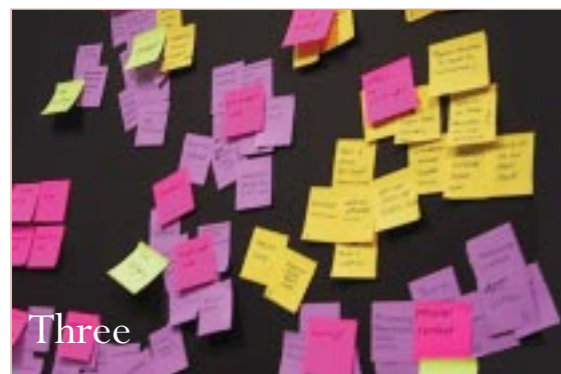
Exhibition organised by Victoria Miro Gallery in association with Jeremy Lewison Ltd.



One



Two



Three



Four



Five



Six

Iconic designs

Underwire asked Ian Logan, head of the Ian Logan Design Company to choose the ten products that he believes to be the most iconic designs of the Twentieth Century.

1. Velcro Quite amazing! Invented by a Swiss man by the name of George de Mestral in the 1900s. Walking through the countryside he saw lots of those 'burrs' sticking to him and put them under a microscope. He found a company in Lyons in France to make the product. The name comes from Velvet, Velour in French and ' Hook' Crochet in French. Patented in 1951. They are taken for granted and used in every country in the world.

2. Cable Ties Another great invention and a great piece of industrial thinking. Invented in the US for bunching electrical wires and looms for buildings, aircraft, the space programme etc. Before the cable tie all wiring looms were done by sting and by hand. The tie as we know it was invented in 1968. It has an amazing number of uses – it's even used by the police for handcuffs.

3. Post-it Notes I cannot imagine how many Post-its are used every day but what a fantastic little invention. They were produced by Art Fry an employee of 3M. He took the glue from another employee at 3M and used it to make the first Post-it.

4. Eileen Gray Coffee Table A very beautiful and very useful little coffee table designed by Eileen Gray in 1929. She was Irish and trained as an artist at the Slade. She became very well known for her lacquer ware and for being part of the Bauhaus. The table is made from glass and chrome.

5. Wilhelm Wagenfeld Table Lamp A truly proportionally beautiful table lamp designed by Bauhaus designer Wilhelm Wagenfeld in the 30s. He was a silverware designer and this particular lamp is the most famous item he designed.



Seven



Eight



Nine



Nine



Ten

6. Hans Coray Chair Another 30s piece of design and about the only thing that Hans Coray, a Swiss designer produced. The chair made from aluminium is both light and stackable. I believe it's one of those designs that has had a great deal of influence on many pieces of modern furniture. It was originally designed for the 1939 Swiss National Exhibition.

7. The Beach D17S Staggerwing A truly Classic small business aircraft from the 1930s (a pretty amazing period). A design by Walter Beach called The Beach D17S Staggerwing. It was very advanced for it's age – comfortable, fast, efficient and could hold 5 people. It is still very much sought after even today. It is a strong and beautiful design.

8. Tivoli Radio Another radio, which I sell in the shop called the TIVOLI. Designed by an American engineer called Henry Kloss. Henry Kloss worked on the sound system for 40 years to develop the best sounding radio yet designed. The radio is small, very simple and good looking. Henry Kloss

died a couple of years ago before the true potential of his designs were realised.

9. Rollerblade/Ski Boot Two truly superb pieces of plastic design, the Rollerblade and the Ski boot. These two items can only be made out of plastic and are quite ergonomically wonderful.

10. iMac/iPod And last but not at all least the products I am using at the moment – the sensational iMac and the iPod both designed by English product designer Jonathan Ives.

Ian Logan runs The Ian Logan Design Company, and designs for many top companies in the UK and abroad. The company recently merged with 'The Nest'. He has always felt that designers would make interesting if not the best buyers and so opened a retail space at the front of his design studio. The shop has been a great success and customers love its eclectic feel. Ian Logan Design, 42 Charterhouse Square, EC1M 6EA. 020 7600 9888.

health

One:

We think we need it to concentrate in the mornings, but we're wrong. Researchers at the University of Galway have proven that caffeine has no stimulatory effect on regular coffee-drinkers. It does not decrease fatigue or improve concentration. Controlled tests on 120 people, using caffeine on one half of the group and a placebo on the other revealed that what we *think* is the stimulating effect of the cup of coffee kicking in is in fact, just the body responding with relief to our feeding the caffeine addiction that we have built up. The tests also revealed that the increased risk of heart disease for regular coffee-drinkers is greater than previously thought. But the good news: you can rid your system of its dependency in seven days. Try supplementing every thought of a cup with a glass of water this summer and know you're doing yourself a favour.

Two:

The suntan is the ultimate health and beauty paradox. How unfair is it that the ultimate no-no for both the health and the long-term appearance of our skin makes you look so, well, healthy and beautiful? We seem doomed to continue what Coco Chanel started when she accidentally fell asleep in the sun on the French Riviera (or that's how the story goes). All the exfoliating and the inevitable 'orange-ankles' incidents make the fake tan route too time-consuming and traumatic, so despite knowing full-well about the dangers of UV rays, we love the tan too much to let go of the deckchair. Until now. Heidi Klein, the all-year holiday one-stop shop in Notting Hill has installed a Jean Paul Tanning spray-tan booth that actually creates a natural (yes, really), moisture-rich tan for your own skin tone in 60 seconds. And there's no waiting around to let it dry. It costs £28 (but think of what you save in sun-cream). So now there's no excuse not to save your skin. **Heidi Klein 020 7243 5665.**

Three:

While it's always a good habit to look closely at the person giving the advice, Prince Charles' new foray into the hair care industry is definitely worth a try. The Prince's brand Duchy Originals has developed a range of shampoos and conditioners in conjunction with celebrity hair-stylist Daniel Galvin Junior. While the idea of using all organic products is a nice idea, the reality is that the prices of the leading reputable organic brands are quite prohibitive. Duchy Originals will be a welcome addition to this field, as an affordable supermarket brand with a reputation for the highest quality and commitment to safe ingredients. The range will be available in Waitrose from June 21st.

Four:

Imagine if you could have had an exact insight into the genes of your ancestors ... Our DNA holds the key which can pinpoint the secrets of our unique biological identities; it's no wonder we're all fascinated by it. An interesting new twist on the 'time capsule' means that you, or the essence of you really can live forever. The DNA immortality kit contains sampling equipment for making a DNA sample (from a swab of your cheek-cells), a guide to your DNA, and hygienic storage packaging so that you can preserve your identity for the benefit of future generations of your family, who will be able to learn from the unique patterns of coded genetic material you possess, how they relate to their health, hereditary illnesses, appearance, behaviour and the impact of the environment in changing predetermined traits. Or follow the second option and have a DNA profile carried out by CATgee so you can learn about why you are who you are. This ID profiles you in a way that no photograph can. **CATgee DNA Immortality costs £19.95. Available from Selfridges.**



One



Two



DUCHY ORIGINALS

Three



Four

discovery



For ladies who can't get enough ...

THE DISCOVERY: Pawn-shops are returning to the high street.

Once the place of financial refuge for the desperate; their reputation tinged with a shoddy-carpeted, damp-smelling sadness, pawn shops never disappeared completely but were sitting dormant and run-down, a reminder of harder times (or at least one without credit-cards) almost waiting for times to change. And change they have. But does their recent revival as the offbeat source of loan finance have any hope of a future?

Even as recently as the 1970s, parting with a good suit or a family heirloom was the only way the working class could earn the little extra to tide them over until payday. But it was a primitive practice, wasn't it? Perhaps not. When the relatively sophisticated systems of debit-cards and debt-consolidation are the order of the day, it's hard for us to imagine the element of sacrificing necessary belongings in order to survive. As a system, however, like all the simplest ideas, it worked, by charging astronomical rates of interest, relying on our desperation, and of course, on the premise that most people will return for their treasures. Sentimental value makes for the perfect emotional blackmail.

So what's the problem with frequenting pawn shops as a solution to the modern third-week of the month syndrome? The average person in the UK owes at least £4.5 thousand pounds. With our established 'credit mentality', we're quite used to being indebted, but aren't the stakes higher with objects of emotional sentimental value?

The difference is that nowadays, the things to which we attribute the greatest financial value are the novelties, and once the aura of grandeur wears off, they're disposable. Getting by has an entirely different definition. We're shopaholics. New for old works for us. This time it's not engagement rings we're handing over with a sniffle, but the cool stuff we thought we wanted and just got bored of. Yes, they'll give you money for most things of re-saleable value, and if you don't return for them, well, they just become the property of the pawnbroker.

As they catch on to this, more and more young women are turning to pawning their valuables as a source of ready cash and not returning for them. Deserting their Jimmy Choos and Playstations, Vespas and PCs, they're taking to the streets to replace them with newfound objects of desire. Dickensian poverty it is not. Nor is it charming retro consumer nostalgia. It's an alarming new twist on a commonsense tradition; a cash bonanza scheme fuelling the whims of the impulse-shopper.

Harvey and Thompson, the biggest pawnbroking chain based in the UK are making a move from the back-streets and into the shopping malls, to establish themselves in an arena of 'needs-based' shopping; a place associated more with necessity than luxury. But they should watch out for this clever clientele, because, hey, when those overdrafts are gone, they'll have to feed their habit somehow.





Headscarf from H&M
Bracelet by Mikey
Vest-Top from Topshop
Shorts by Princess Tam-Tam

A MATTER OF TIME



Cardigan from Anglomania by Vivienne Westwood
Bikini from a selection at Figleaves.com
Pencil-skirt, vintage
Shoes by Jasper Conran



Halter-neck top and skirt, both vintage styles from Rokit
Sunglasses by Chanel
Earrings from Butler & Wilson
Scarf, vintage as before



Camisole top by YA at House of Fraser
Bikini briefs as before



Bikini as before
Shorts as before



Dress by Cacharel
Pearls from Butler and Wilson
Cardigan as before



Toys in the attic



The World Health Organisation predicts that by 2020, the global burden of depressive illness will be second only to heart disease. **Maria Fitzpatrick** investigates the happy alternatives emerging for the women who can't talk their way out of it.

Kneeling, up to her elbows in the soapy water, Alice shifts over on the carpet inclining her head slightly with concentration as she pours bubbles into the bigger of the two jars, the red one. She's smiling to herself. Which is a good sign. They've been worried about her, all the voices. She's not writing yet, and she doesn't seem to be able to speak, or relate to anyone. She prefers to play by herself. The fact is Alice simply hasn't got the energy to talk. A copywriter and mother of two with chronic depression is finally getting help.

Although she feels alone, she's far from it. As recently as Ally McBeal, 'therapy culture' was still pretty foreign over here. The world and his dog had a therapist, and it was all pretty funny. All the eccentric slapstick 'crazies' humour was so extreme that we completely missed the point. But the prozac generation jokes have fizzled out. Maybe it's the brutal scrutiny of new wave chat-show hosts, but it seems like everywhere you turn at the moment, someone is 'coming out' about the time they suffered from depression. The stigma of the unknown has all but gone. Never before have people been so frank about mental illness, and yet the people who really need the help often don't want to talk about it.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists estimates that 8% of women in Britain are suffering from depression at any one time, almost twice as many than men. This may be partly because our bodies

are in a constant state of flux, hormonally. But leading Psychiatrists have found that women seem to be particularly prone to the destructive negative thought patterns that are symptomatic of long term or recurring depression. Women quite easily slip into a self-defeating way of thinking about themselves so that minor adversity can provoke quite severe depression.

The sad and simple truth is, depression can come, as it did for Alice, "out of nowhere." While some people are genetically predisposed to it, the chemical imbalance in the brain can be caused purely by a traumatic experience, drug-taking, a long-term illness or stress. Stress can act alone, but it usually just reinforces factors that are already present and it simply worsens the illness.

The mental health charity, SANE, operates a research unit in Oxford to constantly monitor the origins of psychosis. They suggest that the growing levels of stress in modern life have seen the levels of depression soaring. Especially for women who are finding it hard to cope with the expectations of a society that expects perfection. It's not enough to be a successful career woman, or a perfect mother, lover, friend. You have to be all the above. Top that with debt, divorce, violence ... the 'prevention is better' rule isn't a great deal of help. We need a cure.

