

FINANCIAL TIMES

HTSI

7 JANUARY
2023



THE BIG REFRESH

How to FEEL GOOD in 2023

PLUS _____ BARBARA STURM'S BEAUTY MANIFESTO - THE C-SUITE CHECK-UP - POSITIVELY POSITANO - HAPPY SMELLS



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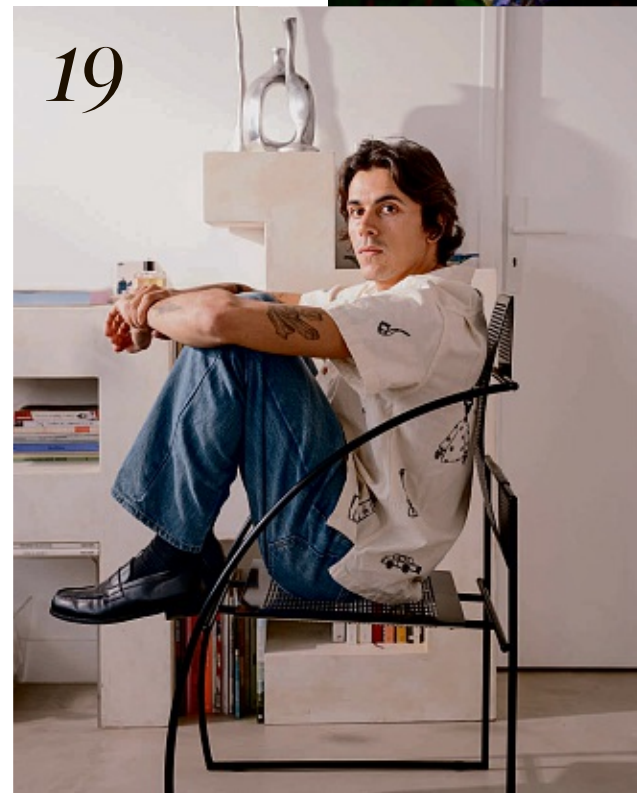
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RICHARD MILLE



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OPENING SHOT

POWER HUES

Anthony Daley explores the beauty of colour in a two-gallery exhibition

"After the moon landing in 1969 I was staring at the sky all the time," recalls artist Anthony Daley. "I remember thinking: the sky is made of colour, and the world is made of colour. At that moment, I think, I invented painting for myself." This fascination with the "beauty of colour" has continued to animate the Jamaican-born abstract expressionist throughout his 40-year career, and it defines his new commission from Dulwich Picture Gallery, for which he was asked to respond to Rubens' luminescent c1630s painting *Venus, Mars and Cupid*. Daley has produced a body of 20 radiant, smudge-textured paintings – on show across both the public art gallery and at Cork Street's Flowers Gallery. Like his childhood skygazing, Daley wanted to use the experience to bask in the pleasure of colour and light. "That's my challenge," he says: to take paint "and raise it to something that's sublime". **BAYA SIMONS**
Anthony Daley's works are on show at Flowers Gallery, WI, from 11 January to 4 February, and at Dulwich Picture Gallery until 2 April

Right: *Saintly*, 2022, by Anthony Daley



CONTRIBUTORS



KATE CHAPPLE

HTSI chief subeditor for nine years, Kate was also a sub on the launch edition in 1994, with a long stint as *Tatler* chief sub in between. For this issue, she writes about equine-assisted psychotherapy at Operation Centaur, which has helped her with her grief following the death of her father. "The horses are magnificent," she says, "including a chestnut Arab that was a thank-you present from one client. And there was I thinking of giving a tin of M&S biscuits..."



SATURN (HERMANN KOUDOU)

The French illustrator and graphic designer, best known as Saturn, has tried his hand at a range of practices, from serigraphy to tufting. "I use a lot of geometric shapes because I like their modular nature," he says, "you can create infinite visuals by rearranging them." Drawing inspiration from yoga, he illustrated this week's piece by Tiffanie Darke that looks at wellness schemes for C-suite executives, including recovery centres and "Nature Quests".



MARKEL REDONDO

The day before starting a degree in computer science in Bolton, Redondo had a change of heart and travelled to China to study photojournalism and work as a freelance photographer. In 2007, he returned to his hometown, Bilbao, where he's also become a drone operator and enjoys surfing and cycling. For this week's *How I Spend It*, he shot Spanish surfer Natxo González. "I was surprised how much Natxo knows about meteorology."



NICOLAS BIANCIOTTO

The Paris-based casting director was a hip-hop producer for 10 years before changing careers and launching Ikki Casting in 2016. He's also the co-host of *Cast*, a French podcast that delves behind the scenes of the fashion industry. He cast models Chun Jin and Morgan Porter for this week's cycling shoot in Copenhagen. "I wanted to find the perfect duo to match the intentions of the team, which centred around storytelling with a cinematic vibe."



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EDITOR'S LETTER

HTSI

EDITOR

Jo Ellison (jo.ellison@ft.com)

DEPUTY EDITOR

Beatrice Hodgkin (beatrice.hodgkin@ft.com)

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Rasha Kahil (rasha.kahil@ft.com)

STYLE DIRECTOR

Isabelle Kountoure (isabelle.kountoure@ft.com)

FEATURES

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Tim Auld (tim.auld@ft.com)

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Jackie Daly (jackie.daly@ft.com)

Louis Wise (louis.wise@ft.com)

COMMISSIONING EDITOR

Lauren Hadden (lauren.hadden@ft.com)

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

Clara Baldock (clara.baldock@ft.com)

JUNIOR EDITORS

Rosanna Dodds (rosanna.dodds@ft.com)

Baya Simons (baya.simons@ft.com)

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Sara Semic (sara.semic@ft.com)

FASHION

FASHION EDITOR

Benjamin Canares (benjamin.canares@ft.com)

FASHION COORDINATOR

Aylin Bayhan (aylin.bayhan@ft.com)

ART

ART DIRECTOR

Carlo Apostoli (carlo.apostoli@ft.com)

DEPUTY ART DIRECTOR

Morwenna Parry (morwenna.parry@ft.com)

PICTURES

PICTURE EDITOR

Katie Webb (katie.webb@ft.com)

PICTURE RESEARCHER

Paula Baker (paula.baker@ft.com)

SUBEDITORS

CHIEF SUBEDITOR

Kate Chapple (kate.chapple@ft.com)

DEPUTY CHIEF SUBEDITOR

Alexander Tyndall (alexander.tyndall@ft.com)

SUBEDITOR

Helen Bain (helen.bain@ft.com)

JUNIOR SUBEDITOR

Chris Allnutt (chris.allnutt@ft.com)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Vivienne Becker, Jessica Beresford, Bella Blissett, Simon de Burton, Adeela Crown, Aleks Cvetkovic, Delphine Danhier, Aimee Farrell, Kate Finnigan, Maria Fitzpatrick, Nick Foulkes, Chloe Fox, Alexander Fury, Julian Ganio, Francesca Gavin, Laila Gohar, Fiona Golfar, Ben Grimes, Alice Lascelles, Giovanni Dario Laudicina, Rhodri Marsden, Evens JP Mornay, Nicola Moulton, Rebecca Newman, Michelle Ogundehin, Ajesh Patalay, Charlene Prempeh, Tamara Rothstein, Fergus Scholes, Victoria Woodcock

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Lucia van der Post (lucia.vanderpost@ft.com)

TRAVEL EDITOR

Maria Shollenbarger (maria.shollenbarger@ft.com)

US CORRESPONDENT

Christina Ohly Evans (christina.ohlyevans@ft.com)

PUBLISHING

GLOBAL DIRECTOR, LUXURY & WEEKEND ADVERTISING

Dorota Gwilliam (dorota.gwilliam@ft.com)

COMMERCIAL SALES & PRODUCT EXECUTIVE

Isaac Peltz (isaac.peltz@ft.com)

PRODUCTION

Denise Macklin

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

John Lee

WWW.FT.COM/HTSI

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INSTAGRAM.COM/FTHTSI

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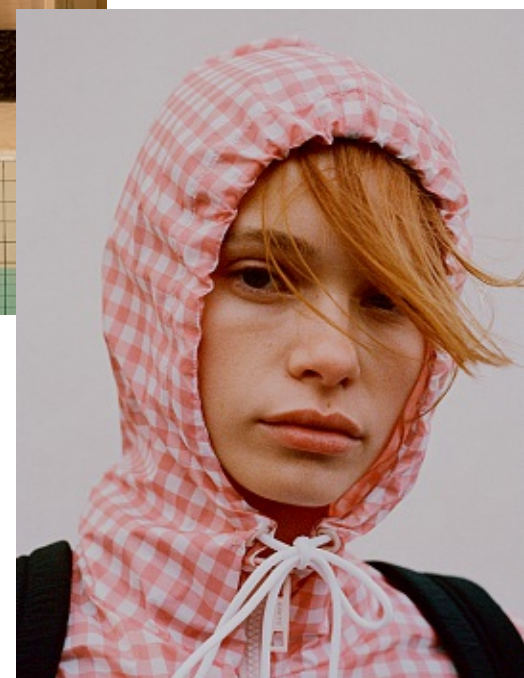
ho needs resolutions, purges, fasts and punishments? Not me, for one. This new year I have no intention of setting out

a list of good intentions: I simply wish to feel good. I say this as someone who is currently nursing a nasty sniffle, the end of the cold that started as a flu. I think actually it was previously a headache that started with a cough.

Although last year we were spared some of the more pernicious Covid variants, the HTSI fun house has recently been plagued by a buffet of basic ills. And, as we start a new year in which we might optimise our overall immunity, I am drawn towards ingredients and tonics that will put me back in finer health. Recently, I was intrigued to hear Professor Tim Spector of King's College London, a specialist in genetic epidemiology, argue that we could eradicate a host of common ailments (as well as weight issues) if we ate at least 30 different plants a week. It didn't matter much about your diet, whether dairy- or gluten-free or vegetarian – instead we should be eating as many different vegetables, fruits, nuts and spices as possible to encourage a greater diversity of gut microbes. As new year challenges go, I think it's quite a good one. While I had not heard of yuzu kosho or sea buckthorn until I read about them in this week's Food & Drink section (page 60), in an effort to stimulate my

HAVING SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU CAN VENT, LAUGH AND CRY IS THE KEY TO HEALTH

microbes I will be giving both a try. In particular, I like the sound of the yuzu kosho, a spicy fermented condiment that, according to its fanbase, promises to "pop" your every meal. Feeling good is as much about our mental health as our activities or diets, and two other articles in the issue reinforce that fact. Kate Chapple writes candidly about how equine-assisted therapy helped her to process her grief following the death of her father (page 52). And Louis Wise talks to Rachel Whiteread, Phyllida Barlow and Alison Wilding about a friendship that has been foundational to the trio's long careers (page 48). The sculptors are about to mount a joint exhibition, *Hurly-Burly*, to which each has contributed at least four works.



Above: the wellness space at Sommerro, Oslo (page 57). Right: Copenhagen cyclist chic (page 42). Below: *Untitled (Blue, Blue, Blue)*, 2021, by Rachel Whiteread (page 48)



EDENISTE HAPPINESS LIFEBOOST, £68 (PAGE 29)

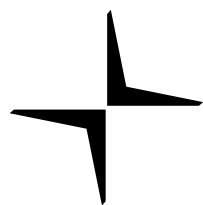
But it's the role they have played as each other's advisers, champions and occasionally mentors that is really cause for celebration here. Having someone you can vent, laugh, cry and be with in a crisis is always key to a healthy psychological outlook: these "friendly witches" are testament to the power of pals.

We also have more straightforward feelgood items: from the fashion story shot by Rasmus Weng Karlsen and stylist Kristine Halken in cycle-friendly Copenhagen (page 42) to an interview with the German über-facialist and creator of the "vampire facial" Dr Barbara Sturm (page 23). Sturm speaks to Kathleen Baird-Murray at home in Gstaad, shortly before she heads to London to host an "anti-inflammatory Haus". We've also got the latest sex aids, should you be interested; it would seem a dereliction of duty not to include something so fundamental in an issue about getting the very best from life (page 38).

Lastly, take a tip from Léo Walk, this week's Aesthete, and clear away your excess furniture (page 19). The French dancer and choreographer describes life near Père Lachaise, and the apartment from which he enjoys a Paris-delicious view. "I keep my home quite empty and minimalist," he says of his spartan living room. "The more space there is for dancing, the better I feel." ■ HTSI

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Léo Walk

The dancer and choreographer collects stones, admires JFK Jr and smells of Terre d'Hermès

INTERVIEW BY **ELLIE PITHERS**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALEX CRÉTEY SYSTEMANS**

MY PERSONAL STYLE SIGNIFIER is my long hair. I've cut it short and shaved it all off before, but I feel my best when it's long – it goes well with my dancing. My stylist is Eva Guide at Amour Cheveux Club, in République. I don't use any special products – just Le Petit Marseillais shampoo. amourcheveuxclub.com

THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED was a black sculpture. I went to the flea market in Saint-Ouen, and just as I was leaving, I saw it. The seller told me he picked it up in America years ago but he didn't know who made it. It's very heavy, and it reminds me of a big door, one which opens onto another world. It was expensive but I negotiated well – Saint-Ouen is full of enthusiasts, so if you show them that you're passionate about something, in the end it comes off.

A PLACE THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME is my best friend Marion Motin's house in Normandy. Marion is a dancer and choreographer, and she has a house in the middle of the dunes, by the sea, in Agon-Coutainville, where I have been going for quite a few years. It's often very cold there, with a chill that slaps you in the face. Every time, it re-focuses me and brings me back down-to-earth.

THE LAST PODCAST I LISTENED TO was *Picasso: Séparer l'homme de l'artiste*, an episode from Julie Beauzac's feminist podcast series. It really upset me. I had no idea the guy was such a monster. It's a subject I've thought about a lot as an artist: the human side versus the arrogant part inside the artist that says, "I have to spit this out, loud and proud – just shut up everyone, and listen to me." Sometimes I wake up in the morning and I feel like there is a kind of rage inside me. I have friends who try to keep me grounded, but at times they also extinguish a flame of

creativity. You have to move mountains to be an artist. It's not easy. podcasts-francais.fr/podcast/venus-s-epilait-elle-la-chatte

MY STYLE ICON is John F Kennedy Jr. I like his flow: a bit chic, but poetic and sporty at the same time. He always broke the mould a little bit: he would wear a suit, his shirt a little bit open, a baseball cap worn backwards. He had a lot of charisma.

SOME OF MY BEST IDEAS COME FROM LETTING GO

I HAVE A COLLECTION of about 100 stones, kept between my house and my father's house. I've collected them since I was little; I wanted to be an archaeologist as a child. Actually, I feel a bit like an archaeologist in what I do today. I have

my bodies – my dancers – and I'm polishing them. I'm looking for things, searching for materials and colours. I still receive a lot of stones as gifts, as my friends and family know I love them – one person gave me a stone from Tahiti in the shape of a shark's tooth.

THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN is a photograph of all my six aunts for my Portuguese grandmother Mamie Berta. One of my aunts was very ill, so I rounded up all the sisters from all over France, and asked my friend to do a shoot with them. They hadn't seen each other for ages, and we got a photograph of the whole family together.

THE LAST ITEM OF CLOTHING I ADDED TO MY WARDROBE was a pair of Nike and Comme des Garçons sneakers I bought in Paris – they're very cosy.



Above: Léo Walk in his Paris apartment. Left: his preferred Le Petit Marseillais shampoo. Below: his sculpture, artist unknown





Brussels. It's a beautiful shape and has sat on my bedside table in my last three apartments. I don't know why it intrigues me so much, but it makes me feel good.

MY FAVOURITE ROOM IN MY APARTMENT is the living room, because it's where I dance. I keep my home quite empty and minimalist – the more space there is for dancing, the better I feel. I've been practising for my new show, *Maison d'en face*, opening at the Théâtre du Châtelet in April. I just moved to a new place near Père Lachaise, in the 20th arrondissement, and I have a panoramic view over Paris. I can see the Eiffel Tower and Montmartre! It's beautiful. chatelet.com

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED was not personal to me, but it's a phrase from the German choreographer Pina Bausch, who said: "Dance, dance, otherwise we are lost." It was something I learned in breakdancing battles when I was young. Lots of people would stand on the side talking and trading insults – it was brutal. The most important thing to do was stop talking and dance.

THE LAST MUSIC I DOWNLOADED was "#20" by ApeX Twin. Earlier this year I did a one-week residency, staying in a beautiful house in the south of France called La Villa Galaxie. Every morning, I got up and listened to this music in the middle of the forest that surrounds the house. It was like being in a parallel universe. rivieraprod.fr/villa-galaxie

IN MY FRIDGE YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND coeur de boeuf tomatoes and mozzarella from Carrefour. It's not stylish, but I don't have much time for grocery shopping as I'm always working. Those two things go with everything – salad, pasta. I also have Mr Freeze ice pops. They're the best. Very cheap.

I RECENTLY REDISCOVERED New York. The city gave me an early career boost when I was touring with Christine and The Queens, and it opened up a lot of possibilities for me. It's not a city I'd like to live in, but it has an energy that makes you feel like you can start from nothing and do great things. In France, I feel like there are lots of boxes and labels. In New York, you can be a musician, who owns a clothing label, who makes headphones, who does collaborations – you decide where you're going in the world. Plus, I love Boom Boom Room at The Standard hotel.

AN INDULGENCE I WOULD NEVER FORGO is roast chicken, especially from Villa Magnan, a beautiful guesthouse in Biarritz. I would go there just to eat their roast chicken. It's incredible. A true Sunday roast, cooked in the oven with potatoes. instagram.com/villamagnan

THE BEST GIFT I'VE RECEIVED is a drawing by a friend. I was going through a complicated period, working very hard for my first show at L'Olympia in Paris, and I wasn't really in contact with my friends. I felt very alone. A friend waited for me at home and gave me this picture, of my dancers against a blue sky.

AN OBJECT I COULD NEVER PART WITH is my blue stone, a lapis lazuli I bought in

THE GROOMING STAPLE I AM NEVER WITHOUT is my bottle of Terre d'Hermès. I've worn it since I was a teenager. I bought my first bottle with my pocket money when I was 13 or 14. £89 for 100ml EDT

MY FAVOURITE BUILDING is the French Communist Party headquarters in Paris, designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. I made a video there, *Jalousie*, with the singer Angèle. I imagined every shot, every sequence, from the choreography to the styling. The design of the building is fabulous – period but futuristic at the same time. I also love the colour green and I'm obsessed with the green carpet under the dome. espace-niemeyer.fr

I HAVE TWO FAVOURITE APPS, the first is the Radiooooo app, where you can listen to music from all over the world and from any decade after 1900. I like to discover lots of different songs I didn't know about before – for example, Nigerian music from the 1940s. And my second is Uber Eats. I love cooking but I never have time, so I usually order Vietnamese from Paris Hanoi near my apartment.

I can't eat anything too greasy, because the next day in rehearsal it sticks in my stomach and I can't dance. radiooooo.com

SOME OF MY BEST IDEAS come from letting go. I'm very anxious, so it happens very rarely. And suddenly, when I am very emotionally charged and I let go – it really works. Whether it's a little video on Instagram or a big project, that's what gives me inspiration. ■HTSI



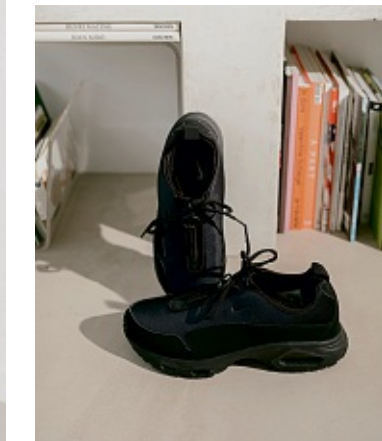
THE LAPIS LAZULI STONE



THE MORE SPACE THERE IS FOR DANCING, THE BETTER I FEEL



Top: Walk recently moved to the 20th arrondissement. Top right: Mr Freeze ice pops. Above: his style icon, John F Kennedy Jr. Right: *Je Dors, Je Travaille*, by sculptor Valentine Schlegel. Below: Walk at home in Paris. Below right: his favourite Nike sneakers



Above centre: his grooming staple, Terre d'Hermès. Above: a painting on ceramic of his company, La Marche Bleue

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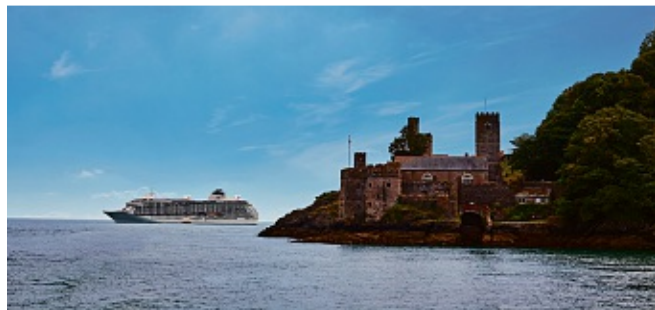
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THE FIX



INTERVIEW

STURM BREWING

The skincare guru talks to *Kathleen Baird-Murray* about exosomes, uphill skiing and that famous vampire facial

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TORVIOLL JASHARI

Dr Barbara Sturm photographed at her house in Gstaad with Ricky, her daughter's rabbit, and Whiskey, her dog



Above: Dr Sturm on the porch of her home: her routine involves hiking, eating well and her own line of skincare

Gstaad is an incredibly well-serviced village for luxury goods, where you can take in a Damien Hirst exhibition at Gagosian or treat yourself to a new Hermès/Louis Vuitton/Prada handbag – but you’ll struggle to find a restaurant open after 8pm on a Wednesday night in mid-November. I know this because I’m here to interview German skincare guru Dr Barbara Sturm who, after a whirlwind tour of shop openings (two in NYC to join her spas and boutiques in Düsseldorf, Los Angeles, London, Miami and Dallas), and a minor accident when she ran into a glass door in Los Angeles, is hunkering down for a week or so with her father and daughter Pepper, eight, before she sets off to Dubai for more of the same. As I lap the ghostly streets of this chi-chi ski resort looking for her house, I can’t help but wonder: how does a jar of moisturiser get you here?

Sturm’s passion for skincare is rooted in her belief that inflammation is our worst enemy. It was in 2002, while practising as an orthopaedic doctor and working as part of a research team developing the pioneering Orthokine treatment for inflamed joints, that she started exploring the possibility of injectables that used the same principles. You could, she reasoned, extract clients’ blood, spin it in a centrifuge to extract the anti-inflammatory proteins, and then inject it back into the face as an anti-ageing treatment. Following the success of the so-called “vampire facial”, clients asked for something to use at home, so she started producing a cream she had originally developed for her own blackhead-prone skin – with the addition of their own blood

proteins. In 2014, Sturm’s custom MC1 cream – the take-home version of a PRP (platelet-rich plasma) treatment – became a beauty industry sensation.

I’d like to be able to claim some credit for Sturm’s stratospheric success, but sadly I can’t. In 2014, when I was beauty director of Net-a-Porter’s print title, *Porter*, the company’s vice-president for global beauty, David Olsen, came over to my desk enthusiastically proclaiming Sturm to be the next big thing in luxury skincare. “It’s got my own blood in it!” he said, referring to the MC1 cream. “Ugh! Why would anyone want that?” I replied. Regardless, Olsen launched Sturm’s collection (without his, or anyone’s, blood in it) and the rest, as they say, is a home in Los Angeles, one in Düsseldorf, a celebrity following (Kate Hudson recently co-hosted a party for Sturm in the Hamptons), and this particular, rather lovely, long stint in Gstaad.

The original MC1 cream has since been overtaken by a blood-free line of serums, moisturisers, hair products, even children’s skincare. New city-chic boutiques offer a range of treatments from microneedling to scalp massages and the 15-minute de-stressing “ear seeding” treatment. Everything is underpinned by Sturm’s passion for anti-inflammatory science. This month, she is bringing The Sturm Haus: Anti-Inflammatory Workshop to London. The two-day event (tickets from £50) will feature talks in wellness education, skincare consultations, express facials, sound baths – and vagina clay-sculpting sessions. It may sound wacky, but she’s built an estimated \$150mn business on the back of it.

“When Dr Barbara Sturm launches a new product, there is always excitement,” says Annalise Fard, director of beauty, home, fine jewellery and watches at Harrods. “It’s her consistent innovation that has led to the remarkable growth of the brand.”

SITTING IN THE CRISP MOUNTAIN light, fresh from a Pilates class, what’s most noticeable about Sturm’s make-up free complexion is that she has a beguiling collection of smile and frown lines, something cosmetic brand founders usually prefer to iron out. Her beauty routine, she says, is focused on taking time out for hikes in the fresh air, uphill skiing, eating and sleeping well – and using her own skincare. “People forget how important skin is for our immune system,” she says. “Underneath our skin cells are our dendritic cells, which communicate with our immune system – so whatever we put on our skin shouldn’t interfere with its natural purpose.” Nor does she wear sunscreen 24/7 – unless she is in the mountains or by the beach, she doesn’t believe she needs it. “We need sun exposure for vitamin D production, for our respiratory tract, for our mental health, for our immune system.”

Her bigger-picture thinking eschews the latest trending ingredients in favour of a philosophy that is all about strengthening skin. She prefers to focus on exosomes, the sac-like structures found within a cell, containing some of our DNA proteins. Having been obsessed with them for 20

years, she has just launched a line of creams and serums – called Exoso-metic – with lab-synthesised growth factors and exosomes that help to boost cell communication and thereby initiate renewal and repair processes. Her website boasts “before” and “after” pictures submitted by happy customers, while for those put off by the £380 price tag, she hosts free online skin consultations with her team, and has just launched a Microbiotic line (from £30) that is aimed at a younger consumer; one item is called “The Ultimate Stinky Pimple Treatment”.

Having a scientist at the helm has become de rigueur for any new beauty brand, from Noble Panacea’s Nobel Prize-winning Sir Fraser Stoddart to Augustinus Bader. But does it guarantee that a cream is any

“I’M A HUSTLER – YOU HAVE TO BE IF YOU WANT TO FULFIL YOUR DREAMS”

good? Sturm’s products don’t come with the clinical trials you might expect for such a stalwart believer in science. “I don’t do fake studies,” she says. “And if I did a clinical study I’d have to pay £2mn or £3mn for a test on 20 people.” (The going rate is actually closer to £10,000 to £20,000 per claim, but across a brand with as many SKUs as she has, I can see how that might ramp up.) But one CEO of a beauty conglomerate, who preferred not to be mentioned by name, says clinical tests are vital: “They help you assess claims, product performance and real efficacy. This is second nature for truly science-backed brands.”

Over the past four years, revenue has grown tenfold, with profitable growth accelerated in the past three years: 2019 saw “minimal” investment in the company by Keyhaven Capital, with Sturm retaining “ownership over decision-making”. But Sturm, who grew up in communist-era East Germany until her parents managed to move to West Germany, says her role hasn’t changed much. “At a certain point you need to expand your operations,” she says. “And, you know – what do I know about warehouses? Nothing.”

Back in Gstaad, the grey morning sky has changed to a crisp blue. A mountain view fills the window of the wood-flanked interior; in Sturm’s garden I can see rabbits in a run, waiting for Pepper to return from school. I ask her if there was ever a time when things were tough? She starts speaking German, checking with Ulirike Deucker, her longest-serving colleague, and they laugh about the time they opened her first clinic in Düsseldorf in 2006, with its five rooms – and sat there waiting for the phone to ring. But I am also reminded that here is someone who managed to get a degree in medicine while also breastfeeding her baby girl Charly, now 26.