Traditionally, depression was always treated with medication or psychotherapy, or both. But what if

that doesn't work? Alice tried two courses of antidepressants which, far from being a miracle cure, left her feeling even worse than before:

"I felt nothing. Just total numbness and indifference. I kind of expected that when my low feeling went away, that the highs would come back, that I'd be able to enjoy the good things again. But I ended up wishing that the pain would come back, just to feel something real."

Others find the intensity of talking therapy far too traumatic. We're constantly told that talking is the key, but the medical consensus is that in some cases it does more harm than good. Some people feel the need to justify the way they feel, and there's the added pressure of having to find words to convey a feeling or describe a difficult experience.

This is where creative therapy has stepped in to fill the void. James Hughes, author of 'Altered States – creativity under the influence' explains that the acts of playing and creating are a much more natural way of venting our feelings, especially if they are irrational, as is often the case with depression:

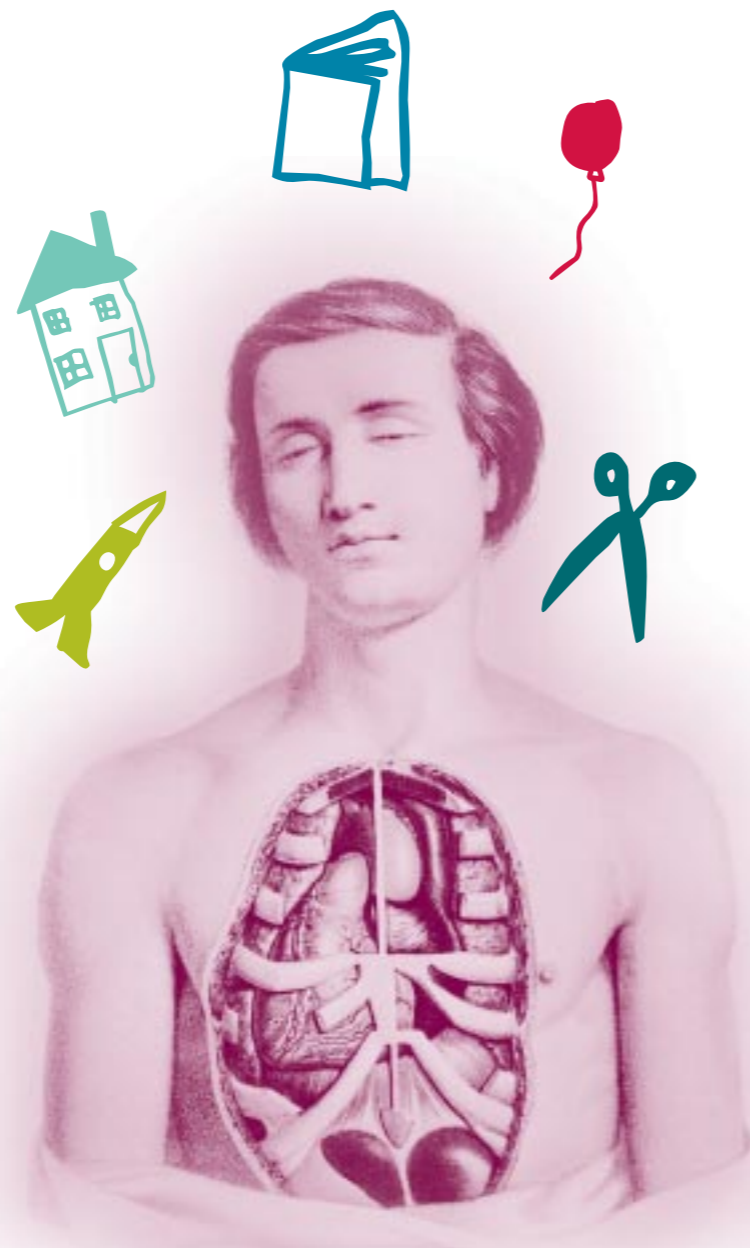
"Irrational messages lose content when translated into words, and often become unacceptable. As long as a message is primarily encoded in images, the irrational is not challenged. Language is an analytical system which is easy to dismiss."

Creative therapies were first developed in the 1930s in the United States. Psychiatrists were aware that by using an object as the stimulus for conversation, patients were much more at ease, impulsive in their behaviour and experienced a 'release' that was never achieved by talking, alone. This awareness, coupled with the rise of recognised behavioural difficulties in children led to the use of toys and art materials in a new 'creative therapy'. The technique started to emerge in Britain in the 1980s, and has since developed into a range of therapeutic processes which can drastically improve the quality of life of adults suffering from clinical depression and anxiety.

If you have ever collapsed laughing after a water-fight or experienced that strangely calming feeling when painting the bedroom walls you can probably understand why play and creativity could have a profound effect. But with most of us, that's usually as far as it gets.

According to a spokesman at the British Association of Play Therapists, creative therapy is based on very simple theoretical principles: "We, as human beings tend to want to actualise our inner potential – including any aspects of creativity, curiosity and the desire to become more effective and autonomous in our daily lives. We require warmth, respect and acceptance from others. Children, particularly, instinctively look for approval or positive regard. This develops into a

"It is quite common for fully grown adults to have a fit of giggling; a purely euphoric reaction to the feeling of freedom"



learned need for positive self-regard. In the adult both needs are in place. But in the depressed condition, none of these are fulfilled."

People suffering from depression often describe the feelings of hopelessness, insignificance and loss of control. In a quiet room, removed from the fear or exhaustion of having to justify your tears or rage, creative therapy lets you get to know yourself again, and take control of your world, even if that only extends as far as the playroom door. When you play there is no right or wrong. You make and break the rules. Silliness is more than acceptable.

In a quiet room, removed from the fear or exhaustion of having to justify your tears or rage, creative therapy lets you get to know yourself again, and take control of your world, even if that only extends as far as the playroom door.

"I love witnessing that moment when someone just lets go," says Michele Bartlett, who runs his own creative therapy centre in Surrey.

"At first, they are so guarded, but there's always a trigger. Some of my clients love dressing up in crazy wigs and things, others really respond to music while they're colouring or painting. One of the most reluctant and sceptical women I've treated boasts about how her collages now take pride of place on her fridge at home."

All creative therapies use images – in art, clay, sand or sound to help the therapist understand the client. James Hughes explains that in early childhood, most activity takes place in the 'image-making' right side of the brain, rather than the 'analytical' left side. Shapes and colours acquire multiple meanings before they are "circumscribed in language." These shapes and colours escape in doodlings and paintings, expressing what we don't or can't say.

Regular visitors to Bartlett's playroom are often surprised by a new and often messy activity, such as the sandbox or water trough, or a challenge in clay. He calls this "accessing experiences at a sensory level."

This is why sand and water, and finger painting are regular features. Anything tactile and sensual – The sense of touch, fragrances, sounds, repetitive actions can evoke feelings and memories. "This acts as a bridge to the unconscious," he explains, "offering new insights into the individual."

One of the biggest challenges of creative therapy is 'relearning' how to think and behave like a child. Children enjoy a period of time, however brief, when they don't question the boundary between

imagination and reality. They feel no embarrassment or selfconsciousness. With this comes freedom to express themselves in a truthful and unconsidered way, that we, as adults, have long forgotten.

Leading play therapist Clark Moustakas explains that playing and creation communicate our unconscious experiences, desires, thoughts and emotions. As negative feelings and emotions are expressed they become less intense, resulting in more positive feelings and balance. Therapists try to harness this expression by letting adults play and experiment, unhindered, without involving themselves, and then helping them to interpret what they have unconsciously revealed about their pain.

"We are trained to interpret understand the 'metaphorical content' of the play, a painting or reaction. Triumph over problems is quite symbolic, but it begins to feel real," says Bartlett.

"It is quite common for fully grown adults to have a fit of giggling; a purely euphoric reaction to the feeling of freedom. They are so used to feeling controlled and repressed by the depression that they react almost hysterically to the lack of it."

Play and art therapy are still relatively new to the medical field, with under a thousand creative therapists working in the UK. As yet there have been very few studies on the benefits for adults, apart from the word of the practitioners themselves, who are happy to admit that these methods seem to achieve results faster than counselling, with clients reporting overwhelming new levels of resilience and the ability to cope again. Which has to give hope to thousands of women like Alice, struggling to find a voice. Thomas Jefferson once said: "The art of life is the art of avoiding pain." A modern art that we can all relate to.





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fashion

One:

After two seasons of cinching in the purse strings, Versace are at least presenting catwalk collections again. But it's more of the same. The fact is, Donatella's speciality, the flashy, diamante, thigh-flashing premiere gown is desirable, for sure, but totally inappropriate for those of us who don't have that place in St. Tropez. But, despite spiralling losses, and reported debts of over \$170 million, she appears to be unable to stray from this hyper-glamorised Barbie-land long enough to appeal to anyone who doesn't get her dresses for free. Unlike other leading fashion houses, Versace haven't adapted their design strategy, or diffused their ideals about their consumer base at all in response to financial difficulty. They should take note of the turmoil within LVMH and Gucci, and make changes before it's too late. Sexy dresses are all very well, but so are sales. On June 30th, Allegra, Donatella's daughter will inherit a 50% stake in the empire, so who knows what changes that 'little shift' might bring?

Two:

However, Couture might never be the same if the rumours about a Karl Lagerfeld and H&M affiliation are true. Up until recently, the high street was going from strength to strength, with Topshop, Debenhams and New Look (to name a few) giving young talent in this country an outlet and a much-needed kickstart, and all of us access to outstanding choice and originality more akin to high fashion. But when Clements Ribeiro are putting their name to a range in Alders, we're going into dangerous territory. An affiliation with a dowdy old-fashioned department store can only cheapen the image of this talented design duo, and drag others down with them. And as for Karl's philandering: good for Hennes, but what on earth? Coupled with the news that every day, another high calibre designer is creating a cheaper, diffusion range (Calvin Klein and Oscar De La Renta in recent weeks), designer fashion, certainly Couture will increasingly be perceived as irrelevant, purely an imagination factory to provide material for high-street rip-offs, and removed from any concrete standing in the business. Designer has to be associated with desire, but perhaps our desires are stretched to accommodate the introduction of so many by-products nowadays, we just don't need that level of fantasy any more to escape what was once high street banality.



One



Two



Friend or beau

Can men and women ever be 'just friends'? Kim Halliwell gets to the bottom of a question that we all have to ask from time to time.

Take 'Friends' Yes it's funny, and yes it's been an unequivocal success. The formula is irresistible: three good-looking men and women living in opposite flats, sharing life's ups and downs. We have always felt a part of this quirky world: we are let in on private jokes and intimate information; we want to 'stay in touch' with the characters and find out what happens to them. In a virtual sense, viewer and character become 'friends'.

But are the characters really 'friends' with each other? Cue the sex. Taking into account that two of the characters are related and assuming that they are all straight, there are eight (legally) possible sexual scenarios to exploit. As a male friend of mine would put it, there is plenty of opportunity to "mix it up". And in the history of the show, mix it

up they have. They have all crossed the line between being 'just good mates', having sexual feelings towards them, and acting upon those feelings. And each time this happens, a message is sent out: when men and women are friends, sex will win out.

The degree to which this type of message influences real-life relationships is uncertain. The viewer may take the show with a pinch of salt. After all, it is just TV, and sex sells. Most of us seem to believe in platonic friendship – in a recent Match.com survey of 1,514 members, 83% of respondents thought that men and women can be just friends. But the problem we seem to face is the lack of examples of cross-sex friendship in the media against which to compare our own experiences.

So how do we define these experiences without cultural markers – how do we set the boundaries? If sexual attraction is present, can we still maintain a healthy friendship or does this break the rules?

Cross-sex friendships take many forms. Catherine Jarvie, a social commentator on the subject, observes that cross-sex friendships are not always cut and dried: she describes a sliding scale with ‘platonic’ at one end and ‘sexual’ at the other. There is a type of male-female friendship with a ‘healthy’ level of sexual tension that sits somewhere in the middle, she argues. She calls this a “teaser”, an ongoing flirtation that never leads to anything: “while it might smoulder with innuendo, it remains good-natured and ultimately, chaste.” What each party gains from this is ego massage, the buzz of admiration.