“I am a hustler,” she laughs. “And you have to be a hustler if you want to fulfill your dreams.” The dictionary definition of a hustler is someone who is at worst an illicit dealer, at best an aggressive salesperson. Sturm is no hustler. But as a determined, hard-working, highly smart business founder, she is definitely fulfilling her dreams. ■HTSI

The Sturm Haus: Anti-Inflammatory Workshop is a ticketed event at The Stables, London WC2, 27-28 January, drsturm.com



From top: DR BARBARA STURM Super Anti-Aging Face Cream, £225 for 50ml. Super Anti-Aging Serum, £280 for 30ml. Microbiotic Gentle Cleansing Balm, £35 for 125ml. The Better B Niacinamide Serum, £110 for 30ml



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BOWFLEX steel and rubber SelectTech adjustable dumbbell, £229, powerhousefitness.co.uk



OUTDOOR VOICES recycled-mesh shorts, £45, mrporter.com

DO-WIN suede and mesh weightlifting shoes, \$130, roguefitness.com



LOUIS VUITTON cotton-mix Christopher jump rope, £530



CZXFITNESS oak Water Rowing Machine with Bluetooth monitor, £699

SHOPPING

THE HIT PARADE

18 ways to give yourself a lift.
By Aylin Bayhan



THERABODY foam Theragun wave roller, £125, cultbeauty.co.uk

The inspiration: *Artist at Rest*, 1946, by Robert Doisneau



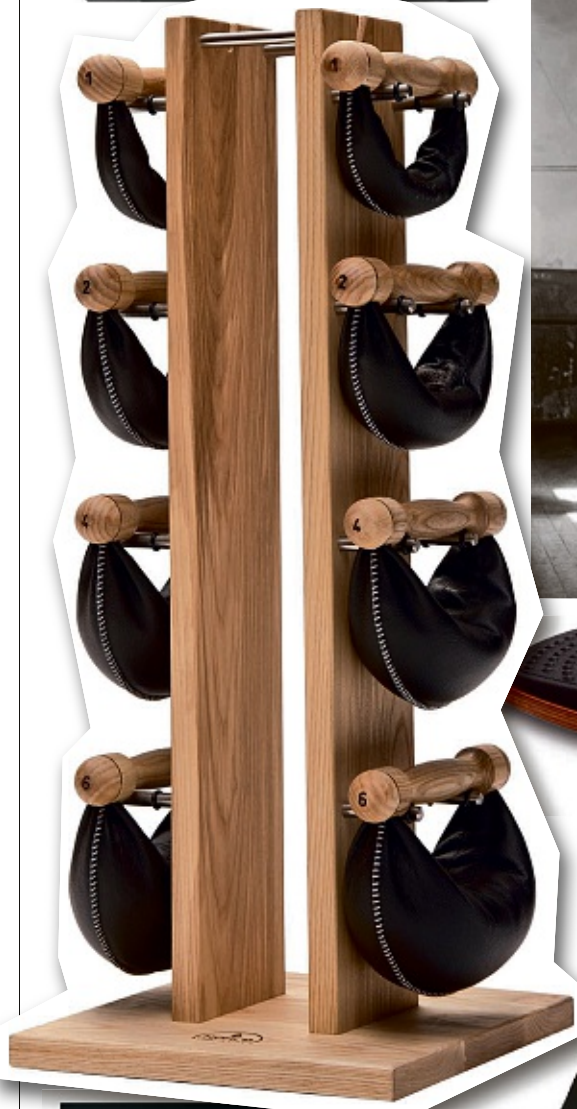
HOCK DESIGN walnut and stainless-steel Loft dumbbells, £495, luxdeco.com



HERNO padded wool vest, €495, mytheresa.com



ADIDAS polyester and mesh Aeroready training gloves, £43



WATERROWER ash and leather NOHrD SwingWeights Tower, £589, fitnessoptions.co.uk



JACOB BEK foot massage balance board, €89



WATERDROP stainless-steel 400ml tumbler, £29.90



BIOCOL LABS Something For Immunity ampoules, £20, endclothing.com



THE NORTH FACE mesh and polyester duffel bag, £115, mrporter.com



MONCLER ribbed stretch-jersey Grenoble base layer, £375

LE GRAMME silver and diamond Le 7 bracelet, £865, mrporter.com



AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-TWX9 true wireless earphones, £279.99



ERIC FLAG beech and steel Push Up Bars, €39.90, amazon.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT DOISNEAU/GAMMA-RAPHO/GETTY IMAGES

THE FIX



SIA TAYLOR BRUSHED GOLD AND PLATINUM SONGBIRD NECKLACE, £1,390

WATCHES & JEWELLERY

IN THE BUFF

As the mood tilts towards restraint, gold takes on a new range of lustres. By Maria Fitzpatrick

It seems odd, perhaps, that for decades fashion and interior design have anointed a “new nude” or “new neutral” on a seasonal rotation – yet jewellery never got the memo. It has stuck, with few exceptions, to the trusted menu of richly toned golden yellow, brilliant white and perky rose (H Stern’s pioneering pale Noble gold, introduced in 2001, the result of 180 test combinations of metals, is one outlier). Now, though, the landscape is shifting to make space for more softly spoken golds and pieces with a restrained finish or polish – which, far from being bland or dull, feel like an intriguing departure.

In 2019 Omega launched a “Moonshine” gold, a light yellow that mimics “moonlight in a dark blue sky”, while Gaia Repossi, whose own rose gold is more muted than most, has dabbled with beige-toned “champagne gold” in her recent Robert Mapplethorpe collection. Ouroboros custom-blends beige and caramel golds for its bespoke pieces in Jaipur, designing alloys that will complement an individual client’s skin tone. And Chanel, which first introduced its own beige gold in 2014 on the face of the J12 365 watch has firmly built it into its fine-jewellery brand DNA: it’s a regular feature of its Boy.Friend

CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY Coco Crush earrings: (on right ear, from top) white-gold and diamond, £5,650 for pair, single beige-gold and diamond, £1,920, single beige-gold, £1,200, yellow- and white-gold and diamond, £6,550 for set, and white-gold and diamond, £5,650 for pair; (on left ear, from top) yellow- and white-gold and diamond, £6,550 for set

From near right: CHANEL beige-gold Boy.Friend watch, £13,100. AUDEMARS PIGUET gold Royal Oak “Jumbo” Extra-Thin watch with smoked-gold dial, POA. CARTIER gold Tank Française watch, £19,100 (available to pre-order in 2023). GIRARD-PERREGAUX pink-gold and onyx Laureato watch, £42,000. OMEGA Moonshine-gold Speedmaster Moonwatch Professional, £27,100



“WE’LL SEE AN UPSURGE IN DEMAND FOR DIFFERENT ALLOYS”

beach when the sea retreats. Charlie Betts of Single Mine Origin (SMO), which sources fully traceable, responsibly sourced gold for the jewellery trade, says it could well be the tip of the iceberg. “We have been asked for many years about the usual red, white and yellow golds, but recently we’re being asked for green, and I think we will see an upsurge of demand for different alloys. Businesses

watches and the Coco Crush line. The hue, synonymous with the house’s designs, reminded Mademoiselle Chanel of wet sand on Deauville

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY; KATAOKA JEWELRY AND OBJECTS D’ART; ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE FOUNDATION, LICENSED BY ARTSTOCK, NEW YORK



want their gold to have a point of difference, but the customers are also much more engaged with where it came from and how it is composed – it’s possible the two things will grow hand in hand. And maybe something about these understated shades is appropriate for the times we’re living in.”

The desire for a subtle, nuanced aesthetic in precious metals is perhaps no better shown than in how beige gold – once an oddity – has been welcomed into the family once and for all. Beige gold, or as the architect-turned-jeweller Dina Kamal describes it, “18-carat gold in the raw”, emerges at the tipping point where pure yellow 24-carat gold is combined with a cocktail of other metallic elements (such as silver, palladium, zinc and others that add strength and stability) into a new alloy. When the material, which must have a minimum of 75 per cent yellow gold to be considered 18 carat, has no copper in the remaining 25 per cent (it’s the varying degrees of copper that contribute the pink to “rose” gold), it is the whitest 18-carat gold can be, but it looks beige.

AT THE VERY HIGH END OF the watches and jewellery market, there is a desire for a more discreet tonal sensibility in general – as seen in the autumnal smoked-gold hues on the dial of Audemars Piguet’s recent Royal Oak “Jumbo”, for instance, and in the increasing pull towards the low-key lustre of matte polished or brushed metals. At PAD in October, the art-collector crowd asked jewellers outright for brushed metals, perhaps because the aesthetic is still more unusual and therefore stands out, but in a less obvious way.

In Cartier’s new twist on the Tank Française, the monobloc metal timepiece originally launched in 1996, the desire was to “reinforce the design’s ‘natural’ aspect”. Along with its softly brushed metal (either steel or yellow gold), the case and bracelet have almost the same tone and finish, a departure from the original, creating a monochromatic impression that lands with a gentle purr rather than a big bang. And at Girard-Perregaux, dialled-back delivery is also hitting the right notes. The low-key Laureato watch with an onyx face, which is performing exceptionally well, is made from pink gold in alternating satin and polished finishes. “The rose gold allows for a more matte tone,” explains head of product development Clémence Dubois.

Kataoka, the Japanese fine jewellers with flagships in Tokyo and New York, has a brushed minky-grey gold. But it’s beige, which represents about 70 per cent of orders, that best reflects the “understated elegance values” that resonate with its global client base. Its designer Yoshinobu Kataoka found many of today’s yellows and pinks “ostentatious”, embracing instead the sensibility of a “silky and subtle” custom, “honeyed yellow” beige gold.

Brazilian fine-jeweller Fernando Jorge, recently installed in his new Mayfair showroom, has been working in beige gold since his first collection out of Central Saint Martins. His designs, which tap into the “body culture and sensuality of Brazil”, have a relaxed, confident and modern elegance. He



DINA KAMAL brushed raw-white-gold and pearl Jelly Fish pin, POA



OUROBOROS gold (softened with copper and silver), diamond and sapphire Constellation ring, £3,800



FERNANDO JORGE beige-gold Tag bracelet, £13,500



H STERN Noble gold and diamond earrings, POA



KATAOKA custom-blended beige-gold Rise & Set ring, \$3,480

started exploring the possibilities of beige gold to create a genderless alternative that was “less shiny and golden but not as bright as white”, and has offered it widely since 2016 – both in his main collections and increasingly for wedding bands and bespoke pieces.

“With some stones, yellow gold just doesn’t look right,” he says, “and the plating on white gold can mask its warmth.

“BEIGE IS REFINED AND BEAUTIFUL BUT NOT TOO SHOWY. IT’S STILL QUITE NICHE”

Beige is refined and beautiful but not too showy. It’s still quite niche but it appeals to the client who wants the real-deal materials but is confident enough to wear

something more discreet and subdued. In fact, they want something that’s not instantly recognisable – it’s intriguing, and it’s noticed by the more inquisitive eye.” One thing that can’t be missed is a diamond, which reflects and twinkles with a particular refinement when placed on this more “neutral” canvas – as seen in Dina Kamal’s refined pavé-set chains and her diamond-set waterfall earrings, which take inspiration from Frank Lloyd Wright’s seminal concrete Fallingwater design. “The beige gold isn’t competing with the diamonds, so there’s a synchronicity between the metal and the stones,” she explains. “They are equals.”

Balance, as in all things, is crucial here. In fact, Kamal adds the tiniest fraction of copper into her mix for softness. “Too cool and it feels aloof or too masculine; it still needs some sensuality. You don’t see that much of a difference but you can sense it – and that matters.” ■HTSI



REPOSSI white- and “champagne” (non-rhodium-plated white) gold and diamond Motor ring, £46,800, from its Robert Mapplethorpe collection

THE FIX



PERFUME

Seven happy scents

Rosanna Dodds seeks joy in a bottle

It was scientists Richard Axel and Linda B Buck who, in 1991, first discovered a direct link between our olfactory system and the parts of the brain that process memory and emotion. It’s why you feel nostalgic after smelling a loved one’s perfume. Or why an ex’s scent can fill you with dread.

French perfume house Edeniste was born of these findings. Having looked at various factors – blood pressure, saliva and temperature – the brand has concocted an eau de parfum line (from £68) with a “mood-stabilising accord”.

Each can be layered with a choice of six “Lifeboost” fragrances (2, £68 for 30ml), from Happiness and Wellbeing to Energy or Dream. Happiness claims to activate the brain’s reward pathway with notes of mango and watermelon; the Energy and Wellbeing accords were developed by measuring brain activity. “Boost yourself with whatever you need,” says founder Audrey Semeraro.

In New York, supplement brand The Nue Co has also been developing its line of “functional fragrances” (1, £80). “They’re designed to de-stress, energise and help you rebalance,” explains Flo Glendenning, VP of product and sustainability, pointing to newly launched Water Therapy – a salty blend of vetiver and seaweed that aims to trigger the neurological connection to “blue spaces”.

Across the three calming fragrances, more than 90 per cent of surveyed wearers report feeling less stressed. “It’s the next stage of aromatherapy – but with data behind it,” adds Glendenning.

A common denominator in happy fragrances is bergamot, a citrus fruit long used to uplift and reduce tiredness. It’s the star of classics such as Clinique Happy (3, £49 for 50ml) and Hermès Le Jardin de Monsieur Li (4, £45 for 30ml), and a head note in Cosmoss’s new Sacred Mist (5, £120 for 100ml). Sandalwood is also popular: my ultimate mood-booster is Dyptique’s velvety Tam Dao (6, £140 for 75ml).

But for German brand Escentric Molecules, the secret to happiness is found in a synthetic molecule called Iso E Super. The scent is said to tickle brain receptors in a way that replicates the feeling of touch; Molecule 01 (7, £79 for 100ml) has since become a cult phenomenon. Many claim to have met their partner through the fragrance. A very happy outcome indeed. ■HTSI



3



2



4



5



6



7

THE FIND



SMART INVESTMENT

Freshen up with a Japanese
Katazome stencil towel

EDITED BY **CLARA BALDOCK**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **OLIVIA E BENNETT**

AUTUMN SONATA
Alma towel, also
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other designs, €78

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GROOMING

BLADE RUNNER

Real men shave with a cut-throat razor.
Tarquin Cooper sharpens his knives

The cut-throat razor is an appealing throwback to traditional shaving. It's heroically old school, both an *objet d'art* and a challenge. "It's the apex of wet shaving," says Robert Burton, ecommerce manager at The Executive Shaving Company, which sells a range of cut-throats. "You're going back to a traditional type of shaving that was used for centuries before King Gillette came along with the safety razor in 1901. Ultimately it's an open blade – there's no protection, it's you and your technique and the blade – there's a challenge to that."

And it's not one easily mastered. The first time I tried shaving with a cut-throat, my face looked as if I'd had an accident with a lawnmower. I would have given up but for a subsequent cut-throat lesson with a traditional barber in Mayfair.

"Don't shave with a cut-throat when you're late for work," says Barry Klein, managing director of Taylor of Old Bond Street, whose Jermyn Street store offers lessons. "Give yourself time."