Sophie, 27, has a teaser with one of her friends. Because they are aware of it and openly discuss it, there are no complications: “We’ve both talked about this and we like flirting a bit now and again because it makes us feel good without having to do anything about it. It’s ‘safe’ flirting”. It seems to rely on a common understanding that it goes no further. That withstanding, the mutual appreciation is basically a bit of honest, harmless fun. For Tom, 37, ‘teasing’ is integral: “I would say there is some level of flirtation with every single woman I come into contact with (but I ain’t no floozy!). Flirting is extremely important – I can’t quite put it into words, but it’s part of us that goes back to why we are on the planet in the first place. Not sleazy or cheesy, but just admiration for the opposite sex – makes you both feel vibrant, important, special, interesting.”

But this attitude clearly doesn’t work for everyone. Finding the balance and keeping a check on emotions can be hard. Prue, 28, strongly believes that sexual feelings have damaged her own friendships: “There has always been that underlying sexual element, shown through flirting and joking. Then when either one of us has entered a relationship a certain aspect to the friendship disappears.” Prue believes that men and women can only be true friends without the sexual element. She views these men in “a brotherly way”. Alison, 27, agrees: “Once a male is my real friend, the relationship wouldn’t involve any flirtation”. And Sophie recognises that sexual attraction can affect the level of closeness enjoyed: “I don’t regard someone who I feel strongly sexually attracted to as a really close friend”.

So, sexual attraction seems to affect how the friendship is played out and, in turn, influences how close the friend is perceived to be. It can also inhibit the formation of *other* relationships, as Emma, 26, recalls: “Myself and a male friend had a flirtatious and intimate relationship that didn’t really allow for new relationships ... we just got a bit protective and jealous in the face of intruders.” The people involved must recognise when to tone it down to avoid compromising new, as well as

Rather than seeing a “man” or “woman”, some people claim they just see a “friend”. This is a healthy sign that friendship can transcend sex – and sexual feelings.



existing, relationships. As Sophie recognises: “Some of my male friends feel protective towards me, and they have occasionally been a bit wary of my boyfriends initially. But, this is usually short-lived ... if I think it’s a problem I’ll talk to them about it and help them get over it.”

Don O’Meara, a sociology professor at the University of Cincinnati-Raymond Walters College, concluded that there are five “challenges” to successfully forging a cross-sex friendship.

Meeting members of the opposite sex. Compare meeting someone at work and meeting someone in a bar after four vodkas. Or meeting someone through another friend, where references are immediately shared, and meeting someone randomly, where common interests must be discovered. Despite the sexes increasingly coming together in society, same-sex interaction still tends to prevail. This seems to be the case irrespective of environment (think same-sex education, the old boys’ network, coffee mornings, the WI). It has been observed in a range of social contexts from the nursery school playground to the cocktail party. When we meet people of the same sex, things just aren’t as complicated.

Defining the relationship. Subconsciously or not, you categorise a new man in your life: is he a friend, might he become more than this, what do we have in common, does he make me laugh, do I find him attractive? Heidi Reeder, a Professor at Boise State University Idaho, states that “if a friendship is going to be romantic, studies show it usually does so in the beginning ... the longer the friendship lasts, the more likely each person is to see the other as a friend.” As in the case of Prue and her “brotherly” friends – people who have stood the test of time and could never be viewed in a sexual way.

Dealing with scepticism from others. We can get confused about what we *might* be feeling towards someone of the opposite sex and what we *should* be feeling. This uncertainty is only made worse by concern about how the other person is feeling as well as what peers might assume. We care what other people think – as a society, we are obsessed with how others view us and are often burdened with a feeling of ‘ought’ rather than ‘want’. The importance we place on other people’s perception of us is particularly acute when it comes to friends. Much as we want society to move on and for men and women to be friends without prejudgement, we are guilty of doubting platonic friendships, even if only as a joke. Loaded remarks about what’s going on between you and your “new friend” muddy the waters – we flounder when the nature of our friendships are questioned, and can begin to doubt them ourselves.

Managing sexual attraction. The fact that you are members of the opposite sex is hard to ignore, particularly when you first meet someone. If there

is sexual attraction, how do you deal with this, particularly if you have had bad experiences of attraction leading to the demise of a friendship? Or, as Pamela Paul, in Time magazine, observes, “a man might like his best female friend and even find her sexually attractive but believe they would make a terrible couple. The solution? Just friends.” Sexual attraction isn’t necessarily over-riding, nor is it necessarily permanent. Sophie believes that it can be “short-lived and once that’s over, a rewarding friendship can be forged.” Perhaps Harry in the film ‘When Harry Met Sally’ got it wrong when he declared that “the sex part always gets in the way”. Perhaps when a friendship develops, sexual attraction fades as a less conditional, platonic attachment grows.

Establishing equality. O’Meara notes that “male dominance, prestige and power is baggage that both men and women are likely to bring to a relationship”, residual of the traditional male-female societal roles. While this is still true, things are shifting. It is, for example, more likely to be an issue for older generations who don’t necessarily take sexual equality for granted.

“Flirting is extremely important – I can’t quite put it into words, but it’s part of us that goes back to why we are on the planet in the first place. Admiration for the opposite sex – makes you both feel vibrant, important, special, interesting.”

Increasingly, friendship groups are mixed, suggesting that people can and do choose to share their time with both sexes. Sophie: “Some of my strongest, most rewarding friendships are with men. We share similar interests and values and over time we have developed a deep sense of trust with and loyalty towards each other.” Through her research into friendship formation, Heidi Reeder found that, “rather than seeing a “man” or “woman”, some people claim they just see a “friend”. This is a healthy sign that friendship can transcend sex – and sexual feelings.

But being conscious of a friend’s gender is natural, and isn’t a bad thing. Men and women tend to look at things differently. As Alison, 27 notes: “It’s good to get a different perspective on things. I think men in general do have a different outlook to women and are perhaps a bit more relaxed about certain things so it’s good to hear their take on a situation.” A sense of balance matters to people when they consider and perceive situations. Basing judgements and decisions on only half the picture would feel wrong. Having friends of both sexes allows us to gain the complete picture and it helps us to keep each other on track, as Sophie recognises: “I find I can offer

different things to my male and female friends. My male friends appreciate the obvious female dynamic I bring to things, which stops things getting too “boisy”. But I think my female friends really benefit from getting a woman’s view, especially if they are dealing with a break-up or other problems with boyfriends”. The reassurance that we are there for one another and that friends seek our opinions, guidance and support is important to us and makes us feel valued.

It has been suggested that women enjoy a greater level of intimacy in their friendships than men. Peter Nardi, a sociologist at Pitzer College California, has studied the fact that, “men often find it difficult to become emotionally close to other men ... they’re more comfortable revealing their emotions to a woman.” Dan, 26, agrees that emotional issues are more easily discussed with his female mates: “I can get views and advice from a female perspective ... I find it easier to open up to my female friends on matters of the heart”. Tom, 37, says he enjoys a “real sense of honesty” from his female friends. In the same way, research has shown that women are more likely to discuss and share intimate details with other women than with men. Alison notes: “With my closest female friends, I’m comfortable with talking very openly about sexual matters in a way that I probably wouldn’t be so comfortable about with my male friends.”

Society is changing fast and the sexes are interacting more than ever before, in education, professionally and socially. The debate on whether cross-sex friendships exist is redundant – they exist all around us. What was once a man’s world is slowly but surely moving towards an egalitarian one. What we need to do is address *how* men and women interact, and how this might evolve in order to get on with each other in different social contexts. If we aren’t provided with positive role models in the media, perhaps we can lead the way by learning how to develop our friendships from one another. As Sophie’s view in this regard is a healthy and progressive one: “My male friends will help me to see how men think when I don’t understand them. I’m pleased to have been able to forge great platonic friendships with men. I think this balances me out and I definitely have more respect for and a better understanding of men, as a result.” This process is vital in helping us to validate our friendships and to grasp the opposite sex.

Sadly there are people who never quite manage to separate the sex from the person. I was in the pub the other day, drinking with some colleagues and we started talking about friendship between men and women. One of the guys said he didn’t think it was possible and gesticulated that “these” get in the way (I’m sure I don’t have to elaborate). I told him that this was difficult to take on board because most of my friends are male. He responded, with a twinkle in his eye, “aaah, I’ll be your friend”. Thanks but no thanks, Harry – with friends like you, who needs cheesy chat-up lines?



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Top ten most annoying things about lists

Making lists: the intellectual equivalent of queuing. We all do it because it seems like the right thing to do. This unnecessary compulsion to put things in a line and drum them into a semblance of order should be banned.

1

Food-shopping lists. A fruitless exercise. As soon as you feel the smug satisfaction set in that you're organised enough to make one, you're doomed to leave it behind. And if you do by chance shove it in your bag, unless the ingredients are written like a routemap of the supermarket aisles you end up walking around muttering to yourself and making crossing off motions with an invisible pen. Work on the premise that if you forget it, it can't have been that important.

2

Other people's lists. Do they leave them in the trolley just to taunt you? I think the ones that list purely exotic ingredients are pure fiction; a cruelly premeditated attempt to make the person who inherits your trolley gaze after you in awe and swear to live off guavas and flax seeds from that moment onwards.

3

That party game where you have to remember and write down all the things on the tray. Oh, how it haunts you and makes you feel like you're going prematurely senile.

4

Hierarchies. The lists designed for making the little people feel smaller. Always referred to by the people at the top and accompanied by comments along the lines of: "it's nothing personal you know." Grrr.

5

That clammy-hands feeling when, in public, someone disguises that threat "name your top five films" as a question, or a 'fun' conversation starter. There's always one person who will take it far too seriously and scuttle off to consult an Encyclopaedia Britannica or similar before the evening is out, and everyone else is made out to have the imagination of a flea because the person asking has obviously lain awake at night thinking about the best 'off the cuff' answer. And you can pass it off so many times with protestations of "Oh, I couldn't possibly decide," but it will trouble you ... forever. What if they ask at the gates of heaven? WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO HARD?

6

We've lost control of the honours lists. Being number one in the charts used to mean something. Now the people who have the most money to throw at the retailers determine the pecking order of 'readers'

choice' lists and chart shows. It's all pre-determined and undemocratic, dominated by money and politics and no longer about sales figures generated by sales and airplay. What's the point?

7

And as for awards ceremonies, don't get me started. Who makes these lists of nominees? The choices are so uncomplimentary and never show a united sensibility, I think there's a bit of a lottery going on. Doesn't it devalue the whole process for both the winner and the audience putting in token names for political correctness? But it's the 'voted by the public' category that really gets me going...it's not representative of anyone else except the twelve year olds who were sitting idly by the phone when they asked for votes. I digress. Awards lists should be based on merit, no matter who the sponsors are.

8

Once the domain of VH1 and MTV when you were too tired or stupefied with boredom to change over, the terrestrial channels have been infected with a terrible rash of list-based 'entertainment'. What was at least a sincere attempt to bring us the best rock songs in the world has descended into madness: documentaries based on 'One-hit wonders of the mid to late seventies' and the seventy-five 'most disgusting and complained about moments on

tv'. But we didn't even want to see them the first time! Is it irony or just desperation?

9

That word 'ever'. Is the "Top 100 of the best loved no 1s of the Eighties" not garrulous enough? Can't we just say: they were all number ones, or, we're going to play some songs from the Eighties that are worth listening to. The addition of the word ever, is it a poor attempt to justify recycling the same footage, looping it until it's totally out of date and irrelevant. These lists are set in stone...nothing can or ever will surpass the top 100 until they have time to make a new one. Unreality tv at its worst.

10

There's a bit of a short-term memory crisis when it comes to the people's choices, so no matter how many times you sit watching in 'car-crash' tv style (you know you shouldn't) just waiting for the number one to prove you wrong, it never will. If they were listing the top fifty household items you might need when stranded on a campsite in Wales, Bohemian Rhapsody would be bound to creep in there. And all those people voting for 'Imagine' should practice what they preach and knock us all off our seats.

But, when all's said and done, lists make for great argument material. And they're handy for making a point. Damn.



Je ne sais quoi

Paris is *the* place to be if you're looking for love. But there are some things no guide book can help you with, as **Mark Fitzpatrick** discovers on his quest to understand the workings of the French woman.