Klein says that the biggest difference from a regular razor is the fact that you're not looking square-on to the mirror but to the side. "That leaves you slightly blinded. The trick is to start with your cheeks, then use your regular razor to finish off your chin and neck area, and then progress as you get used to it." "When you look back at pictures of the Victorian era, most



gents had a moustache for a good reason," adds Burton. "Shaving under your nose is not easy with a cut-throat." But, with persistence, both say a degree of proficiency is attainable.

The cut-throat – or straight – razor has long held a special place in popular imagination. It was the weapon of choice for the fictional demon barber of Fleet Street, Sweeney Todd. More recently, a cut-throat was the focus for one of the more sexually charged scenes in Bond history, with a lathered-up Daniel Craig receiving a very close shave from Naomie Harris's Miss Money Penny in *Skyfall*. The scene led to one retailer reporting a sales increase of open razors of 405 per cent. Klein says he sold four months' worth of stock in four weeks.

The challenge is to keep the angle of the blade at approximately 30 degrees to the skin. At the correct angle, it glides smoothly. Too upright and it catches, causing painful nicks. The cheek on the dominant side is the easy part; it's when you need to cross your hand to the other side that things start to get complicated. It can require the steady hand of a surgeon.

A traditional steel-bladed cut-throat razor is also a thing of beauty. They typically start from around £150. The German-made Dovo Bismarck (£175) has a gold-plated 6/8ths carbon-steel blade, a gold-plated tang (the prong you rest your little finger on to control the blade), and an ebony-wood handle, known as the scales, reflecting the role it plays in balancing the blade. The Thiers-Issard Sheep and Wolf (£244.50), meanwhile, is handmade in France using Sheffield silver steel with an olive-wood handle. A Burr Elm wood box set of seven

Thiers-Issard Le Chasseur straight razors, each one hand-engraved with the day of the week and depicting a hunting scene on the scales, costs £1,878.

Typically, cut-throats need to be sharpened with a leather strop every few shaves and sent off to be honed every nine months. But there is another option – a cut-throat that takes a disposable blade. The shavette, the type popular at high-street barbers, takes a safety blade snapped in half. They tend to be made of plastic and feel cheap. Instead, Burton recommends starting off with the Japanese-engineered Feather Artist range, which offers the finesse and craftsmanship of a traditional razor with some ingenious features. Their disposable blades are thicker, which give

"THE CHALLENGE IS TO KEEP THE ANGLE OF THE BLADE AT 30 DEGREES TO THE SKIN"

more rigidity for a closer shave; some come with a guard that looks like a serrated edge but it provides a layer of protection, and they're economical, lasting for around 10 shaves. The SS Scotch Wood (£122.50) also has a rounded tip that gently pushes down the skin to disperse pressure at the top of the blade. "The Feather artist range is what the Japanese engineered to try to replicate a cut-throat razor but with more modern aspects and materials, and a disposable blade," explains Burton. "Guys find them easier to use."

If ease is your goal, perhaps the cut-throat is not for you. Many times on my journey I have come close to throwing in the (blood-stained) towel and howled at the application of the antiseptic stick. But persevere, and you'll be rewarded with not only one of the closest shaves possible – but also one of the most rewarding. ■HTSI
A cut-throat shaving lesson at Jermyn Street Barbers costs £80; jermynstreetbarbers.co.uk



ACQUA DI PARMA yellow shaving brush, £255



SS Scotch Wood, £122.50, executive-shaving.co.uk



TAYLOR OF OLD BOND STREET Royal Forest Shaving Cream, £13.95 for 150g



DOVO Bismarck, £175, executive-shaving.co.uk



CHRISTIAN DIOR Eau Sauvage aftershave, £74 for 200ml



THIERS-ISSARD
Le Chasseur 5/8s
seven-day set,
£1,878, executive-
shaving.co.uk

Top right: a West Point cadet shaving in front of his tent in 1913



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ASK ADEELA

Should I be using retinol?

Our beauty columnist offers a beginner's guide to the anti-ageing vitamin

As a facialist, I am always asked: "What's the best anti-ageing skincare product?" I always answer: "Retinol." Retinol is not a new skincare fad. The powerful, fat-soluble form of vitamin A was discovered in 1909, isolated in 1931, lab-made in 1947, and first used in over-the-counter creams in the '70s. It has a stellar reputation as a wrinkle-fighter: it promotes collagen and elastin growth beneath the skin, increases cellular turnover to diminish lines and wrinkles, and combats pigmentation and acne scarring.

The problem is that it's often underutilised or misused. The confusion comes because it is a retinoid, and retinoids fall into four main categories: retinol, retinoic acid, retinyl esters and retinaldehyde. There's a misconception that they're the same, and interchangeable. They're not.

Tretinoin (aka retinoic acid) is a prescription-strength retinoid, 20 times more potent than over-the-counter retinol and prescribed for acne or severe, indented acne scarring, pigmentation or melasma. The high prescriptive concentration causes cells to turn over faster and deliver quicker results, meaning it can also cause inflammation and redness.

WITH RETINOL, REMEMBER: START LOW, GO SLOW AND BE PATIENT

Retinol, on the other hand, slowly converts to retinoic acid, and therefore takes longer to get the skin from A to B. Because of this, retinol users can experience less irritation. What you need to remember with retinol is: start low, go slow and be patient. Start off with a pea-sized amount of a low-percentage formula, 0.01 per cent to 0.03 per cent, and slowly move up the ladder (retinol tends to go up to one per cent at the highest level) until you reach the Goldilocks zone: not too low, not too high.

Retinol can initially cause a skin process called retinisation: initial redness, dryness and flaking that can last between one and four weeks. It's a sign of your skin undergoing a shock of accelerated cellular growth. It's not necessarily an adverse reaction, more a tolerance adjustment. Over the years, I have seen people panic and discontinue retinol use at this vital stage: I compare it to a gym goer dropping their regime at the first hint of muscle soreness.

Retinol is one of those skincare ingredients that really forces one to "trust the process" but, given the right dose, patience and usage, it can deliver a fresh-faced complexion. Your skin will thank you now, and for decades to come. ■HTSI

YOUR THREE-STEP ROUTINE TO HELP BUILD SKIN TOLERANCE

- For the first 10 applications, apply retinol every third night.
- The next 10 applications, apply every second night.
- Finally, build up to every night. If your skin is still sensitive, then keep it at every second night.



APPLICATION TIPS

- Don't neglect neck or décolletage, and even the back of the hands which are often overlooked.
- Try my Retinol sandwich technique. Your serum and moisturiser are the two slices of bread, and the retinol is the filling. Wait a few minutes between applying each layer.
- On your retinol off-nights, give your skin some love and hydration. Your skin will be more moisture-needy than usual.
- Constant friction of cotton rubbing can heighten irritation. Swap your pillowcase with a Slip pure silk pillowcase for skin-soothing relief.
- Retinol-induced epidermal renewal will make the skin more vulnerable to the sun. It's vital to use sunscreen every single day, reapplying every three hours.



DR DENNIS GROSS Overnight Wrinkle Treatment, \$85 for 30ml. This is a one-two punch of a serum, with powerhouse ferulic acid improving skin elasticity while evening out pigmentation.



KIEHL'S Retinol Skin Renewing Daily Micro-Dose Serum, £45 for 30ml. For a measured dose of peptide and ceramides to strengthen the skin-barrier function, opt for this patent-pending serum.



SKINCEUTICALS Retinol 0.3, £72 for 30ml. Beginner-friendly, and delivers a steady, even release of retinol.



LA PRAIRIE Skin Caviar Nighttime Oil, £440 for 20ml. The Swiss brand has championed the use of retinol-rich caviar since the late '80s, making a massage feel even more special.



MEDIK8 Crystal Retinal, £45 for 30ml. To let your skin adapt, start with Medik8, available in a series of strengths. It contains retinaldehyde, a next-gen form of fast-acting vitamin A.



TYPOLOGY Fine Lines & Wrinkles Serum (pictured top left), £33 for 30ml. Good for those with hyper-sensitive skin, this serum doesn't compromise the skin's delicate barrier because of its gentle glide.



MURAD Retinol Youth Renewal Serum, £80 for 30ml. This easy-does-it formula with a dose of hyaluronic acid is mild enough for nightly use.



Left: the week-long programme includes daily yoga and Pilates. Below right: a map of the circular Croce di Nocelle walk by Rebecca Campbell. Bottom right: the view from Monte Comune

Right: the author in Positano on the Amalfi Coast. Below: the terrace and swimming pool at Le Sirenuse



deliciousness that would make any self-respecting wellness guru weep. That would be la vita insanity.

But you don't have to sign up to a week's wellness programme in order to pimp your Amalfi adventure for the healthier. Anyone can enjoy the myriad walks that interconnect the isolated hilltop villages. Sure, people are familiar with Il Sentiero degli Dei – The Path of the Gods, a former mule track that runs from Bomerano to Nocelle, just above Positano. But why shuffle up a hackneyed tourist path with hundreds of other people when just alongside it is the almost unknown Croce di Nocelle, a circular walk that takes you to the summit of Monte Vagnula, with its dramatic cliffside hideaways, before plunging back down through the village of Montepertuso and past the old merchants' villas of Liparlati? Or there is the Casterna Forestale, a four-hour walk through cypress and pine forests which, between 1951 and 1976, was taken every Sunday by a priest from nearby Vico Equense – and where you are unlikely to encounter another soul.

THE HILLS OFFER AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT perspective on a landscape that one could reduce to a few clichéd sunset views. But they aren't easy. On the second day, walking alone with Giovanni because my daughter has refused to leave the hotel balcony (and who can blame her?), we ascend a seemingly endless concrete stairwell that is no more emotionally fulfilling than doing 30 minutes on a stairmaster. But when the concrete finally gives way to the mountain paths, one is immediately struck by the seabird's vantage. The air feels different, smells different; it all looks almost Alpine in its lushness. There's something psychologically reassuring, too, about walking ancient paths once used by villagers for whom there existed no other routes. Giovanni recalls his grandfather schlepping down the mountain with sides of pork to trade for firewood multiple times a week. Children would walk these paths to school. When people attribute the long lives and fortitude of Italians to their Mediterranean diet, they forget that, until recently, huge swaths of the population used to walk a daily marathon as well.

Back at the hotel, the massage therapist tends to my tender calf muscles with the ministrations of a sumo (regular Dolce Vitality guests have the option of Theragun "percussive" massages). I then consider leaping into the spa's ice-cold plunge pool – but opt to eat a pizza and drink a Limoncello spritz instead. The morning yoga, led by a sweet American, Jennifer Warakowski, further saves my muscles from spastic atrophy.

Meanwhile, Positano has begun its gradual shift into the long winter hibernation. The beach jetty is dismantled and the boat crews start saying their goodbyes. There's a chill in the evening, and I can book a restaurant with ease. I take a last dip in the Mediterranean and feel the exquisite melancholy that accompanies the final gasps of summer heat. After three days, I not only feel vital, I feel like a Roman goddess. Albeit one whose glute muscles are so sore she needs to grip her ass walking through the airport on her way home. ■HTSI
Jo Ellison travelled as a guest of Le Sirenuse; rooms from €685. The next Dolce Vitality takes place 19-25 March, €8,500 per person, sirenuse.it



Positano ACTIVE

Can the Amalfi crowd be persuaded to switch pasta and posing for mountain hikes and sunrise yoga? Jo Ellison tests out Dolce Vitality

514m views on TikTok. Having witnessed the tidal surge of visitors attempting to move along Positano's narrow lanes on the last Sunday in October, I can only imagine the glorious absence of visitors that Steinbeck once enjoyed.

For Francesco, who joined the business in 2020 after a stint in New York, the future of Positano lies in the opportunity to open up the region to travellers by offering a quiet extension to the season. For the past year, he has been working on Dolce Vitality, a week-long programme, open to 24 guests, of walking, sunrise yoga, massage and fasting (or let's call it very mindful eating) that bookends the summer months – when the weather is cooler, the plant life is more abundant and the crowds are largely gone.

WHILE DOLCE VITALITY SOUNDS PRETTY, IT'S AS PUNISHING AS HELL

But while Dolce Vitality sounds pretty, I soon discover it's as punishing as hell. Forty minutes into the Monte Comune, a four-hour hike that takes us up the steep path of Le Tese behind Positano, before emerging on a headland that offers a clear view across the Bay of Naples, my heart is thumping so ferociously I wonder if I might be about to have a cardiac event. Francesco is still chirruping away about the spectacular vantage points and unspoilt landmarks within our foothall. Our guide, a goat-like triathlete called Giovanni who runs up mountain paths for sport, is foraging for a native berry that tastes like an extremely grainy raspberry. And my daughter, whom I have dragged along for the lols, is looking at me murderously and begging us to turn around.

So far, so brutal. And I'm doing an abridged version of the official week-long programme, which involves daily yoga and Pilates (plus personalised body-composition assessments, tailored pescatarian or vegan menus, and daily massages). We're taking part in only two of the customary five hikes, I've rescheduled the sunrise yoga for a more humane 9.30am, and I'm not even considering the wellness menus because there's no way I'm forgoing the breakfast buffet: an orgy of gluten-rich, dairy-heavy, carb-loaded

The thing is, the power of the dolce vita brand is now so entrenched that people only associate this area of Italy with a few things," says Francesco Sersale as he marches up a mountain path on which the autumn flora is offering a final flourish. Those things are, he says, as follows: eating lots of pasta, posing for selfies at sunset against the commune's dusky walls, and sitting on the beach. "People come and they watch the sea and hold hands and take a boat trip. And it's all very romantic and lovely, and then they leave," continues Francesco. "Not that there's anything wrong with that, of course. But very few people realise that there's an entirely different side of Positano if you just look in the other direction."

Francesco is the third generation of the Sersale family to be involved in Positano's Le Sirenuse, a sprawling oxblood-coloured testimony to old-world glamour that first opened in 1951. The hotel has done much in the intervening decades to cultivate the very sensibility Francesco is unpicking: thousands of tourists – mostly American, mostly couples – flock to the hotel's terraces each summer in search of their own slice of lemon-scented Amalfiana, and the Sirenuse sits at the fore of any itinerary for affluent adventurers in search of their own neo-realist Italian fantasy. Blame John Steinbeck, that midcentury Baedeker who arrived in Positano on an assignment for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1953 and was quickly captivated by the "old family house converted into a first-class hotel" managed by the Marchese Paolo Sersale, who happened to be mayor of the town.

"Positano bites deep," wrote Steinbeck in his dispatch. It's an observation that has become an unofficial slogan for Le Sirenuse, which sells T-shirts printed with those very words from its boutique opposite the hotel.

Steinbeck was smart enough to recognise the geological and economic challenges presented by promoting a town that clings so precipitously to a vertical escarpment. "There are about 2,000 inhabitants in Positano and there is room for about 500 visitors, no more. The cliffs are all taken." He clearly didn't reckon on social media. In fact, some five million visitors now chug along the Amalfi Coast each summer, and its towns have become an essential feature of the influencer life – #AmalfiCoast has more than

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THE SEX-AID MARKET IS FLOURISHING. THESE ARE THE BRANDS TO KNOW. BY ROSANNA DODDS



COCO DE MER THE RING, £125

When Gwyneth Paltrow included a \$28,500 sex chair in her Goop holiday gift guide, many balked at its extravagance. The chair, designed for New York brand Kiki de Montparnasse, has shiny brass stirrups and smooth leather quilting. It's one of many pleasures in the Goop wellness repertoire, which also includes "romantic" vibrators, gold-tinted wristlets and a cowgirl sex machine. All are extremely chic.

Paltrow has banked on a flourishing industry: the global sex-toys market is expected to reach \$62.32bn by 2030, with a compound annual growth rate of 8.4 per cent. Other champions include Cara Delevingne, co-owner of award-winning sex-tech company Lora DiCarlo, and actress Dakota Johnson, an investor in Brooklyn-based Maude. "Loving yourself should be the most normal thing in the world," says Lily Allen in a promotional video for her collaboration with Bavarian brand Womanizer. "I masturbate. Do you?"

"Our capacity to experience pleasure can be life-changing," affirms Coco de Mer CEO Lucy Litwack. "A confident sexuality can empower so many facets of your life; it's all about self-love and self-respect."

Litwack compares the brand's sex toys to *objets d'art*, with popular items including a topaz-topped butt plug (£165) and a rose-printed ceramic dildo (£150). "My vision was to build a true icon of pleasure in luxury," says Litwack.

Still unconvinced? Try something simple like Lelo's clitoral pinpoint vibrator (£159). Or go for beauty: Kindred Black's sex toys could be confused with sculptures. And for those that scoff at pleasure entirely, let me direct you to an illustration of a 13th-century erotic Iranian poem that was recently sold by Roseberys for £16,000 – more than five times its lower estimate. Sex sells, as it always will. The only question is how much you're willing to spend. ■HTSI

From top: GOOP Viva la Vulva vibrator, \$98. LELO dot, £159. LILY ALLEN Womanizer Liberty, £89



Do you NEED the C-suite check-up?

Executives are turning to intense mental-wellbeing therapies to give them the edge – and save them from collapse. *Tiffanie Darke* reports

ILLUSTRATION BY SATURN

It's day two of the annual conference for the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners EMEA, and the C-suite attendees are taking part in a group meditation. Having not met for three years, the IAMCP has decided to give half of its sessions over to nurturing the wellbeing of its staff. Gret Batchelar's organisation, Conscious Working, is taking the lead on this. "To be successful you need to be equipped with strategic thinking that is rooted in compassion for yourself, your teams, the broader community and the planet," she says. "This begins with self-awareness."

Corporate wellbeing programmes of yesterday may have served some osteopathy, a gym membership and

an annual health check, but that approach no longer cuts it. Even though "roughly \$50bn is spent on wellness by businesses, it's not making a jot of difference", says Octavius Black, CEO of behavioural science company MindGym. With burnout and stress-related absence on the rise, businesses are having to contend with a complex range of employee mental-health issues.

As a result, they are having to rethink their wellbeing strategies – not only to support their staff, but to retain them. A recent Deloitte survey found nearly 70 per cent of leaders are considering quitting for a job that better supports their wellbeing, while 81 per cent of C-suite interviewees said improving their wellbeing is more important than advancing their career. One problem, says Batchelar, is that

"HR teams come to us asking for wellbeing support, but don't consider the C-suite as the employees".

Louise Parker is a behavioural change coach whose clients all come to see her privately. This, she believes, should change. "Putting a gym into Morgan Stanley is all very well but it's about so much more than that. It's not just a personal trainer and a nutritionist, it's mental health." The barrier to this, she believes, is that many "businesses aren't yet ready. That's down to fear of sharing about health. Through that process you have to expose yourself, to be open and intimate, and people don't want to do that at work." A six-week coaching course comes in at £15,000 for three sessions a week (which can be remote), and then drops to £6,000 a month, where she is on call for clients as and when needed.

Business coach Julie Stokes has just helped launch a new executive retreat at Goodwood with gut-health specialist and psychotherapist Stephanie Moore. "Super-smart people have brains that are very active, and most haven't figured out ways of calming them," she says. The five-day retreat (from £5,000) includes personal consultations, treatments and group lectures – on everything from stress resilience and sleep quality to weight management and energy regulation, as well as bespoke life coaching and emotional intelligence sessions. Guests undergo some pre-assessments, and alongside the usual massages and bracing walks, can expect sessions on "how to defeat your inner saboteurs".

Swiss clinic Paracelsus is at the pinnacle of executive recovery centres. Here, clients including "the top teams

from private equity and private investment banks" undergo a full medical, and psychiatric and nutritional analysis. They come for a few days and stay in their own lakefront residence together with a full-time therapist. They also have a maid, chauffeur and chef, and skiing, skydiving and cooking are all on offer. Costs per person run into the low six figures. Paracelsus founder Jan Gerber argues that investing in the health of top executives is smarter, however, than signing them off work: "For a fund with billions under management, and hundreds of millions for the investor circle, if one of those partners falls ill, the cost is exponentially higher than that small investment." Gerber should know – his background is risk management. He adds, "Psychotherapy is a gruelling process and everything [extra offered] needs to be in service of that... it is a seven-star experience."

LESS EXPENSIVE – AND PROBABLY A LOT MORE FUN – is Yeotown, the wellness retreat in north Devon that now runs programmes in Madeira. Stays are built around afternoons off so teams can spend a couple of hours back at work, but mornings and evenings are structured around mindfulness, meditation, massage, surfing, forest bathing... "Wellbeing stuff that used to be dismissed as a bit out there now has scientific backing," says co-founder Simon Sieff. Recent clients include top executives from Goldman Sachs, the Young Presidents' Association and Inhabit Hotels. Sieff says he has never once been called by an HR department.

Instead, "Someone will come here recreationally, and then come back with their whole team."

But if business leaders are really looking to get an edge, they need to consult Andres Roberts of Bristol-based Bio-Leadership Project. Working with firms like Patagonia, Natura & Co and Aviva, he leads small groups on "Nature Quests", inspired by the vision quests in Native American cultures. "The first two days are a mix of slowing down – walks, wild swims, meditations – with work to open awareness and to connect with the world around you." It's essentially deep relaxation. "We do lots of this work around a fire, with good food, to make it feel like fun." Then clients are taken into nature, left on their own with no food for 48 hours before being brought back to assimilate their experiences. "I've never

CLIENTS ARE TAKEN INTO NATURE AND LEFT WITH NO FOOD FOR 48 HOURS

'heard' myself in that way" was the verdict of one recent alumnus.

"The paradigm for leadership is shifting from people who want to be at the top of the pyramid to the centre of the circle," notes Chris Connors, a meditation teacher and "embodiment coach" who has worked with executives

at Kering and LVMH, Net-a-Porter and YOOX. He believes what is defining this next generation of leaders "is not a big cheque, not only physical and emotional intelligence, but spiritual intelligence. This doesn't mean acting like a yogi – but having high levels of self-awareness. Because then you're able to understand what your ego is doing, what your unconscious is doing, what's driving you into difficult things and what can get you out of them. It's about knowing yourself."

Jim Ratcliffe, the founder of chemical company Ineos, is one such leader. He took on the job of improving the wellbeing of his staff after the fatal heart attacks of two close colleagues in 2007. But rather than take the team on wellbeing offsites, he built it into the company ethos. Resilience trainers CorPerformance were brought in and, 15 years on, the wellbeing programme is now intrinsic to company culture. Using data measurement and tracking tools, CorPerformance sets bespoke lifestyle and fitness goals for each member of staff (on a voluntary basis). "For one person it might be a marathon, for another it might be taking the dog for a walk," says group operations director Simon Laker. "Then we track how you respond to it – it's an iterative process, with genetics and other factors playing their part." In 2022, 1,870 of the company's 25,000 staff competed in the company's Tour de France challenge (where teams complete different stages of the race); "countless" others do marathons; and there is a 320km running, cycling and hiking trip across Namibia. "A lot of our work is on deals which go on for months – it can be hugely stressful. Our people are the best at sustaining that level of work now, because to do that you've got to be fit," says Laker.

"Stress and resilience was all HR departments used to want to hear about. Now it's mental health and performance," adds CorPerformance's founder Fred Wadsworth. "What is increasingly recognised is the power of general wellness in mental performance." CorPerformance and Ineos have set out to prove that, with the right wellbeing support, you can transform employees. "Most executives are sitting or lying for more than 20 hours a day," says Wadsworth. "We were originally persistent hunters, not sitting around industrialised workplaces. Because the body and mind are so affected by each other, you end up with disordered mood states."

"Culture and leadership are what change companies' wellbeing," concludes MindGym's Octavius Black. "A human-centred business is one that is more about soft power than hard power. One that recognises that the things that matter to us are our values, our spirit and purpose, and less our career path, what we earn or our working hours." The organisation's psychology-based transformation programmes have been taken up by 62 per cent of FTSE 100 companies and 59 per cent of the S&P 100. Leading by example, one could say. ■HTSI



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PEDAL PUSHERS

Sportswear meets city chic on a cycle around Copenhagen



Photography by *Rasmus Weng Karlsen*
Styling by *Kristine Halken*
Models *Chun Jin* and *Morgan Porter*

Above, from left: Chun wears JW ANDERSON cotton T-shirt, £155, and studded denim trousers, £3,250. EYTYS suede and cotton Kamasu sneakers, £217. Morgan wears JIL SANDER BY LUCIE AND LUKE MEIER wool and metal detail dress, POA. EYTYS suede and nylon Fugu sneakers, £204. KASSL EDITIONS oil-coated cotton-mix tote bag, £390



Morgan wears SPORTMAX cotton-mix top, £295, and cotton-mix and vinyl skirt, £970. THE ROW nappa leather coin wristlet, £380





Above: Morgan wears TOD'S leather coat, POA. THE ROW coated linen hood, POA. MONCLER sunglasses, £270. RAINS nylon backpack, £81. KASSEL EDITIONS oil-coated cotton-mix The Anchor bag, £217. PRADA metal keychain, £455

Opposite page: Chun wears ALAÏA nacre jersey bodysuit, £720, and knitted viscose crinoline skirt, £3,440. RAPHA Pro Team Frameless sunglasses, £128. EYTYS suede and cotton Kamasu sneakers, £217. PRADA leather cardholder, £560

Below: Chun wears ALAÏA silk-mix and leather jacket, £2,460. ISABEL MARANT leather trousers, POA. BY MALENE BIRGER silk cap, £150. RAPHA Pro Team Frameless sunglasses, £128. JIMMY CHOO leather Diamond hobo bag, £1,295. WANDLER mesh and leather bag, £810. EYTYS suede and cotton Kamasu sneakers, £217





Above: Chun wears MM6 MAISON MARGIELA x SALOMON nylon vest, POA. MM6 MAISON MARGIELA furry yarn dress, £550, sheer bodysuit, £320, and satin bag, £430. HUNTER recycled-nylon bum bag, £40. EYTYS suede and cotton Kamasu sneakers, £217

Right: Chun wears EMPORIO ARMANI nylon blouson, £680 for twin set. Y-PROJECT cotton dress, £468

Opposite page: Morgan wears KASSEL EDITIONS lacquered cotton coat, £690. SUNNEI cotton bag, POA. EYTYS suede and nylon Fugu sneakers, £204



Models, Chun Jin and Morgan Porter at Storm Models. Casting, Ikki Casting. Hair, Henrik Haue at Link. Make-up, Regina Törnwall at LundLund. Photographer's assistant, Matt Marsh. Stylist's assistants, Isa Langkjær and Viola Bager. Production, The Lab



The three witches

Photography by Lydia Goldblatt

Sculptors and sorceresses, Phyllida Barlow, Rachel Whiteread and Alison Wilding have cooked up a show inspired by their 40-year friendship. By *Louis Wise*

This month *Hurly-Burly*, a three-way exhibition featuring Phyllida Barlow, Rachel Whiteread and Alison Wilding, will open at Gagosian Paris. It takes its title from *Macbeth* – “When the hurly-burly’s done, When the battle’s lost and won”. It’s a surprisingly gleeful name for an exhibition from three of Britain’s most admired modern sculptors, as well as a tribute to their friend the late gallerist Karsten Schubert, who once called them “the three witches”.

But are they really very witchy? “I feel like I can guess what people are going to say,” says Whiteread, the 1993 Turner Prize winner, now 59, from her home in north London. “I have funny déjà-vu things.” A pause. “I probably would have been burned at the stake, yeah. And I’ve got a good cackling laugh as well!”

“It’s possibly there – who knows?” says Wilding, 74, who taught alongside Barlow in the 1980s at Brighton Polytechnic, where they first met a young, ambitious student, Whiteread. “I don’t go around with a huge number of artists except Rachel and Alison,” says Barlow, the oldest of the three at 78, who enjoyed a sudden rocket to art fame 12 years ago. “So I suppose I’m witchy in the sense that I rather keep my distance.”

Hurly-Burly is, for all the mischief, an opportunity to hear three very different artists in conversation – although there hasn’t been much of a pre-chat. Each is contributing at least four works, new and old, without knowing what the others have, and each is as excited as the other to see what will emerge from the cauldron. “Phyllida, Rachel and Alison have been the source of inspiration

for generations of artists,” says Cristina Colomar, director at Gagosian, “but we hope this exhibition will continue to reach new admirers of their work and extend their seemingly endless sphere of influence.” To an outsider, then, it seems an ideal way to compare three major players in the past three years of British art. To the trio in question, however, it’s mostly a fun way to sum up 40 years of friendship. They are aware that they have affected each other deeply, but tend to view each other’s work as radically different.