It's one of the most endearing things about Paris: the clichés are true. I am even sitting writing this in a garret on the Left Bank, in Saint-Germain-des-Près. The smelly cheeses, the baguettes under their arms, the poodles, the accordionists on street corners: you couldn't be anywhere else. A short walk from here, the glorious façades of the Musée d'Orsay, the Louvre, Notre Dame, and the glittering Eiffel Tower (on the hour, every night-time hour, it bursts into sparkles), the glow of a *bateau mouche* sweeping illumination down the Seine, and the buildings bathed in dim champagne brilliance at night justify the name: City of Light. Oh, and Love. Paris also does not disappoint in delivering on its reputation as *the* city of romance. But it might be a good idea to get the romance bit sorted out before you get here. It's a complicated business anywhere, but here you sometimes get the feeling that you're playing high stakes poker with nothing in your hand but Pokémon cards.

Of course, the half of the tourists who aren't Japanese all seem to be couples on a romantic getaway, but what of those of us who came here once upon a time and then just couldn't seem to get away? The chances are, if you're one of the many foreigners who have ended up here, that love was one of the main reasons you chose to stay. There's a difference though; meet a foreign guy in Paris and he may tell you about falling in love, but it's often in a more general sense; he is in love with Paris, with French life, with walking down the street and falling in love on a daily basis. As for the French girls, well, yes we love them, but it's the rarer and better man than I who has convinced one that the feeling is mutual. Women, however, are a different matter.

Among the female expats in Paris however, it seems quite the standard situation that their main reason for being here is a French man. For many of

them, the love affair is much more specific. Jean-Claude, or Pierre, or François, fair enough, he's the one she fell in love with, on her year as an *assistante* in a French school, or as an Erasmus student, or even just on holiday. Very susceptible to the Gallic charm, these young ladies on the Paris leg of their round-the-world trips. However, as for the French in general . . . it's not quite so easy. All these brave women, uprooting themselves from home and family to join their French bloke, are predisposed to loving French culture. After all, wasn't it part of said French bloke's charm? A man who knew his way around a wine list, who knew how to carry off a compliment, who knew, I'm sure, other things she may have been too polite to discuss with me, all in that inimitable French way: wasn't his Frenchness a positive trait? Indeed it was. French culture, food, history, literature, art: these may well be her passions. Indeed, it is quite likely that she has a degree in one of them, and that that is what brought her here in the first place. French people, though: many aren't so sure.

One of the most striking things about experiencing French culture as an outsider is how different it is for a man than for a woman. The man who comes here tends to get on reasonably well in the minefield of unwritten rules, red tape, and Byzantine codes of behaviour. He is excused much; after all, he's a foreigner, isn't he? The woman though, especially if she now has a French family to contend with (the French mother-in-law is a formidable figure indeed), has a rather harder time. The etiquette of how to dress, how to eat, to entertain, even how to walk down the street: it all seems a lot more complicated if you're a woman. The problem isn't French men either, when you get to the bottom of it. It's French women.

The horror stories one hears from foreign women living here, of social gaffes, horrific blunders, or just plain loneliness, often have at their root that inscrutable and unapproachable creature: the French woman. It's not that they don't like them. Well. In many cases it actually is. But though our expat chick may have some French female friends, it always seems to have taken ages to batter down the walls of *froideur* surrounding them. If anyone has ever made her feel awkward or inappropriate in a French social setting, ten to one it was a woman. Men may embarrass her by gallantly trying to cover her *faux pas*, but it's the women who really have the knives out. It may never have occurred to her in her life to feel underdressed, especially just when going out to the *boulangerie* on the corner for bread, but I guarantee it was the wrinkled nose and slow head-to-toe look of a woman that made her feel it.

They tell me it's something to do with the fact that French women lack a certain complicity shared by those in anglophone countries, for example. Even with each other, they're not starting from a feeling of sisterhood, or sitting around with each other bitching about how

Paris also does not disappoint in delivering on its reputation as *the* city of romance. But it might be a good idea to get the romance bit sorted out before you get here.



useless men are. Oh no. Other women are the competition, the enemy. And if they're foreign on top of that? Forget it. Who do they think they are, coming over here trying to steal our men, with their loud voices, awful French, appalling clothes?

It may sound exaggerated. Perhaps. But it depends who you ask. Among younger people, one would assume that things are a little more relaxed. They're not so worried about which course goes before which, and what informal attire really means for a dinner party. But while there are always exceptions, there is definitely a fraught and complicated relationship between French women and their English-speaking counterparts. Even among young women, there is a definite sense of being made to feel you don't fit in.

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In an anglophone bookshop in Paris, one encounters several books, a whole section even, devoted to explaining French culture to foreigners. By foreigners, we're talking about anglophones, and more specifically Americans. And, while there are books devoted to how to work with French people, how the bureaucracy works, cuisine, history, and so on, most of them are about French people. The general attitude seems to be: "Funny buggers, the French, but aren't they fascinating?". Many of these books are written by women, and, dare I say it, mostly for women. This is the complicated part. No matter how much they complain about French women, there is undeniably something about them that these authors, and these readers, aspire to. Their *je ne sais quoi*. A couple of the the books available are devoted entirely to trying to explain, and teach, the discrete charm of *les françaises*. If French men have a reputation for being sexy, French women seem to have a whole mythology around them. The titles of the books speak for themselves: *Fatale: How French Women Do It*, by Edith Kunz, promises to reveal "the mysterious ways Frenchwomen manage to appear sexy, smart, and recklessly chic". Even more unashamedly an instruction manual is *Entre Nous: A Guide to Finding Your Inner French Girl*, by Debra Ollivier. And they walk off the shelves.

An American girl I met — let's call her Heather — complained stridently about the looks she received when she was dressed nicely ("Ok, today, I'm like, totally dressed *down*? But when I like, put on a

dress, and get all done up nice and shit? They just give me these looks, like, totally jealous or something. They're such bitches."). Now Heather, obviously, had a long way to go before acquiring much of a *je ne sais quoi*, but her attitude was a strange mix of dislike and competitiveness. She wanted to beat them at their own game, despite trying to pretend she wasn't one for playing.

The funny thing is, according to French guys, it is precisely their un-frenchness that they find charming about foreign girls. A good way to make friends with French men for me has proved to be to go out with a large group of pretty Irish and English girls. Of course, you may not have one to hand, but on the happy occasion that you do find yourself in such pleasant company, it is fascinating to see the effect they have out on the town in Paris. They're obvious from a mile off. They laugh louder, drink more, wear less, and dance in groups shouting along to the music. And the French guys flock to them like moths to a flame. This can be a problem. The guys in question are persistent, insistent, and not always particularly subtle. I was often summoned urgently from across the dance floor, to have one of my female friends put her arms around me and say triumphantly to Sleazy Pierre: "See? I told you I had a boyfriend!". Sometimes, Pierre was not deterred by this, and would begin quizzing us on how long we'd been together and whether it was serious, but mostly it proved sufficient, and said friend would wait until he was out of sight before shoving me away, saying: "And you get your hands off me too! I'm getting another drink."

Occasionally though, a couple of charming and good-looking young men would come over and just start chatting to us, often eager to try out their English, very interested in where we were from, what we were doing here, what were we drinking, and, incidentally, that one there, is she single? This more subtle approach, in which they enlisted me as an ally rather than saw me as a minor obstacle to be overcome, was more fun for all concerned, and often ended with me and the French blokes being best pals, buying each other drinks and complaining about women together. From them I learned the important fact that I wasn't the only one who found French women unapproachable. They did too. That was why the foreign girls, much more outgoing and easy to talk to, were such a hit. French girls tended, they agreed with me, to be much more intimidating, not to be very receptive to getting into a conversation with a stranger in a bar, and also, always, to have boyfriends. Their natural state seems to be as part of a couple, and it must be a rare skill indeed to identify the ten minutes when a girl is single, and then know what to do about it.

I've heard it from French female friends too; too many French women define themselves in terms of the man they're with, or the men they attract, and dress, talk and act accordingly. This is not to

say that that's what they're like. It just seems that, much more so than at home, that is the role defined for them in French society. Though I wouldn't put any of my friends here in this category, I think even they would admit that it exists: that of women who haven't much to say for themselves, and men who think that's the way it should be.

It's not that they're expected to be dumb, far from it; they're just expected to be subtle, discrete, and mysterious rather than opinionated. There is an idea of femininity here that seems antiquated to us. The emphasis on clothes, grooming, and, especially, being thin, is even more pronounced than at home, if you can believe it. And here it's just assumed: a woman takes care of her appearance, almost like a duty. Women dress in a womanly way. Women are on diets. All the time. But they don't really talk about it openly, unless you count magazine covers, every single one of which, every month, features a new weight loss solution. It shows too. Parisian women aren't just thin; they're tiny. My foreign female friends remark on this, half appalled, half admiring. John, from Coleraine, has a simple explanation: "The only reason Parisian women are so thin is that they cheat. All they put into their bodies is black coffee and cigarettes." It's not quite as extreme as that, but you do notice that though the French diet is full of rich, fatty (delicious) foods, the portions they eat are very small, especially the women. No one ever seems to eat between meals either.

Their natural state seems to be as part of a couple, and it must be a rare skill indeed to identify the ten minutes when a girl is single, and then know what to do about it.

This restraint carries over into drinking too, again, especially for women. You hardly ever see anyone drunk here. It's not unusual to sit for an evening in a bar over two *demis* (half pints), whereas at home, the night has barely begun before people are swigging back their third pint. Apparently it's particularly frowned on for women to be seen to drink a lot. Indeed, at a dinner party, it's a massive no-no for a woman to refill her own glass of wine. She must wait for an attentive man sitting near her to do so. And he almost always will.

Despite all this, here we are, having fallen hopelessly for Paris, or Jean-Claude, or *foie gras*, or whatever it happens to be. These quirks of the French character have their upsides too. While it may take a long time to get past their initial reserve and make friends with them, once you have, it's a friend for good. They seem to take friendship more seriously, have fewer close friends, but really mean it when they do. It's quite

flattering to feel you have passed the test, as it were, and you know that you can then rely on them and trust them. Their way of socialising, strange to us initially, certainly has its advantages. Taking time over food, they really enjoy it, and you learn to appreciate it better too. Sitting in a café over one drink for an hour, you see that they don't so much go out to drink or dance, or meet new people and snog them, fight them, or throw up on them (you know, all the things we call "having a good time") but rather to socialise. The art of conversation isn't dead here. Looking around the café, everyone seems to be deep in interesting discussion. They may not be roaring with laughter, but that doesn't mean they're not having fun. It's just a different kind. There's something terribly civilized about it all.

You get the impression that whatever it is they're all talking about, whatever things are going on in all these lives, enigmatic but right in front of you, it's all terribly complicated and fascinating. So you just join in, and sit smoking a cigarette and sipping a coffee, looking mysterious and full of *ennui*, and exchange smouldering glances with the gorgeous girl or guy at the next table. Feels like everything is in black-and-white, with subtitles. Then the accordionist on the corner strikes up, and you couldn't be anywhere else. Neither would you want to be.



HELMUT LANG
219, RUE SAINT-HONORE PARIS

books

One: The Ninth Life of Louis Drax

Liz Jensen ([Bloomsbury](#))

Accident-prone Louis Drax is nine years old when he falls off a cliff into a ravine. He doesn't die, but lies in a deep coma from which it is safely assumed he will never wake up. His family is shattered by the shock, and even more so when a disturbingly revealing communication develops between Louis and the specialist, Dr Pascal Dannachet (who is trying without success to coax him back to consciousness), leading to the unearthing of strange and frightening clues to the mystery of his fall. Liz Jensen has written an excellent thriller. Riveting and shockingly dark, she plunges deep into human emotions and the immeasurable complexity of the mind. The tale has echoes of the sensibility of Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, but is all the more galling and unusual for being told through the voice of a child. Jensen has a tendency to set down long trails of ambiguity which will make the film adaptation, (directed by Anthony Minghella and due to start filming later this year) as tantalising as the novel.