“It seemed like a nice idea to play around with, and to be surprised by each other’s work,” says Whiteread, who suggested the idea to Gagosian in 2021, after Wilding had

“I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN BURNED AT THE STAKE. AND I’VE GOT A GOOD CACKLE!”

first mooted it years ago. “It’ll be great to see how all this works together, and see if there are any similarities.” She is contributing a selection of woods, papier-mâchés and bronzes painted blue, pink or yellow – not how many may normally think of her and her monumental casts. Yet it’s also very suitable, since it’s as a BA student of painting that Whiteread first met her friends, who were teaching in the buzzy sculpture department downstairs. Whiteread nearly did an MA in painting too, but ended up following Barlow and Wilding to the Slade to study an MA in sculpture, setting her on a career-defining course.

Barlow, based in north London, is finishing off her sculptures when we speak one autumn afternoon. “I suppose I’m scared that my pieces will be too big,” she



From left: artists Phyllida Barlow, Alison Wilding and Rachel Whiteread at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, where they once taught and studied together



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALISON WILDING/NOAH DA COSTA, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KARSTEN SCHUBERT, LONDON, PHYLLIDA BARLOW/GENEVIEVE HANSON, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND HAUSER & WIRTH, RACHEL WHITEREAD/PRUDENCE CUMING ASSOCIATES, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GAGOSIAN

sighs. “I’m scared that they will be ugly things. I’m very good at ugly! There’s a creeping sense of wondering whether I will overstep some mark.” True, her work made from more prosaic materials such as cardboard, cement or polystyrene can be lumbering, but it is often joyous, too. “Sort of a bull – or cow – in a china shop!”

The conversation of each artist is seasoned with deep affection, with their varying personalities coming through: Barlow is warm and garrulous, Wilding sensitive and private, Whiteread no-nonsense and focused. Barlow first met Wilding in 1969 when as a very young tutor at Chelsea College of Art she interviewed her for a place there. “She took everybody by surprise,” says Barlow. “Her work, and the way she is: utterly unique and quite extraordinary, with a razor-sharp mind.” Wilding “absolutely” remembers her first encounter with Barlow, “because she was lovely. She was exactly the same then as she is now.” (Whiteread’s impressions corroborate this further. “Phyllida laughs a lot, so you’d hear her laughing. Alison was more serious!”)

In the Gagosian show, Wilding is providing a selection of typically handsome and cerebral sculptures, made from alabaster, bronze, brass or oak. If she is by her own admission the “wild card” here, she is hardly an unknown, having been nominated for the Turner Prize twice, shown all across the UK and gained an OBE. She is certainly unfazed at the idea of showing at Gagosian. “Why would I be scared?” she scoffs stoutly. “It doesn’t scare me.”

Both Wilding and Barlow recall meeting Whiteread as a 19-year-old student in Brighton in 1982. At that point Wilding was already “reasonably hot” by her own assessment, while Barlow had started a family with her husband Fabian Peake, very quickly having five children and showing work when she could. Barlow can still see Whiteread in their first tutorial. “This very striking redhead, elegant and articulate and decisive, and an aura of determination. That’s not always there with our students.”

Whiteread doesn’t deny her determination. “I’d just go to them and say, ‘Can I see you for a tutorial?’ It was quite cheeky... but I knew what I wanted so I went for it.”

Barlow and Wilding were, Whiteread insists, “very good teachers”. Sometimes the relationship has seesawed: if Whiteread was once mentored by Barlow, she was later able to help the elder artist when she began to gain serious recognition: “I was able to help her navigate some stuff about the contemporary art world, which is a minefield.”

Barlow, though, almost chokes at the M word. “Oh no, no, no. Absolutely not. No mentoring! Absolutely not. I think extraordinary people are on their own course.” It’s

“EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE ARE ON THEIR OWN COURSE”



Above: X, 2018, by Alison Wilding. Left: *Untitled (Blue, Blue, Blue)*, 2021, by Rachel Whiteread. Below left: Wilding, Barlow and Whiteread at the Slade. Opposite page: *Untitled: Shute 1,2,3 – Wall, Leaning, Floor*, 2018, by Phyllida Barlow



left to Wilding to say what many have said over the decades. “Phyllida has been a really, really inspirational teacher. Hundreds and hundreds of students have been taught by her who just think she’s the best.” (Other alumni of hers include Douglas Gordon, Tacita Dean and Conrad Shawcross.) “She’s been absolutely brilliant.”

Barlow, who has an enjoyably black sense of humour, remarks that the ’80s were a particularly tough time for her as she strove to make ends meet, but with no note of complaint. “I always enjoyed talking to students who were struggling,” she says tellingly, “because I knew about that.” As a student at Chelsea College of Art in the ’60s, she got strong feedback from another famous teacher: Henry Moore: “He told me I couldn’t draw!” But he did say it kindly, she adds, “and I mean, I’m sure he was right, they were probably awful drawings...”

Whiteread very quickly found extraordinary fame, winning the Turner Prize aged just 30. “I certainly didn’t find a lot of it easy,” says the artist, who has opened up recently about her struggles with mental health. “It had its problems having the spotlight on you all the time.” For Wilding, watching her former student become an internationally lauded artist was definitely strange. “But I would say Rachel has been a fantastic friend to me. I regard both of them as really dear close friends. Not necessarily about work, but just about everything else in life. When my husband died five years ago... you know how friends can be when you really, really need

them? They were both like that. I think that is really the strength of our relationship.”

Does gender matter, especially in the notoriously sexist art world? Wilding believes it “matters massively”, recalling how many star male artists she showed with in the ’80s were “so sexist, so pushy”. Yet Barlow is cautious about getting caught up in the “woman-artist prefix”. “My hope is it’s not a defining thing about how art should be understood... I think that being female, being women, is there – but I don’t think it’s how we would define our friendship and its longevity.”

Each is looking forward to *Hurly-Burly*’s installation, with both Whiteread and Wilding saying it’ll be “a giggle”. When they meet up these days, they don’t discuss their own work – they have a laugh over a meal with a bottle of wine. They are all very sensible now, says Whiteread, who promises her pub days are behind her – although “I can be totally unprofessional when I want to be”.

How would they describe each other in three words? Barlow says of Wilding, after much thought: “True. Intense. Private.” On Whiteread: “Focused. Seeking. Resolved.” Whiteread protests at the question, saying it’s too hard, but then provides a flurry of nice adjectives; notably, though, she describes each friend as “brave”.

It’s Wilding, supposedly the most inscrutable of the three, who opens up the most. Whiteread is “my dear, dear friend”, she says warmly, and Barlow is “my beautiful friend”. Are witches meant to be this kind? ■HTSI



Horse majeure

Mourning the death of her father,
Kate Chapple embraces equine therapy to guide her through her grief

Photography by *Vidar Logi*

The gelding and I are facing each other in a large sandy arena in Richmond Park. British-Flemish psychotherapist Professor Dr Andreas Liefoghe asks me to introduce myself to the horse. As I walk towards him, I make clicking sounds and mutter, "Good boy." I even find myself saying, "Hi, I'm Kate," although I doubt the task is meant to be that literal.

The horse starts approaching me, and with an outstretched arm I let him smell my hand, pat him on the neck and stroke his face. He then heads towards the gate, and I tag along. He stops, raises his head impressively high, pricks up his ears and looks at something in the distance. I ask Liefoghe, "Does he want to go?" The doctor joins us at the gate and asks if this is a theme in my life. I start nervously spouting a whole lot of stuff about feeling invisible. And suddenly I am sobbing over the death of my father.

Liefoghe set up his organisation Operation Centaur in 2005 to "promote the relevance of the working horse in urban communities" – including one-to-one, couple and group equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) programmes to help with issues from grief and anxiety to eating disorders and addiction. EAP has become increasingly popular over the past decade, and last year the first register, Human Equine Interaction Register, was launched in the UK to ensure credibility and high standards of practice. Crucially, one is not required to have had any experience of horses to sign up.

Horses' nature as prey animals makes them hyper-vigilant, able to detect minute energy vibrations that ripple out to the herd. During sessions, they pick up on and react to non-verbal cues and body language. Clients are encouraged to observe how they affect the horses, while the therapist, to use Liefoghe's carefully chosen word, "surmises". When the gelding grabs his halter hanging on the fence with his teeth, for instance, and throws it to the ground, I interpret it as another sign he wants to go, but Liefoghe wonders if he might perhaps want to play. Working through such moments allows me to shake off my "stuckness", as Liefoghe puts it, and helps me to have the courage to mourn properly, something I have dared not do until now.

This year, the professor is launching Retreat & Conquer, a series of five-day overseas retreats for groups of no more than 12. These are planned for Indonesia (at Nihi resort on Sumba island, where guests can run free with a herd of 27 unaltered horses and go swimming with them in the sea), Mustique (swimming with horses again), Limpopo in South Africa, and Dubai. In order to join these trips, guests are first assessed for suitability, which means an EAP session such as I am having in Richmond. "We ask people to apply for a place because we want the groups to work," says Liefoghe. "Sometimes people are very unaware of who they are, and what they bring." (Gulp.) Liefoghe believes the breaks will help people at a crossroads: "It could be divorce, children leaving for university or parents dying. One of the big things that comes to all of us is loss. And change always has a loss at its heart."

I had first considered EAP a month before my father died, following a short illness. I'd felt very childlike as he was slipping away, and this had made me think of horses because all I thought about as a child was horses. From the age of five to 16, I pretty much rode whenever I could. I used to wish I could be one (like Queen Elizabeth II, it turns out). Horses make me feel real joy. I love the way they whinny for each other when a herd member is separated in another field – I admire that they can express this need for company so openly and that they often seem to have more empathy than humans.

Back in the arena at Operation Centaur – a week before my father's military memorial is due to take place – I am still teary. I turn to the horse, who I am convinced wants to go. Liefoghe reassures me: "Horses do in therapy what they have always done for human beings – they speed things up. We would never have got to where we have today after a couple of sessions in a room. But we got there in seven minutes." He informs me that the horse – who I have nicknamed "Bay", as he asks clients to do, because their real names might have distracting associations – does not want to go, but instead has chosen to be with me. He points out that the horse approached me first, that we "walked together" – and that now he is nuzzling me, using me as a scratching post, even sharing air with me. These are all signs of affection.

I like Liefoghe's directness, although it can smart a little. In my second session (of a total of five) he tells me I have been "too intimate too quickly – the horse doesn't know you very well". Admittedly, I had tried to cuddle Bay by wrapping my arms around his neck. ("Fifty Shades of Bay," my husband jokes to me later.)

I wonder if perhaps the horse is grumpy because, as instructed, I have "parked" feelings evoked by

certain people in my life, so I am able to navigate my grief more freely. Bay has been expected to "carry" my emotions for a while, which, though wonderfully liberating, ultimately leaves me feeling guilty. Liefoghe says the position of Bay's ears indicates instead that he is just "listening to us" – and, besides, horses are "beasts of burden".

Horses are becoming increasingly respected for their ability to foster change in human behaviour. "I started incorporating horses in mental-health sessions because I saw clients transform in a way I had not seen before," says Lynn Thomas, co-founder of EAP's largest training organisation, the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (Eagala), who now runs the non-profit Horses for Mental Health. Figures published by Eagala state that, in 2019, 4,764 horses assisted in EAP, helping almost 50,000 people in 40 countries.

The third time I see Liefoghe, he presents a different horse: a beautiful black thoroughbred. Immediately, "Star" starts bucking, rearing and kicking, and then gallops round the arena, whinnying loudly. Liefoghe and I move behind a row of upright jump stands. A call to the groom is made to come to "ground" the horse, and the moment she arrives, Star is calmer. It is decided that therapy will continue back at his stable. First, though, he needs to be walked for 10 minutes to cool off.

I FEEL HIS HEARTBEAT CLOSE TO MINE. I HAVE FOUND A STILLNESS

And it appears I need to be too, as I am taken in a big circle around the entire stable complex. Suddenly, I burst into uncontrollable tears.

In his stable, Star is totally calm. Liefoghe and I talk about anxiety, and how it can help sharpen our awareness, like the flight instinct in horses. But, stresses Liefoghe, "it is all about maintenance". I have "a way to go" in achieving this, says Liefoghe. But he reassures me that if I can ground myself at a stable door, "as you just did", then I can ground myself when it comes to grieving.

The therapy is also helping me trust myself more. I find the idea of parking the emotions others provoke in me particularly freeing. And when I'm feeling hurt, I often bring to mind the horses and how instantly they detect any threat to their sense of safety – the rush of adrenaline is this same sort of alert system.

For our penultimate appointment, Liefoghe brings out a small chestnut Arab that he has been working with for 20 years. I am asked to walk "Goldie" towards Liefoghe, who has gone to stand at the other end of the arena. I make clicking sounds and off we go. I am so excited that this is working that I start to overtake him. But then he stops suddenly, swings his neck round and bares his teeth. It startles me – and makes me aware of my tendency to get swept up in the moment.

In our final meeting, Goldie is presented once again. This time he is very friendly and stands right beside me throughout most of the session. Liefoghe shows me how to feel Goldie's heartbeat, then to drape my arms over the back of the horse to feel his heartbeat close to mine. I have found a stillness.

I have an overwhelming urge now not only to be with horses once more, but to swim with them in Indonesia – and even to ride again, one day.

Before I leave, I ask Liefoghe why he first chose Bay for me, the horse I connected with the most. "Because he's the nearest we have to a military horse: noble, majestic and wise." Just like my father... ■HTSI
One-to-one EAP treatment includes an assessment plus six sessions at £395 each; group programmes, £2,995, operationcentaur.com. Overseas retreats, from £4,995, retreatandconquer.com

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TRAVEL NEWS

Eat, sleep, heal, repeat

Get your groove back in 2023

WORDS BY MARIA SHOLLENBARGER

Sommerro, in the Norwegian capital, is already one of Scandinavia's buzziest urban hotels. A landmark 1930s building that its new management (who brought us the city's other perennially packed address, The Thief, in 2013) has spent half a decade restoring to its former grandeur. Sommerro has 231 rooms and suites, seven restaurants and a plush, velvet-and-gilt 100-seat theatre open to the city. As of November, it also boasts the biggest urban wellness retreat in the Nordic region – thanks in part to the restoration and incorporation of Vestkantbadet, one of Norway's last remaining public baths. The retreat comprises 15,000sq ft of sauna, gym, hot and cold bathing, and extends from the subterranean quarters of the original bath house up onto the hotel's roof, where there's another heated pool and sauna to accompany the rooftop views. The therapies run the gamut from micro-needling facials and peels to infrared sauna circuits and, of course, massages. We're particularly keen on the sound of the electric sauna boat excursions into the scenic island-dotted upper reaches of the Oslofjord. sommerrohouse.com, from £225

RETREAT TO THE WINELANDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

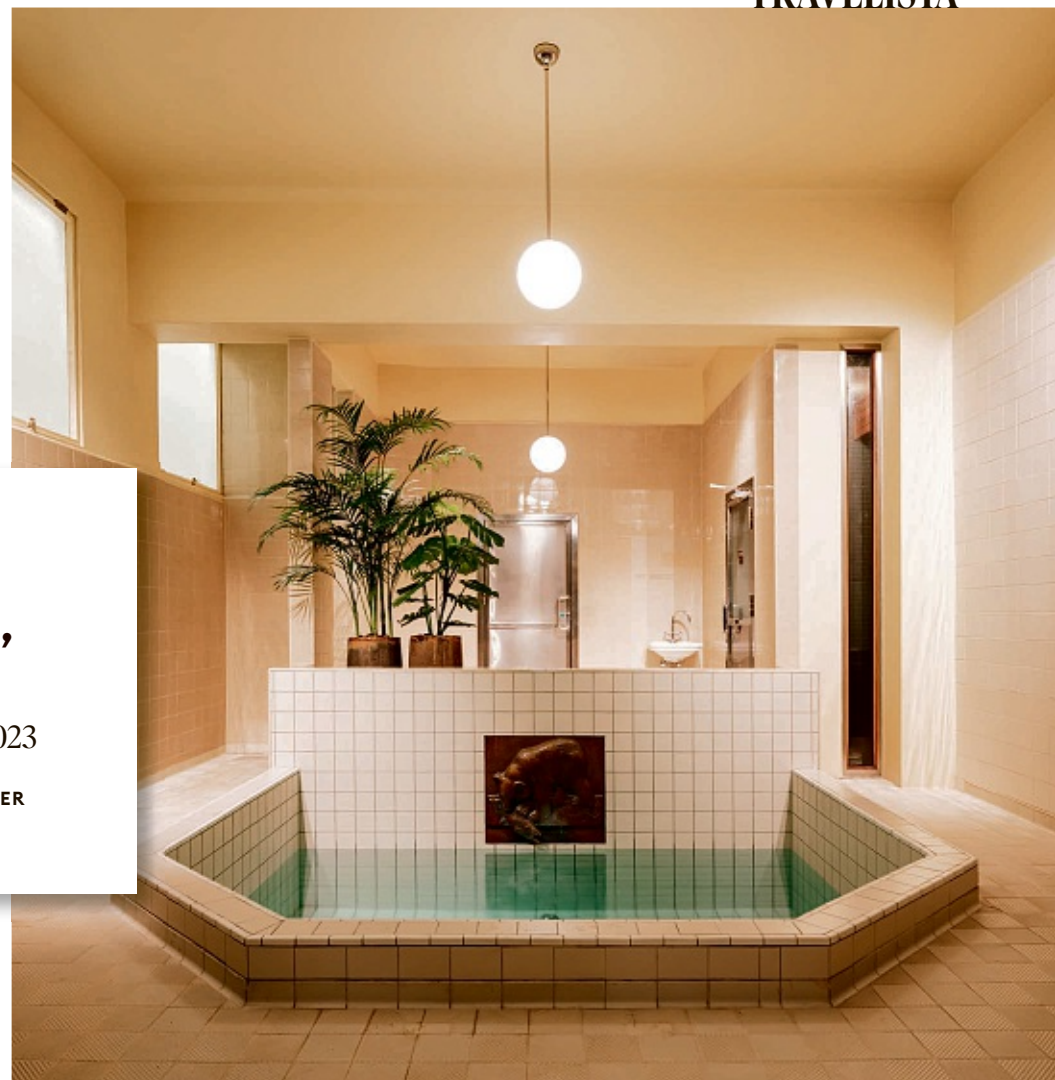
Nicole Boekhoorn and Fleur Huijskens, partners in business and in life, bonded over their mutual wanderlust. Having travelled the world for years in search of a tranquil, good-energy corner of it to call home,

Boekhoorn alighted in South Africa's Cape Winelands, where she met Huijskens the day after she came upon a historic Cape Dutch estate, now called Sterrekopje.

Today, its 11 "sanctuaries" – suites decorated in a hodgepodge of African, Indian, and European textiles and antiques, each with a huge sleeping-sitting room, private terrace and elegant bath (and some with pools) – have been fitted into the various outbuildings scattered across Sterrekopje's 50 hectares, amid meditation and potager gardens where more than 100 species are cultivated. Boekhoorn and Huijskens have already hosted women-only retreats, and the estate in general lends itself beautifully to solo female travellers – not least for the indulgent Bath House spa, which opened earlier this year in the estate's main manor house. Scrubs, massages and facials feature products made locally with botanicals from Sterrekopje's gardens; energy work often features – the spa team includes reflexologists and hypnotherapists. One-night stays are not the thing there; guests book in for multi-night journeys that also incorporate sound bathing, private yoga and breathwork. sterrekopje.com, two-day all-inclusive journeys from R24,500pp (about £1,185)

IN BALI, IT TAKES A VILLAGE

At the Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay – a multi-award-winning stalwart among Bali's resorts – a new comprehensive wellness destination made its debut last summer; and like the perennially popular Sundara Beach Club here, it's open to anyone who cares to book in for part or all of the day, from anywhere on the island. The multi-level, multi-space enclave features indoor and outdoor treatment suites. You can have your chakras aligned in a sound- and light-therapy chamber; close yourself away in a private Longevity Garden for 75 minutes to exfoliate yourself with volcanic pumice



Top: the pool and changing rooms at Sommerro. Below: Sterrekopje in South Africa, and (bottom) its Bath House sitting room



stones and lounge on an infrared bed shaded by banana trees. Not that old-school pampering gets short shrift here: you can follow up a four-handed gemstone massage with a TDA facial, or a deep-conditioning treatment in the Rossano Ferretti hair salon that's on site. fourseasons.com, from Rp10,070,000 (about £535)

A WILD (SWIMMING) HIGHLAND FLING

When Iwan and Manuela Wirth opened The Fife Arms in 2018, the calling card for the historic Scottish Highlands inn they had bought and reimaged was its art: provocative, extravagant, a thoroughly contemporary integration of old and new. This spring The Fife Arms is looking outward to the stunning nature of the Highlands' Royal Deeside for inspiration, with day-long outdoor immersion programmes that incorporate hiking and wild swimming across mountains, moor and peatlands. Led by ex-staffer Annie Armstrong (her presence predates the Wirths' here by decades, and she knows the country well), the excursions incorporate guided hikes through the surrounding pine forests, one of which takes in a gorgeous Victorian bridge suspended over a remote waterfall. A picnic lunch, and some breathwork, happen in a Royal lunch hut, before the journey progresses in the afternoon to wild swimming and river crossings, culminating in a spot of tea – or something stronger – along with more meditation and breathwork if it's desired, next to the fire at the wilderness tent she's set up on the other side. thefifearms.com, from £434 ■HTSI

Instagram: @mariashollenbarger

THE THERAPIES RUN THE GAMUT FROM MICRO-NEEDLING FACIALS AND PEELS TO INFRARED SAUNA



Top: the wellness space at Sommerro. Above: the countryside near The Fife Arms. Below: the India Suite at The Fife Arms



Photos by Flavien Carod and Baptiste Le Quiniou, for advertising purposes only. TASCHEN/www.vijversburg.nl, Architect: Junyi Ishigami.



Scénario. Modular sofa, designed by Sacha Lakic.
Gorizia. Coffee tables, designed by Thierry Picassette.
Midnight. Floor lamp, designed by Fabrice Berrux.
Made in Europe.

**CHELSEA (REOPENING SOON) – HAMPSTEAD – HARRODS – WANDSWORTH
WALTON-ON-THAMES – MANCHESTER – REDBRICK LEEDS – DUBLIN**
In-store interior design & 3D modelling services services

Your typical smartwatch is very keen to brag about its smartness on the dial. Step counters, weather forecasts, email notifications, even the time of day. Nowatch doesn't trouble you with such ephemera; this device has sprung from a belief that excess data is stressful. So it displays nothing. Where you'd normally find a watch face, you'll find a disc of malachite, maybe lapis lazuli. It doesn't animate, light up or do anything other than look beguiling.

But while data might be stressful, that doesn't mean it's not useful. The underside of Nowatch contains sensors that capture heart rate, temperature, step count and electrodermal activity (EDA), which are sent to an app on your smartphone. You can monitor those metrics individually if you wish, but the idea is to combine them to build up a daily picture of your stress levels. The EDA sensors, included in partnership with healthcare-brand Philips, are crucial – they measure changes in the amount you sweat, which they believe to be a reliable stress indicator.

IF THE WATCH WANTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU, IT VIBRATES TWICE. THAT'S ALL

Interaction with the watch is absurdly simple. There is one button, and if you want to note a moment when you're feeling particularly blissed out (or tormented), you push it. The app records this, and later you can label that moment (calm, stressed, energised, etc) to help train the algorithm. If the watch wants to communicate with you, it vibrates twice. That's all. In doing so, it reminds you to consider yourself and be in the present. You can set these vibrations to occur randomly a handful of times a day, and they will gradually become more driven by the wearer's physiology. The app then offers a range of mindfulness techniques to help those stresses subside.

I wore this watch in the week when my 10-month-old son went to nursery for the first time. It was tough, I was stressed and the app noted that. But it also nudged me into thinking more about my mental health, almost as if I was being watched over by a kindly mentor. And I don't know about you, but I'd rather wear a watch that tells me "don't worry" over one that says "you're late". ■HTSI

© @rhodri



GADGETS

The stealth smartwatch...

...and other stress-busting gadgets

WORDS BY RHODRI MARSDEN

DETAILS

Nowatch from €413 to €577 (depending on configuration), nowatch.com



LINES IN THE SAND

The calming properties of lavender are well known. The soothing sounds of waves are widely appreciated. But the world is largely unaware of the tranquillising effect of watching a metal ball drawn by an invisible magnet through white sand. Drift sits on a table top, its gentle dunes softly illuminated, taking instructions from a smartphone app where you can cue up playlists of patterns and lights ("Endless Wander", "Euphotic Essence", even "Disarray"). On one level it's an executive toy writ large, but "passive wellness" is what Drift is striving for. And watching the plucky little sphere carving its parabolic routes is way more relaxing than listening to someone on a relaxation tape telling you how relaxed you are. *Homedics Drift*, £499



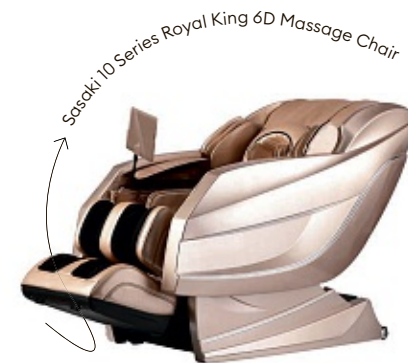
MEDITATE ON THIS

Muse headbands have been around since 2014, measuring brain activity and other metrics to help calm and focus the wearer's state of mind. The "S" in this addition to the Muse stable stands for "sleep". Primed to assist with nodding off, it is more comfortable to wear than its predecessors. Its app contains guided meditations and so-called "digital sleeping pills" to comfort and soothe; as the night progresses, the audio subsides and reanimates when you stir to keep you relaxed. During set-up, it can take a while for all sensors to report that they're receiving data; thereafter it's a breeze, with the app awarding points as you progress towards your relaxation goals. *Muse S (Gen 2) Meditation Headband*, £329.99



A FRESH PAIR OF EYES

If, like me, you spend your working day staring at multiple screens and end it by burying your head in your hands, Renpho's Eye Massager offers some welcome comfort. On its most basic setting, it applies soft pressure to the temples and around the eyes while emitting gentle heat, and the experience is unusual but wonderfully soothing. The built-in music appears to have been provided by a depressed hotel-lobby pianist, but you can send your own choice of sounds to it via Bluetooth, or have no music at all. The optional "vibration" setting is pretty intense, but depending on your day, intense might be what you require. Additionally, you get to resemble the taller guy out of Daft Punk. *Renpho True View Eye Massager*, £54.99



THE MASSAGE KING

It's one of the most luxurious massage chairs on the market, a golden behemoth (or red, black or beige) that attends your every physical niggles. The Royal King's "6D" feature is meant to evoke the sensation of six masseurs going at you simultaneously, and while few of us know what that would actually feel like, the 114 airbags and discreetly positioned rollers leave virtually none of you unrolled, from your feet, calves, buttocks and lower back to your temples. The 10in tablet to your right presents health-related data and gives you granular control of your experience, but it's easiest to opt for one of the 24 auto programmes, of which "Thai Stretch" gets the highest marks. *Sasaki 10 Series Royal King 6D Ultimate Massage Chair*, £7,499



Left: lemon mandarin kosho (top) and lime Scotch bonnet kosho from *The Little Book of Citrus* by Catherine Phipps (Quadrille, £12.99)

EATING

Go kosho!

This spicy, salty, yuzu-based condiment is the ultimate flavour enhancer, says *Ajesh Patalay*

Sonoko Sakai, the Japanese-American cookery teacher and author of *Japanese Home Cooking*, was given her first yuzu tree eight years ago by a student. She planted it in her small hillside garden in Highland Park, Los Angeles, and was rewarded each year by the meanest crop of tiny fruit – certainly not the large fragrant yuzu she'd grown up with in Tokyo. But this season, despite severe drought and a ravaging by insects that left the tree looking “really funky”, the tree yielded three dozen plump fruit, which she used to make yuzu kosho.

A spicy, salty, floral condiment made from yuzu peel, chillies and salt, yuzu kosho is the ultimate flavour enhancer that can be eaten fresh but is best kept in the fridge to ferment. Sakai's version uses Calabrian chillies from her garden and a little yuzu juice to turn the paste creamy. She has been selling lip-balm-sized pots of it at the Hollywood Farmers' Market alongside her signature curry powder and shichimi pepper.