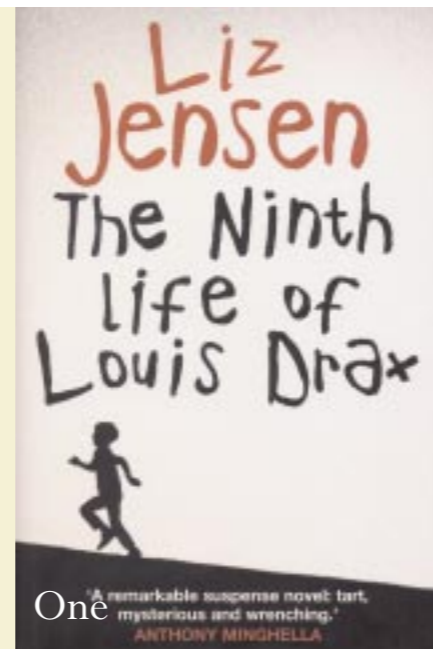
Two: Urban Tribes: Are friends the new family? Ethan Watters ([Bloomsbury](#))

Ethan Watters, a journalist who writes about social trends for *The New York Times* magazine decided to write about the single significant phenomenon that influences his own life: The fact that he is part of a generation of single, working young people who live and work at close quarters, depending on their group of friends like an extended family. This is a digestible combination of first hand, humorous observation and textbook sociology drawn together in an upfront, pertinent, personal style. In observing the interaction of his own friends, Watters addresses ideas such as the 'partner substitute' within the group, 'ritual behaviour' and group politics and assesses the natural tendency of thirty-somethings towards safety in numbers. Interestingly, he concludes that far from being wasted time on the search for 'the perfect mate', the 'tribe years' are an essential part of the formation of a new kind of community, and that once the group dynamics have been identified, the individual can develop so much self-knowledge that partnered-relationships in the future are more likely to last.

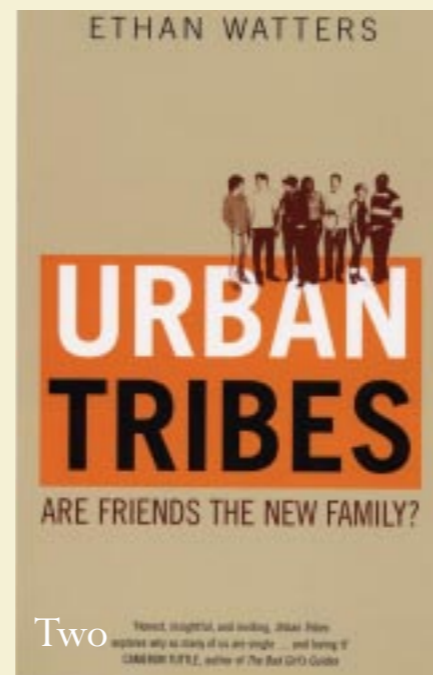
Three: Status Anxiety

Alain de Botton ([Penguin](#))

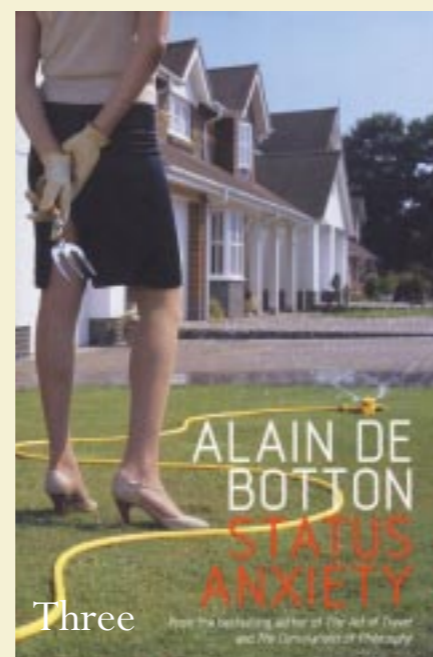
"Every adult life could be said to be defined by two great love stories. The first – the story of our quest for sexual love – is well known and well charted ... The second – the story of our quest for love from the world – is a more secret and shameful tale. And yet this second love story is no less intense than the first." *Status Anxiety* takes a broad look through history, starting with a look at the various states that inferred status in times past, such as strength and physical ability in Spartan Greece – to power and the ability to generate vast personal wealth in present days. He explores more whimsical and interesting variants on the theme too like the ability to dance and woo ladies supplanting men's ability to fight in 1750's England. The second half of the book is principally made up of Botton's perceived solutions to the problem of status anxiety. He gives examples of the scandalous philosophers of old and of modern absurdist artists as people who decided to make their own rules to live by, rather than be governed by the perceptions of their peers. *Status Anxiety* is an interesting book, if a little vague in tone. De Botton's examples are all well and good but he doesn't seem to have thought through the inevitable innate snobbery that they bring with them and thus their own inherent problems and anxieties. It's worth a read, it just doesn't tell us anything particularly special. 'Status Anxiety' was reviewed by [Ed O'Rourke](#).



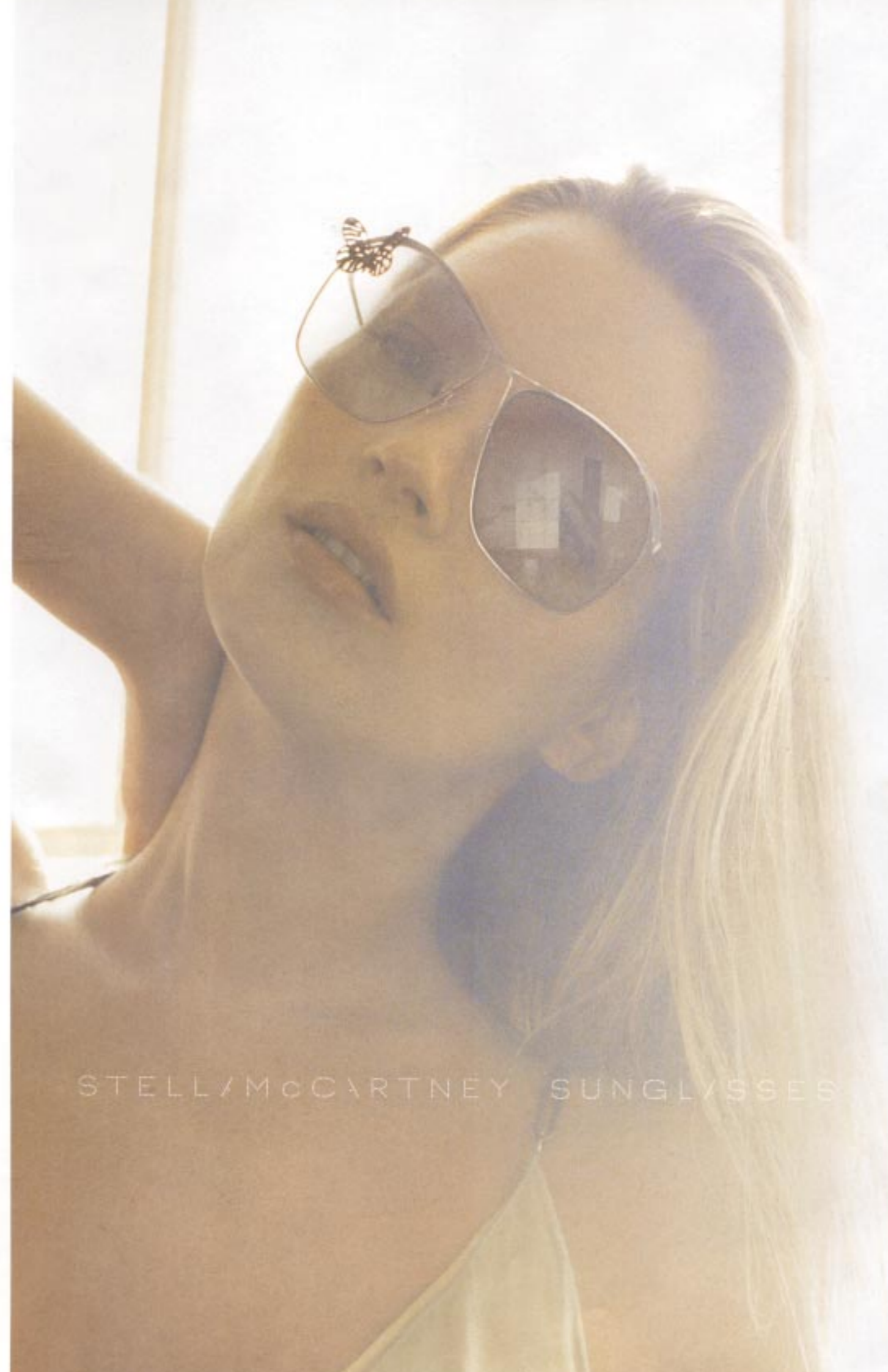
One "A remarkable suspense novel: tart, mysterious and wrenching." ANTHONY MINGHELLA



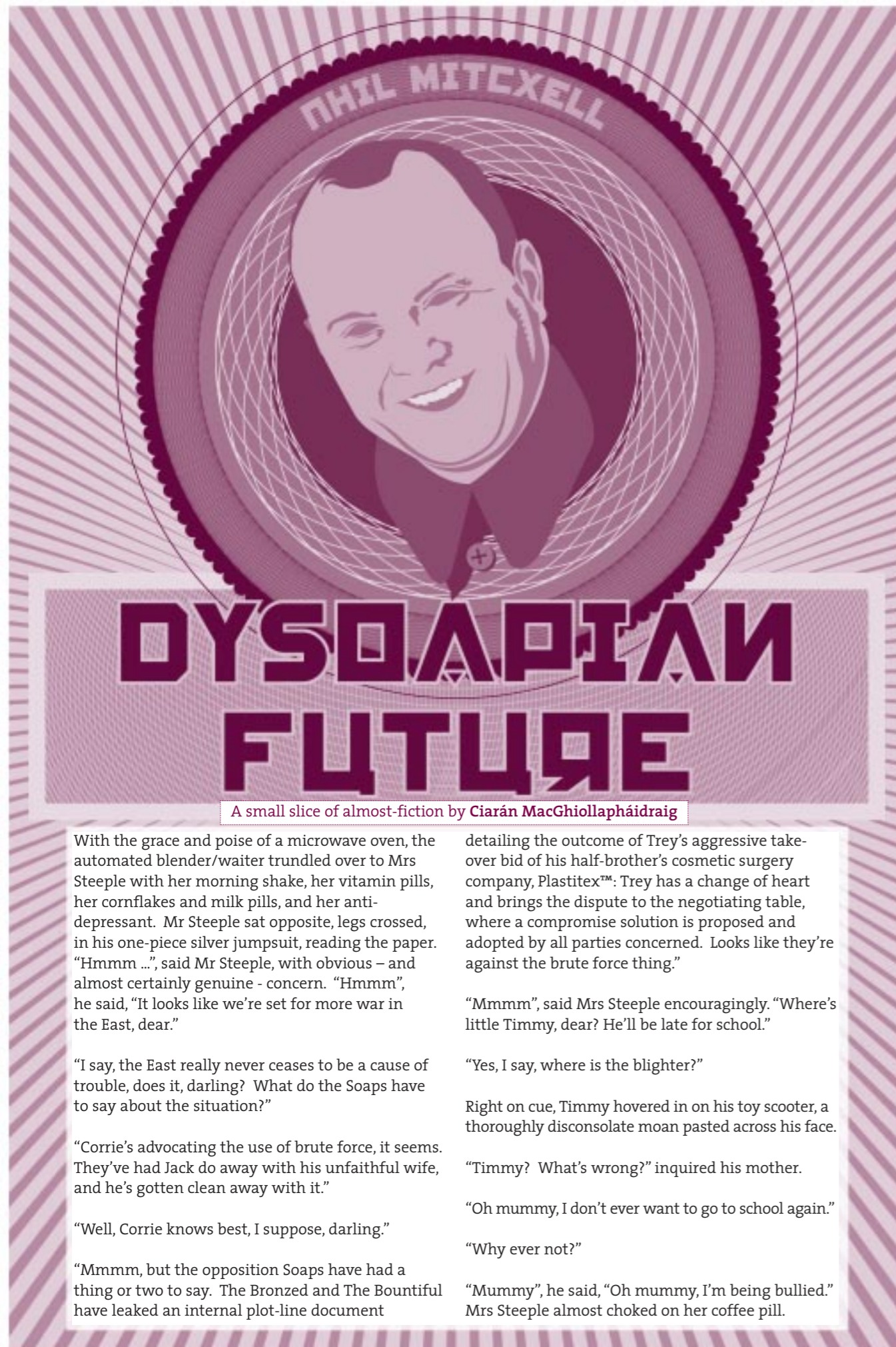
Two "Fascinating, insightful, and amusing." *Urban Tribes* explains why so many of us are single ... and being it! CAMERON RUTLE, author of *The Best Q&A Guide*



Three From the bestselling author of *The Art of Travel* and *The Consolations of Philosophy*



STELLA MCCARTNEY SUNGLASSES



A small slice of almost-fiction by Ciarán MacGhiollapháidraig

With the grace and poise of a microwave oven, the automated blender/waiter trundled over to Mrs Steeple with her morning shake, her vitamin pills, her cornflakes and milk pills, and her anti-depressant. Mr Steeple sat opposite, legs crossed, in his one-piece silver jumpsuit, reading the paper. "Hmmm ...", said Mr Steeple, with obvious – and almost certainly genuine – concern. "Hmmm", he said, "It looks like we're set for more war in the East, dear."

"I say, the East really never ceases to be a cause of trouble, does it, darling? What do the Soaps have to say about the situation?"

"Corrie's advocating the use of brute force, it seems. They've had Jack do away with his unfaithful wife, and he's gotten clean away with it."

"Well, Corrie knows best, I suppose, darling."

"Mmmm, but the opposition Soaps have had a thing or two to say. The Bronzed and The Bountiful have leaked an internal plot-line document

detailing the outcome of Trey's aggressive take-over bid of his half-brother's cosmetic surgery company, Plastitex™. Trey has a change of heart and brings the dispute to the negotiating table, where a compromise solution is proposed and adopted by all parties concerned. Looks like they're against the brute force thing."

"Mmmm", said Mrs Steeple encouragingly. "Where's little Timmy, dear? He'll be late for school."

"Yes, I say, where is the blighter?"

Right on cue, Timmy hovered in on his toy scooter, a thoroughly disconsolate moan pasted across his face.

"Timmy? What's wrong?" inquired his mother.

"Oh mummy, I don't ever want to go to school again."

"Why ever not?"

"Mummy", he said, "Oh mummy, I'm being bullied." Mrs Steeple almost choked on her coffee pill.

Mr Steeple lost his place and had to re-read his sentence.

"I say, how dreadful", said Mrs Steeple, "Are you alright, darling? Has it brought on any clinical depression or substance abuse?"

"Oh no, nothing like that, mummy."

"Well do be careful, darling. If you don't nip these things in the bud, they can take absolutely weeks to get over. You remember how I got hooked on steroids to try to get over that bout of anorexia after that incident in the circus with the hall of mirrors, don't you?"

"Oh yes, mummy. Worst two weeks of my life."

"Well, just you remember that, darling. Now swallow down your breakfast with this glass of water, and Mr Steeple will take you off to school."

A spasm of horror clutched little Timmy's features.

"What? Mr Steeple?! I thought Daddy was bringing me to school today!"

Timmy, you see, was Mrs Steeple's child from a teenaged pregnancy – unluckily conceived the very night she lost her virginity – and her relationship with Timmy's father – a torrid, heart-wrenching, on-off affair – had not lasted.

"Timmy, darling, I am sorry, but your daddy's driven off a cliff while being chased by the police and he's in a coma again. You'll go with Mr Steeple on the flying bus and you'll have lots of fun."

"No, I bloody won't! I hate the flying bus and I hate Mr Steeple!"

"Timmy..." said Mr Steeple, deeply seriously and with a practised frown.

"You're not my daddy!!" screamed Timmy, and he stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind him.

Mrs Steeple turned back to the table, and said to her husband, "Another tea pill, dear?"

Mrs Steeple's day was unremarkable.

She sipped a sherry and watched on television demonstrations against Coronation Street's new storyline at Whitehall Studios, under the statue of Fred Elliot. One young woman, when interviewed, said that it was "disgraceful" that in a "civilized country" like England, the soaps could adopt such a plotline. A member of Eastenders who was at the protest made what seemed to Mrs Steeple the opportunistic comment that Corrie obviously no longer reflected the will of the people, and that he could feel a change coming in the ratings.

After that, Mrs Steeple went to the local shop. On her way, she overheard Mrs Clout pleading under her breath with the repo-man that she couldn't let her husband find out they were in such debt, and saw Mrs Smith's daughter Lucy – who was engaged to her childhood sweetheart, George – on her doorstep, wearing only a night dress, grappling rather passionately with that Irish vagabond mechanic, Seamus O'Brogan. Mrs Steeple casually mentioned the incidents to Betty the shopkeeper, going very silent almost quickly enough not to arouse suspicion when Mr Clout came in, and not realising until she'd given far too much away that young George had been standing there beside the dairy produce the entire time.

Finally, she went and had her Botox done. There she met her lover, Steven, who was little Timmy's father's brother. They glanced up at each other in the waiting room, and said hello so casually that everyone else in the room looked at each other in turn with raised eyebrows. After they'd had their injections, Mrs Steeple and Steven slipped off surreptitiously to a nearby hotel and made love like mannequins.

"Yes! Oh yes!" screamed a straight-faced Mrs Steeple. Afterwards, they shared a nicotine patch.

That night, as they went to bed, Mrs Steeple said to her husband, "Good day, darling? Dysfunctional families still dysfunctional? Teenagers still taking drugs and perpetrating petty crime?"

"Yes, dear, with our help" - Mr Steeple worked for Social Services – "And how was your day, dear?"

"Oh, a day like any other."

"Good, good."

And, true enough, it had indeed been a day like any other. But Mrs Steeple felt strangely dissatisfied.

"Darling?" she said, "Do you ever think to yourself maybe there's more to life?"

Mr Steeple pursed his lips, rested his head on his double chins, and frowned perplexedly. He pondered a moment, but still couldn't understand.

"More than what, dear?" he said.

Mrs Steeple blinked, smiled slightly, and responded – more to herself than to her husband – "Yes. Yes, I suppose so." Mr Steeple smiled back at her, kissed her on the cheek, said "Goodnight, dear", and turned over to go to sleep.

Mrs Steeple gazed fondly a moment at the back of his head. She said, "Goodnight, darling", tucked herself under the covers, and decided she'd let him walk in on her and Steven having sex the next day.



Why it *is* still acceptable to watch *Sex and the City*

A post-feminist critique by **Lotte Jeffs**.

Scene 1, [interior apartment] Carrie stops typing on Apple Mac to stare questioningly out of window . . .

CARRIE: "In the city of New York why is it suddenly ok for women of all ages, nationalities and sexual persuasions to idolise a diminutive, shoe-obsessed and emotionally ravished girl like me?"

Good question. But it's not just New York Carrie, there is a whole world out there (of which you and your equally deranged cronies seem oblivious incidentally) swarming with Carrie simulacra. *Sex and the City* has hit the heart of womanhood, and regardless of their PhD, or work for the Active

Lesbian Feminist Movement, come 10pm on a Friday night, thousands of women become the women they abhor, as they pour a glass of Pinot ready for an hour of fantasy femininity.

There are two types of *Sex and the City* fans: those who convince themselves that they watch the show from a safely ironic distance – loving the glitz and glamour but realising it is pure simulation, and those who spend the entire episode convincing themselves: "that is SO me". But regardless of why they think they watch it, every *Sex and the City* fan secretly wishes their friends were a little more like Samantha and they owned at least one pair of Manolos, even if they would never wear them.

Nothing bad ever happens in Carrie's world; she has brunch, writes her column, thinks for a bit, drinks a Cosmopolitan, has sex with one of her ever metamorphosing suitors and goes to bed. While it's not exactly a life to emulate, it can free you from the mundane reality of your own for a therapeutic 60 minutes a week. You can take the fantasy at face value, or like all good fairy tales, with a little close reading you can uncover a far more revealing subtext.

Take its construction of New York, a city so mythologised by its portrayal on film and television that it has here become an image of an image, no longer referring to a real New York at all. Notice how seamlessly they airbrushed the Twin Towers from the opening sequence in series three, because terrorism and mass extermination jar somewhat with the world of brunch and book-launches proffered by the programme.

But wait, the final series has now been and gone, and is it safe to say that reality or more to the point, mortality finally crept into Carrie's world? Samantha had breast cancer; a real illness from which she might have really died, (well, as much as any television character can really die). Such a revelation marked a significant turning point for the show.

Miranda was reluctantly reconciled to her role as wife and mother, disappointingly for those of us who revelled in her cynical disavowal of traditional female stereotypes. Her portrayal of the fact that 'Woman' is not necessarily synonymous with 'Mother', was a both a brave and refreshing alternative to the assumed maternal instinct of women in series like *Friends*, where all female leads are either mothers or desperate to become them. Charlotte, the prim ex-sorority girl desperate for a fairytale wedding with her Prince Charming settled for a far more Grimm tale with her Jewish marriage to the bald but loveable beast, Harry.

And then there was Carrie, who any *Sex in the City* fan in their right mind would have deeply resented for her burgeoning relationship with the vile Russian. "We want Big, we want Big!" we cried, and eventually we got him. Yes, even in this post-feminist and almost homo-normative world, viewers would rather their heroine settled for the arrogant, cigar smoking patriarch than the romantic and intellectual new man. *Sex and the City* does strange things to feminist principles and it gets away with it, because on one level it upholds them.

We should celebrate the frankness with which the foursome discussed sex over their Eggs Benedict. They proved that women could abuse, objectify and demean men as much as men can women – not necessarily a good thing, but equality at least. In a book of critical essays on the programme, one male, American professor argues that through its portrayal of 'freak-show' men, *Sex and the City* does no more than perpetuate sexism and homophobia. I would be interested to learn how

may episodes this tweed-jacketed academic had actually watched before forming his opinions. He has failed to notice that men are used deliberately as foils with which to explore the personality of their girlfriends, they are emphatically not interesting characters in their own right, and that is what differentiates the show from its HBO alternatives. No one would argue that the 'Adonis' Smith Gerard was anything but a type, fashioned quite self consciously by Samantha, who appropriated the younger man, changed his name and reinvented him in her own image. He became the malleable object of the female gaze, an empowering and progressive reversal of roles, which evidently surpasses our professor friend's frame of reference.

Sex and the City was the first prime-time television programme to show women talking about sex as well as having it, lots of it and not just the no-frills variety either. Samantha was even a lesbian once remember, and while real gay girls may have cringed over the stereotypes, and despaired a little that it was, as usual, a mild flirtation with the possibility, it was a welcome change to see glamorous and successful women in same sex affairs.

In spite of all that's wrong with the country, only America could have produced *Sex and the City*'s consistently witty and intelligent portrayal of strong yet endearing women. As a general rule British comedy drama pales in comparison to its stateside competition, and any attempts to emulate the onscreen dynamics of Ross and Rachel or Carrie and Big have failed miserably. Absolutely Fabulous would be our nearest equivalent to the show. It stars wealthy, successful female characters but their actions and attitudes are so crudely exaggerated that it's impossible to take them as anything more than hilarious caricatures. Perhaps American feminism has always been somewhat ahead of the game, and Britain is just not ready to subvert its achievements in women's liberation until the consequences are made concrete.

The series may have ended, but its legacy will live on. The four years it has been running have spawned a generation of women who have come so far in their fight for equality that it's now ok, hey maybe it's even political to watch and enjoy a programme which portrays selfish, superficial women with often dubious morals. The point is, it's not real, even though hundreds of visitors are taking the \$33 *Sex and the City* tour of New York hoping it is. The show makes no claims to represent real women with real lives, (some may be as witty, as glamorous or as successful but certainly all a little more fallible), it doesn't hold a mirror up to life but its success does tell us something quite important about our own.

Roll on the next American import *The L Word*, a *Sex and the City*-style series based on the lives and loves of New York lesbians, due to create a storm on channel 4 later this year.



Be a phony, but be a real phony

If you're a movie-lover worth your salt, chances are in recent years you've been treated to so many painful renditions of Samuel L. Jackson's 'prophet of doom' monologue from Pulp Fiction that the words "the path of the righteous man" make you want to wail and chew up your Blockbuster card. There are always going to be too many wannabes who are desperate to take their 'frustrated actor' syndrome into the public arena rendering so many films too familiar no-go territory.

Not that there's anything wrong with emulation. Imitation should be the highest form of flattery. But if you're really not any good at delivering a line, the phrase 'privacy of your own home' rings loudly.

We can blame DVD technology for these cringe-worthy thespian displays. All that added film footage has created a new realm of escapist ego-tripping for film fanatics across the globe. With DVD sales worth £357m last year in the UK alone, it is clear that dwindling cinema audiences have little to do with declining interest in film, but a new level of fanaticism that compels us to interact with the screenplay, reviewing and absorbing our favourite scenes at home.

But there is a solution. Finally, the spontaneity, embarrassment and hilarity associated with karaoke have found a home in the hearts of even 'serious' film-lovers. 'Movieoke' has arrived, and with it a time and place for play-acting.

The response to the newest bar entertainment craze is proof enough that it's not just in LA that everyone's an actress. Deep in the recesses of 'Den of Cin', a camp basement club in New York's Lower East Side, they're coming out of the woodwork to 'read' before the silent backdrop of famous movie moments, from Casablanca to Taxi Driver.

Making the 'inside experience' of film ever more real and attainable is what prompted Anastasia Fite, the club's owner (shown above) to develop Movieoke.

Having previously directed a film about a young woman whose speech is made up entirely from lines from the movies, she realised that the role related to more than a handful of her friends. They set up a film-rental service within the club for hard-to-find and out-of-production films, all of them subtitled. And they've had no end of volunteers for the stage since.

But it's not just about paying homage. As in the karaoke tradition, the audience reacts with disappointment, almost disdain, when the performance is too polished and the poorest performances, when delivered in earnest, are almost guaranteed to bring the house down. After all, the expectations of slip-ups and spontaneity and the inevitable element of humiliation make Movieoke democratic, and, well, entertaining. On Wednesday nights, the 'Den of Cin' becomes the setting for elaborate drama more akin to pantomime than Hollywood. You get the feeling that the unfortunate student 'doing' Jack Nicholson is the only one who can't 'handle the truth' about his acting capabilities, as the audience roar with indignation. But he laughs it off. After all, they're a tough crowd to please as the club turns increasingly into a hive of self-made critics. Film choices are obscure and the territory is occupied by both first-timers doing Zoolander-style 'walk-offs' and the hard-core choices of the fanatics who know their Antonioni from their Attenborough.

Fooseoke, a US-based computer company have been quick to point out that Movieoke was originally their idea, an adaptation of karaoke for cd-rom, where users could re-enact or create new dialogue to dub onto the movie-reel. At this point, however, there are few films choices available. (Anyone for American Pie 2? Didn't think so.)

Movieoke hasn't reached the UK yet. Some would say our more inhibited nature makes the 'at home' format more likely to take off over here, but I think our getting in on the act is only a matter of timing.

drama

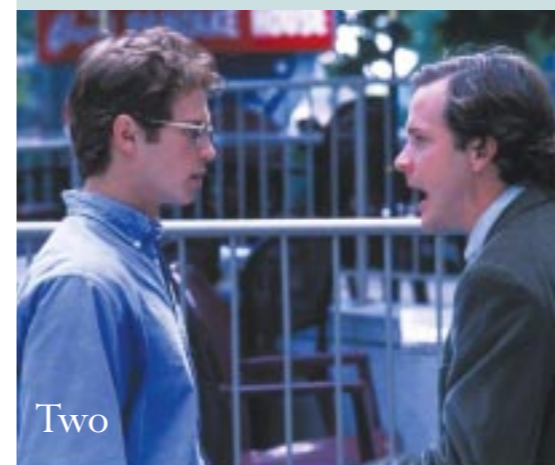
One: The Company (Dir Robert Altman)



One

The Company tracks the story of Ry (Neve Campbell), a young ballet dancer, poised to become the principal dancer in the Chicago Joffrey Ballet. The film is less about a rigid plot than capturing a series of private dramas as if from behind a door that has been left ajar. We watch (almost guiltily) intimate moments capturing the trials of rehearsal, the pain of dedication and politics within the cast, interrupted at intervals with long, but engaging performance sequences by the Joffrey Ballet. Sometimes romantic, but with plenty of grit, this is a beautifully executed turning point for Robert Altman. He has resisted his usual hallmark of employing a cast of many high-profile actors, (with Campbell, Malcolm McDowell and James Franco as the only professional actors in the film) and it pays off. Celebrity aside, the depiction of the contrast between lead and supporting roles is more realistic and impressive, leaving space for plenty of situational drama and sympathetic tenderness.

Two: Shattered Glass (Dir Billy Ray)



Two

Shattered Glass is based on the true story of Stephen Glass, a 24 year old Journalist, who, having risen suspiciously fast to the role of 'star reporter' at 'The New Republic', 'the in-flight magazine of Air-Force one', was exposed to great scandal in 1998 (by an internet hacker) as having worked his whole career writing entirely fictitious news stories. Hayden Christensen is superb in the role of Glass: at once oily and ingratiating to his superiors while a picture of innocence to his colleagues, highly dubious and on the edge of being brought to justice but nerve-wrackingly enigmatic. You really are held on the edge of your seat, wondering whether he is really a dangerous liar, or just a kid who got carried away. The tension holds out until the very end of the film, which is without too much moralistic fanfare. Particularly admirable is the fact that narration as a tool, and the nature of dramatic storytelling is at the core of the film, and yet is a small feature overall in the context of an exciting relationship-based plot. There is, however, one hole in Ray's story. He does not reveal or even hint at Glass' motivation for working so hard at deceiving his colleagues. We are left to assume that it was purely ambition, although the real Glass said that he had no idea why he did it. All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable lick-your-lips drama.

Three: Troy (Dir Wolfgang Petersen)



Three

Troy recounts the tale of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans over the theft of the Spartan King's lover, Helen, by the Trojan Prince, Paris. While the script constantly refers back to the cause for this 'just war', the indulgent emphasis on the battle scenes makes it possible to view the film as action for action's sake, with inadequate acknowledgement of the important themes of the story. In other words, it misses the point, and one hell of an opportunity to make something of such legendary characters as Achilles, and Helen of Troy. We can't help but feel that we've seen it all before, but with less obvious seams in the CGI technology. While the Director is intoxicated with the physical splendour of his lead actors, Brad Pitt (Achilles) and Orlando Bloom (Paris), the values and ideologies get lost. There were always going to be comparisons drawn between this \$175 million epic and the recent successes in this genre, namely Ridley Scott's 'Gladiator'. Sadly, despite having the material of an evocative, poetic legend to work with, Troy, by contrast, is pretty insipid in places, not living up to the scale of the passion of the original tale. It has muscle behind it, but not a lot of meat on its bones. It's not going to be legendary.

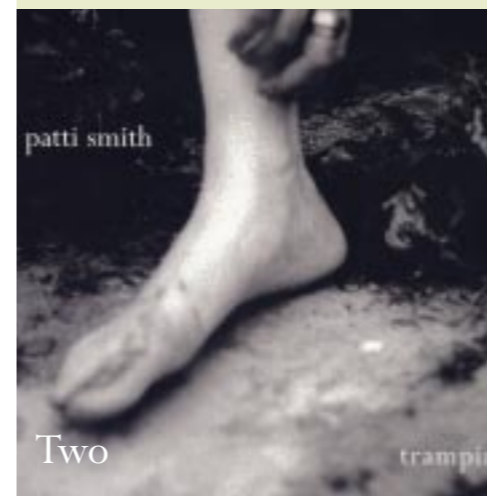
music

One: The Streets *A grand don't come for free*

'Fit but you know it' was a great single. A reminder of just how good Mike Skinner actually is, and a return to the glory of 'Original Pirate Material'. Roll on the album, I thought. I must admit, on first listening, I was thrown by the opening track 'It was supposed to be so easy'. 'Turn the Page' on 'Original Pirate Material' is one of the best opening tracks on any album and I was waiting for another great. Give it time though, and it's thoroughly rewarding. 'A grand don't come for free' is Mike Skinner's 'Concept' album, in that it has a beginning, middle and end that are all linked thematically. Like the opening track, it builds and completes as the album progresses and fits beautifully together. And it's all so real. No bling. No bitches. Just outright honesty. Highlights of the album are 'Blinded by the lights', 'Dry your eyes' and 'Empty Cans'.



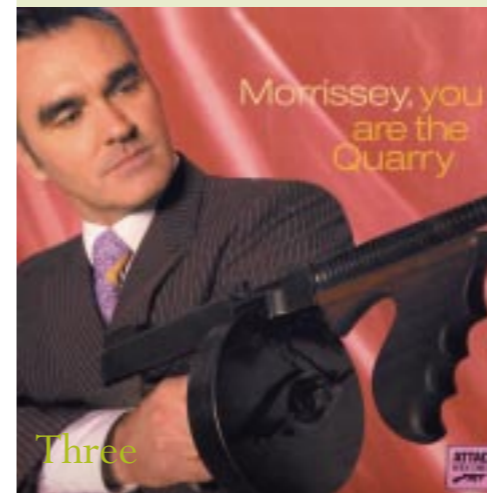
One



Two

Two: Patti Smith *Trampin'*

Patti Smith peaked too soon. Her 1975 debut 'Horses' rocked the Beat generation out of their rolling jazz-fuelled comfort zone. It's been up and down since then (only producing nine albums in forty years) but now, she seems to be on the rise again. 'Trampin'' is as close to a return to form as she's ever got. The opening track 'Jubilee' even sounds like the opening track 'Gloria' from 'Horses'. The album is laced with a variety of political messages ranging from 9/11 to the war in Iraq, which can grate occasionally, but is to be expected from an activist such as Smith. Highlights of the album are 'Trespases' and the closing track 'Trampin'' which has a beautiful piano accompaniment played by her daughter.



Three

Three: Morrissey *Morrissey, you are the Quarry*

So he's back. Seven years in the wilderness of LA has done little to lessen the melancholy and acerbic wit of Manchester's most miserable son. But is it a good album? Well ... kind of. The theme of 'America Is Not The World' seems a bit of an odd one for Morrissey to kick off with - Americans are fat and eat too much meat apparently. Tell us something we don't know Mozza. But it does pick up a bit from there - 'Irish Blood, English Heart' and 'Come Back To Camden' have all the hallmarks of classic Morrissey, both critiquing and praising English society respectively. He has lost none of his ability to be the critical observer. The album suffers a bit from the production - there is a mechanical, looped quality to some of the backing instruments that can irritate on repeated listens. However, his voice is as wonderfully expressive as ever and goes a long way to making up for it. A welcome return to form - just get a new producer and don't leave it so long next time. 'Morrissey, you are the Quarry' was reviewed by Ed O'Rourke.

Four: Keane *Hopes and Fears*

The first heard I heard of Keane was the single 'Somewhere only we know', which is also the opening track of 'Hopes and Fears'. It's a good track, not a great track. Good though. I had more hopes than fears for the album. That is until I heard the album. Again, good opening track. After that, vocalist Tom Chaplin's vocal styling started to give me the fear. He whines a bit and not a good whine - a pretty annoying whine actually. I felt they were trying to slot into that Coldplay mellow rock category but never quite reaching the heights, with riffs I had heard before from dodgy brit-pop one-hit-wonders and ABBA, of all people, which is no disrespect to ABBA. When you compare Keane to their contemporaries, bands like Snow Patrol and Jet, they don't come anywhere close. With the possible exceptions of 'This is the last time' and 'Bedshaped', it's a disappointingly unremarkable album.

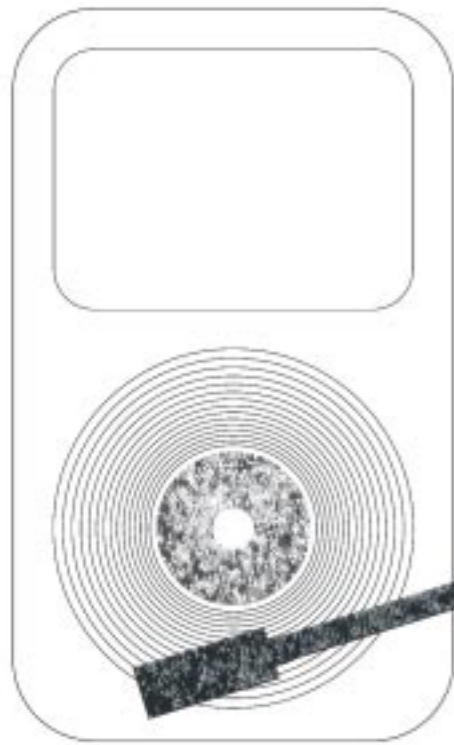


Four

"COMPLEXITY"

by DOMINIC CRINSON

BOMBAY
SAPPHIRE
INSPIRED



One track mind

As the iPod becomes an increasingly common fixture, Tadhg Ó'Súilleabháin finds himself musically challenged.

So how come they've supposedly run out of iPods, but everyone I know has suddenly got one? Are they all just coming out now that it's relatively safe, feigning surrender to the inevitable? I detect that slight embarrassment akin to some one who has just revealed themselves as closet 'My Little Pony aficionado'.

I find myself falling in with the same 'What would I-want-one-of-those-for?' crowd that I was a proud part of right up until the day I was given *GIVEN* a mobile phone, and it soon became as important to my daily life as my lungs or my kidneys.

Now it's not that I can't see the enormous upside to the iPod. For starters, there are all of those Robbie Williams types and record company children of Satan that it will hopefully put back where they belong. I wonder would anything please me more than the sight of Bryan Adams and Hootie (or possibly one of the Blowfish) begging for spare change?

And then there's the potential for creating out of the phenomenon a few spin-off industries to amuse the embittered and long-suffering 'real-music' fan. I personally would hope to be able to employ Michael Bolton and Billy-Ray Cyrus at (what I would hope to make my annual) 'Kick your least favourite music industry leech for a quid' night. Would they be willing? You bet they would. Once all of their fans have downloaded all of their terrible albums, and Bolton is no longer able to afford the hairdresser bills, those boys will be up for anything.

On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that anybody will be ordering in a skip to remove all

of their original Frank Zappa vinyl, just because it can now be stored on something that will fit in the palm of your hand. These people will not stop spending money on music. And as for your local pub band, they will still sell the same few hundred CDs that they always did. This is where I see the beauty of the whole situation; it won't stop bands making it at the lower levels of the music ladder, but it will stop anyone from becoming monstrously, unjustifiably huge due to a natural plateau of album sales, as the more copies that sell, the more accessible those albums are to iPod copiers. Thus, the ludicrously extravagant lifestyle available to the artist can be naturally curtailed. This system could have spared us Oasis' cocaine-fuelled *Be Here Now* and might have provided us with a second Stone Roses album worth talking about.

So where do I stand, and what am I doing still loitering there? I wonder, would being able to access all of my CDs twenty-four-seven really be of any great benefit to me in the end? I don't know that being able to listen to that *Menswear* track that came free with *Q* magazine a number of years ago whenever I felt like it would really enrich my life, or save it from its supposed inevitable musical starvation ("How can you live without one ... I'd just die!"). And unless I've missed a beat somewhere along the line, can't you only listen to one album at a time? Like mobile phones, would it really be any better than handy as regards the where and when?

But will I get one? I fancy I will (but only to put Lars Ulrich out on the street of course).

ANNA SUI



DOLLY GIRL

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 - "MIA" and "TUA" 2 PITCHERS (Design: Mario Botta)
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food

One: Chocolate Beer



One

There's no doubt that spirits go to your head a little quicker in the hot weather, and Pimms, that other special summer tradition is a bit too easy to drink back like lemonade. so for many of us, drinking sea-breezes and the like on a summer's afternoon leads to little more than dehydration and headaches. Happily, there are some refreshing alternatives emerging on the market, in the form of light beers infused with sweet flavours. While the imitations smell great, but don't have a lot going for them taste-wise, the best beers we have found are available from Belgo Centraal, restrauteurs and importers of Belgian cuisine. They sell an impressive range of fruit beers, made with extracts of everything from raspberry to elderflower, but the winner is definitely the most indulgent variety: Served in an elegant, feminine bottle; Floris Chocolat is a white beer delicately flavoured with dark cocoa. Light and refreshing, without an overpowering taste or smell, the sweetness is just right for that little buzz.

Belgo Centraal, 50 Earlham St, Covent Garden, London. 0207 813 2233.

Two: Born & Bread



Two

It is incredible how many people have stopped eating bread altogether, not for fear of carbohydrate calories, but because of that painful, bloated feeling we experience all too often. This is rare in European countries, where the tradition of buying fresh bread every day means there is no call for preservatives and anti-fungicidal chemicals used in the UK to preserve the shelf-life of the bread. A new bakery in East Dulwich is taking baking back to its origins, in order that its customers can experience bread as it should be. Adjoining the East Dulwich Deli, which sells seasonal foods, Born & Bread is what owners Tony and Tracy call "an endeavour to get bread back to what we believe is as close to its original state as possible," with a return to traditional, simple bread-making methods and high quality organic ingredients, including fruit which is added to speed up the fermentation of yeast. All the flour used comes from 100% organically traceable sources in the Loire Valley in France, handcrafted from a Kentish starter-culture by Parisian baker Manuel Monade, and baked slowly, late in the morning in a Spanish wood fired oven. This process guarantees to produce loaves that aren't too dense or full of air, with a naturally tangy flavour. You won't believe what you've been missing all these years. Prices from £1.20.

Born & Bread, 15a Lordship Lane, London, SE22 8EW. 0208 693 1222.

Three: The Wapping Project



Three

Despite its function as a restaurant, the Wapping Project stands alone as a spectacle that is worthwhile visiting, if even purely for the sheer magnificence of its renovated industrial interior. A dramatic contemporary art-gallery is housed inside the shell of this enormous urban space; formerly a Hydraulic Power Station. The owners have invested £4m restoring the original features, water-pipes and tanks and brickwork dating from the 19th century, so that coupled with plasma screens showing art-house films, the experience is both modern and eerily historical at the same time. And if you like a bit of drama at dinner - time, the restaurant is equally impressive, serving elegant and original but uncomplicated food in an unobtrusive manner. We had sumptuously soft char-grilled tiger-prawns with garlic aioli, sea-bass with crushed olive potatoes and chocolate parfait with lavender ice-cream. And honey-dew martinis. It is definitely what should be referred to as a restaurant 'experience', not just another meal.

The Wapping Project, Wapping Wall, London E1W 3ST. 0207 680 2080.



Give it to me slow

As with all the best things in life, good food is worth waiting for. Katherine Francis looks gratefully to the Italian movement which is revolutionising the way we eat.

In Tuscany there is a saying: "Si stava meglio quando si stava peggio", literally, 'we were better off when things were worse'!! For decades we have revelled in the successes of modernization, congratulating ourselves time and again on our ability to speed things up, size things down, reduce costs and increase output. But 'progress' has begun to take its toll, and our hi-tech, portable, hundred-mile-an-hour lifestyle now has us all suffering from this modern syndrome called stress. We're beginning to look back somewhat sheepishly to the good old days, when people accepted that it

was impossible to be in three places at once, and recognised that some things simply take time particularly where food and drink are concerned. The best things are still worth waiting for and thus for the manufacturers of Bulmers cider, 'Time dedicated to you', is their clients' quality guarantee. Our priorities seem to be changing however: it is now common practice to smother crops with fertilisers to make them grow faster, and add artificial food colouring our food to make it more attractive, because let's face it, bright yellow chips and shiny green peas sell better!



Is it any wonder that people have begun to rejoice at finding a slug in their lettuce?! Slugs won't be fooled by poor imitations of real food.

Thank goodness someone decided to take the situation in hand and begin to try and protect the future of our food. That someone was an Italian by the name of Carlo Petrini, pioneer and founder of the Slow Food movement, which he describes as "an eco-gastronomic movement". The heart of Slow Food is in Bra, northern Italy, where the movement began, but its popularity has grown rapidly, and to date it has over 80,000 members, in over 100 countries around the world. Much of its work is coordinated by the regional convivia, which promote the movement through organised gatherings and workshops, and offer support to local producers. Petrini was driven into action by a strong belief that ancient regional practices of food production should not be allowed to die out, nor should the thousands of varieties of plant and animal life that we consume, but which are now threatened by our indifference and our disregard for nature.

The Slow Food movement has compiled an endangered species list (the Ark of Good Taste) of foods - both animal and vegetable - that are in danger of becoming extinct, and has undertaken to protect them, by financing projects which help to produce more favourable conditions in which these plants and animals can thrive once again. Many disciples of Slow Food have dedicated themselves to ensuring a sustainable future for foods that are dying out, and the list covers a multitude, from Mexican vanilla to Kurdish apricots, from Greek cattle to wild Irish salmon. A special Slow Food Award is conferred on individuals or groups (often in underdeveloped countries) who make particular progress in the conservation of endangered species and whose work often contributes to the recovery of their poverty-stricken communities. Their efforts in

promoting bio-diversity are helping to ensure that there will always be choice on our menus, and that our options are not reduced to a selection of fast-food burgers. In an apt metaphor used to describe the globalization process, political scientist George Ritzer talked about the 'McDonaldization of society'. Indeed the fast-food revolution has come to symbolise not only the homogenization and over-commercialization of the food industry, but of our society in general. As its name suggests, Slow Food espouses a philosophy that is the antithesis of all that fast-food represents; it is a non-confrontational movement, seeking to promote an alternative through worldwide education and information, rather than opting for all out war with the fast-food giants.

Last month's grand opening of the Agenzia di Pollenzo, now the official site of the University of Gastronomic Sciences, was a landmark event for the Slow Food movement. The importance of their work has finally been recognised in the elevation of the study of food to an academic science and from next October 60 students, selected from thousands of applicants, will begin their Master of Food degree course. It promises to be a fascinating educational experience, with tantalising courses in food tasting, and trips abroad to observe the development and harvest of unusual crops.

It is clear to see why the Slow Food ethos appeals to such a wide audience, from conservationists, ecologists and scientists, to farmers, chefs and those who are quite simply food-lovers. Essentially, the movement is promoting a way of life that looks back to a time when the bonds between man and nature were much stronger. City smogs are killing off our food sources and desensitising us to the colours, tastes and smells that make eating good food such a sensuous experience. One of the goals of the Slow Food movement is not only to protect endangered foods, but furthermore "to cultivate an environment of celebration around the enjoyment of the produce".

The enthusiasm that the Italians have for food is infectious, and not only do they take their time over eating and drinking, but it is not unusual for them to discuss, for the duration of a meal, other fantastic meals that they have eaten ... and then move on to planning the next one! The social aspect of eating and the enjoyment of good food and drink in good company, is tantamount to Petrini's Slow Food philosophy. The Slow Food movement is doing great conservational and educational work, but at the end of the day, their simple belief in the right to pleasure might be the key to changing our attitude to food. Let's drop the diet shakes and ryvita (where's the pleasure?!), boycott GM foods and artificial flavours ... instead let's relax and allow Slow Food to stimulate our senses!

To find out more about the Slow Food movement, including information on world-wide events and Slow Food publications, visit their website at www.slowfood.com.

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vision



Sital Haria, 30, is the founder and Managing Director of a textile recycling design label and social enterprise, Sari UK, and a retail and marketing company focussing on designers working with recycled materials, RE UK Limited, based in Soho.

Only three years ago, Sital Haria was working in television. When the poverty she witnessed firsthand on a family holiday to India left her feeling hopeless and angry, she decided to try to do something other than just think about it. Initially, her fundraising project was only going to be a 'one off', but the ideas spiralled into Sari, a business enterprise.

Sital's team collect donated saris from the Asian community, which are then recycled by designer Sam Cook into elegant Western and traditional clothing, accessories and soft-furnishings, and then sold through retail outlets in West London.

The Directors of Sari don't take any dividends, so after paying her staff, Sital gives all the profits to SENSE, a non governmental organisation that gives local people the skills to teach deafblind children in the third world.

"It was a personal revelation," she says. "Every morning when I wake up I feel that I'm doing something worthwhile. People have told me that

this story inspires them to leave their jobs, or make even small changes to the way they live. In the beginning when we were desperately trying to get people interested, I used to think: 'I've given up all my security, what the hell am I doing?', but as you can imagine, hearing that made all the difference. It's the best thing I've ever done."

Developing the relationship with SENSE has been one of the key factors to Sari's burgeoning success. "It's more like having a partnership, which is unusual in charity work. We needed to be a social enterprise rather than a registered charity, because it gives us total independence. And a charity cannot trade, which is obviously the root of the project."

Thinking in terms of how far Sari has come in such a short space of time, I ask Sital when she will feel relaxed in the knowledge that she has achieved what she set out to do: "When Sari has built schools and drastically reduced poverty," she replies. "I'll still be making a go of it when I'm sixty, but I really hope that this is something that will continue beyond my time."

Hysteria

by T.S.Eliot

As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved
in her laughter and being part of it, until her
teeth were only accidental stars with **h a** talent
for squad-drill. I was drawn in by short gasps,
in **h a**led at each momentary recovery, lost finally
in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by
the ripple of unseen muscles. An elderly waiter
with trembling **h a**nds was hurriedly spreading
a pink and white checked cloth over the rusty
green iron table, saying: "If the lady and
gentleman wish to take their tea in the garden,
if the lady and gentleman wish to take their
tea in the garden ..." I decided **th a**t if the
sh aking of her breasts could be stopped, some of
the fragments of the afternoon might be collected,
and I concentrated my attention with careful
subtlety to this end.

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