“I didn't grow up with yuzu kosho,” she says of this speciality condiment from the Kyushu region in south-west Japan. “The first time I encountered it was when I was in my mid-20s with the dish chanko nabe, a hotpot that sumo wrestlers eat. This often comes with chicken meatballs. And chicken goes really well with yuzu kosho. Now it's amazing how familiar people [in the west] are with yuzu kosho. It's not only a standard with izakaya, grilled chicken and sashimi, but western chefs are serving it with lots of things, too.”

In *Japanese Home Cooking*, Sakai pairs yuzu kosho with chicken yakitori, grilled tri-tip steak and kombu-cured Thai



“IT'S ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT IMMEDIATELY BRINGS FOOD TO LIFE”

As it happens, Phipps owns a yuzu tree too, which she was bought from The Wasabi Company a few years ago. It sits in a pot in her garden and fares remarkably well in the British weather. “They're very hardy,” she points out. From the latest crop, she'll naturally be making yuzu kosho, which still enjoys pride of place among her condiments. “It's one of those things that immediately brings food to life,” she says. Plus a little goes a long way. ■HTSI

📷 @ajesh34

snapper sashimi. There's also a recipe for mochi waffles with fried chicken, which includes a yuzu-flavoured maple sauce made from one teaspoon of yuzu kosho, a quarter of a cup of maple syrup and two tablespoons of soy sauce.

More widely among western chefs, Björn Frantzén of three-Michelin-starred restaurant Frantzén in Stockholm has been an influential early adopter. On a menu that knits together Nordic cuisine with Japanese touches, he's been known to serve dishes like Norwegian king crab and Alfonsino (red bream) with yuzu kosho beurre blanc. At his newly opened Studio Frantzén at Harrods, a version of this dish appears using salmon from the Faroe Islands.

Elsewhere in London, chef Angelo Sato's comb-to-tail yakitori bar Humble Chicken promises a range of koshos, including an aromatic citrus kosho (made from grapefruit, oranges, limes and lemons) to accompany the Achilles skewers with smoky charcoal-grilled fat, and a more fiery red yuzu kosho made with red Fire Thai chillies (instead of jalapeños) served with shoulder skewers and fermented daikon.

At the Langham's Artesian, where Sato has created the new bar menu, you will also find mussels with citrus kosho ponzu that, Sato says, “adds

depth though most people don't know it's there”. At Middle Eastern restaurant The Tent in Fitzrovia, chef John Javier similarly uses yuzu kosho in place of more authentic seasonings. The condiment cuts through the richness of a labneh tzatziki and is mixed with olive oil, lemon juice, sugar and salt to dress tomatoes in a whipped tofu and tomato salad. “It makes the dish pop,” he says.

Given yuzu are seasonal and costly (about £80 a kilo from Natoora and usually available until the end of January), there's a lot to be said for using store-bought yuzu kosho (the brand Mera is recommended) or making it with other citrus instead. In Catherine Phipps's *The Little Citrus Cookbook* (a new re-edition of her 2017 book *Citrus*) she makes the case for a Caribbean-inspired lime-Scotch bonnet kosho (where the Scotch bonnet chillies are tempered with mild red or green chillies) and a lemon-mandarin kosho (using 15g lemon zest to five grams mandarin zest, plus 40g red chillies and six grams salt). Play around with different citrus and chillies, Phipps says: “There is a massive range of heat with a Scotch bonnet or

Thai green chilli, so taste the chillies first to see how hot they are. Then adjust the amount of zest accordingly. Often with citrus, the sweeter the juice, the more bitter the zest. So use citrus that aren't sweet but have a beautifully perfumed, sour zest. Like Seville oranges, mandarins, lemons and limes.”

Berry good for you

Alexander the Great swore by the health benefits of sea buckthorn – it makes a mean cocktail too, says *Alice Lascelles*

In the drear of winter, the bright-orange sea buckthorn berry is a tonic – a pop of colour and tangy taste that's packed with vitamin C. It's been used as a traditional medicine for centuries: Alexander the Great reputedly gave it to his troops after noting its beneficial effect on his horses. Today, it grows all over Europe and parts of Asia, where it's used as a cooking ingredient and herbal remedy. The silvery leaves can also be used to make an antioxidant tea.

Seth Pascoe, co-owner of the Cornish Seaberry Co, began cultivating sea buckthorn in the south-west of England after experiencing its therapeutic benefits in the Himalayas: “I was two-thirds of the way to Everest base camp and I had a splitting headache, dizziness and an occasional nosebleed thanks to altitude sickness. The sherpas brought out a neon-

“IT'S THE PASSIONFRUIT OF THE NORTH”

orange juice; I knocked it back and when I woke up the following morning the headache and dizziness had all but disappeared.”

His shrubs go into a canned juice called VitaminSEA, a sweet-and-sour blend of his regeneratively farmed seaberrys, apples and lemon juice (£23.99 for six 250ml cans).

Sea buckthorn juice on its own can be gloopy and sharp. But if you're just after the nutritional benefits, Erbology's organic sea buckthorn shot contains more than a day's worth of vitamin C (£10.49 for three shots). The German healthfood company KoRo also sells bag-in-box pure juices including black carrot,

SEA BUCKTHORN COSMO AT CHRISTINA'S SHOREDITCH



ginger and orange and sea buckthorn – and ships internationally (£22 for three litres).

Bartenders have also been using sea buckthorn to give their cocktails a regional twist. “It's the passionfruit of the north,” says Paul Aguilar of top Oslo bar Himkok. Aguilar and his bar manager Maros Dzurus have infused Negronis with its berries, made Garibaldis with sea buckthorn cordial, and created a sparkling cocktail with house-made sea buckthorn distillate. On the list currently is a riff on the Norwegian passionfruit Martini made with locally grown sea buckthorn.

At London's stylish locavore restaurant Native at Browns they use sea buckthorn to make a mouthwatering non-alcoholic spritz. “We try and forage on the east and south coast for the berries when in season as much as we can, or we use Miles Irving at Forager Ltd, who is based in Kent,” says co-founder Imogen Davis. They also source berries from The British Sea Buckthorn Company in Essex, which sells a mix of own-grown, and imported European, sea buckthorn.

At Christina's bar in Shoreditch, they serve a Cosmo twist made with sea buckthorn and rosehip. Proof that this little orange berry can bring a touch of wholesomeness to even the trashiest drink. ■HTSI

📷 @alicelascelles



This time of the year there is a lot of talk around healthy eating, wellness and – maybe my least favourite term of all – “clean eating”. I’ve never really understood what people mean by clean eating. What makes food “clean” versus “dirty”? To me, it simply means whole fruits and vegetables (and sometimes animals), grown and raised well, and cooked and seasoned properly, with salt and a little fat.

In my eyes, cabbage is the perfect embodiment of that. It is easy to grow, satisfying, nutritious, inexpensive and generous. A whole head of cabbage can yield many meals for many friends. And when cooked with care and consideration, it can also feel indulgent. Who says healthy eating shouldn’t be indulgent? Cabbage is a perfect 10.

I understand the scepticism. After all, it’s hard to name a vegetable that’s more paradoxical. On one hand cabbage is universal and beloved, and on the other it is loathed. Almost every culture has its own way of preparing or preserving it. I grew up watching my grandmother in Cairo neatly laying out blanched cabbage leaves on a marble counter to prep them for their ration of rice. Each leaf was meticulously folded onto itself and wrapped like a perfect little parcel. The parcels were uniform in size – long and lean, like soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder. They would then be lined up in a large pot, and get a steaming.

I’m still fond of stuffed cabbage but prefer a preparation that layers the cabbage leaves on top of each other, as opposed to stuffing them individually. The process is less time-consuming and the result more beautiful. As the farmers’ market in New York, where I live, becomes more limited at this time of the year, there is no better time to build a menu around one of the few vegetables that comes into season.

I like to start with a cabbage soup. Cabbage makes a soup that is richer than the sum of its parts. A few simple ingredients can result in something far more decadent. Consider this less of a recipe and more of a blueprint. Gather a head of cabbage (any type is fine), two onions, two cloves of garlic, a bay leaf, a piece of parmesan cheese, and half a cup of starch of your choice. This can be farro (my favourite), or rice, or even some cubed potatoes. Remove the cabbage core and other tough parts before chopping with the onion and garlic. Sweat the onion in some olive oil,

Top centre: Laila prepares chou farci.
Top right: cabbage soup and chou farci.
Right: different varieties of cabbage



HOW TO HOST IT

Cabbages for kings

Laila Gohar eats her super-greens

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIANNA GLAVIANO

butter and salt. Add the cabbage, bay leaf and garlic, and cook, covered, until the cabbage has softened – for about 30 minutes. Then cover with water, add a piece of parmesan rind and the starch you are using. Cook for another 30 minutes, or until the starch is soft. I like to serve

cabbage soup with a soft-boiled egg, and shower with more grated parmesan and a little olive oil. Dish it up in a fancy silver tureen and you have yourself cabbage soup royale. There is something really nice about serving a hearty soup in winter as a main course, but if you’re looking for a more elaborate preparation here is a stuffed cabbage – or chou farci – recipe that makes another glorious meal out of the humble cruciferous. It is a vegetarian recipe without meaning to be – sometimes my favourite kinds of recipes. The mushroom filling feels hearty and rich. The end result is cabbage fit for kings – but the steps to get there are relatively simple. ■HTSI

@lailacooks

Chou farci

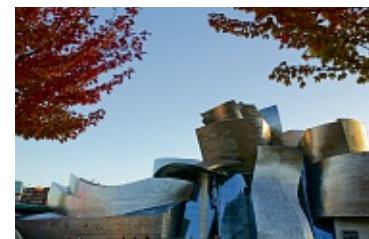
1 large head cabbage (I used Savoy cabbage)
4 tbsp butter
Olive oil
1 yellow onion, chopped
2 bay leaves
3 garlic cloves, chopped
2 large carrots, chopped
A few sprigs of thyme
500g mushrooms of your choice, finely chopped
3 tbsp concentrated tomato paste
1 cup vegetable stock (or water)
2 eggs, beaten
½ cup dried breadcrumbs
A bunch of parsley, chopped

- Bring a large pot of water to the boil. Season liberally with salt. Core the cabbage and gently separate the leaves. Working in batches, blanch the leaves in the boiling water for five minutes. Drain, and cool on the counter in a single layer.
- In a large pot, add two tbsp of butter with 2tbsp of olive oil and cook the onion with the bay leaves for a few minutes. Add the garlic, carrot, thyme and mushrooms, salt, and cook for another 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and keep cooking until most of the water has cooked out. Add the cup of stock and cook for a further 10 minutes. Taste for salt. Transfer to a bowl and allow to cool.
- Butter a 22cm spring-form tin and put a large cabbage leaf, vein-side down, at the bottom. If the leaves are too curved, remove a little part of the thick rib. Add more leaves and arrange, slightly overlapping, until you’ve covered the bottom of the tin in one layer. Allow some leaves to hang over the sides of the tin.
- Pre-heat the oven to 175°C/350°F/gas mark three. Once the vegetables have cooled, add the beaten eggs, breadcrumbs and chopped parsley, and mix. Spread about one-third of the mixture onto the cabbage leaves in the tin. Use one or two leaves to create a layer of leaves on top of the mixture. Add another third of the mixture. Repeat with leaves. Add the rest of the mixture and top with leaves. Bring the leaves in over the edges to form a nice tight package. Slice 2tbsp butter into small cubes and dot on top. Drizzle with olive oil.
- Cover the tin with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and continue cooking for another 10 minutes. The cabbage should be slightly brown, and soft throughout. Allow to cool, flip onto a plate, and unmould.

ALMOST EVERY CULTURE HAS ITS OWN WAY OF PREPARING CABBAGE



HOW TO SPEND IT IN...



Left and right: Natxo González on Mundaka Beach. Above: the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao



BASQUE COUNTRY

Natxo González on where to catch the best waves (and pintxos) around Bilbao

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RICHARDSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARKEL REDONDO

I was born in Bilbao but when I was small we moved to a town called Plentzia, where Bilbao people often spend the summer. There's a pretty beach; the scenery looks almost like Ibiza. Our family home is five minutes from the sea, so it doesn't take long for me to see the waves. There are some great surf spots along the coast of Euskadi: Sopela, the beaches of Meñacoz and Punta Galea – not forgetting Mundaka, for me the top wave around here and one of the best in the world. It's 440m wide and you can surf it for 40 seconds or so. Mundaka is spectacular, especially at the mouth of the river in the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve, with the historic town of Gernika behind the estuary.

A place I love that used to be a secret but is now famous (it appeared in *Game of Thrones*) is San Juan de Gaztelugatxe. With the church on the rock and a long stone staircase, it's dramatic. There's a wild energy because of all that nature right in front of you. I like to take a paddleboard out from Bakio beach. There are caves along the coast that are full of fish, and to see San Juan from sea level is amazing.

It's thanks to where I grew up that I became a surfer – imagine if I'd been born in Madrid! As kids, we used to spend all day on the beach. I was five when my cousin gave me a bodyboard and I pestered my parents for a real surfboard, but they said if I wanted one I'd have to buy it myself. So I saved up and bought my first board at Eukaliptus, a mythical surf shop in Sopela. Having the right equipment is vital – you need a good wetsuit in February. I also like Prosurf, in Sopela, where the owner always has what I'm looking for.

“THERE'S A WILD ENERGY BECAUSE OF ALL THAT NATURE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU”

My job is riding monster waves, so there's a lot of pressure involved. A game of tennis at the Club de Tennis Plentzia really frees my mind and helps me disconnect. If I've been surfing at Sopela I chill out afterwards at La Triangu, a



Above: González at Kuma restaurant in Bilbao. Below: the town of Mundaka



chiringuito near the beach. They do a good breakfast – slices of tortilla, avocado toast, good coffee – and it's a classic place for a few beers in the afternoon with maybe a burger or a pintxo of chicken. In Barrika, up on the hill above the sea, Ipar Itsaso is a phenomenal marisquería [shellfish restaurant] where you choose what you want from the fish stall downstairs – I like a chargrilled sea bream or turbot – then head up to the dining room and sit looking at a fabulous sunset.

My parents tell me Bilbao used to be a sad place, dirty and polluted from the ironworks and factories along the river. Now it's a beautiful city, very contemporary. The gym where I go most days, XS Training, is right by the Guggenheim Museum. After my session, if there's an interesting show on I might go and take a look. I love live music, and the best live venue in Bilbao is Kafé Antzokia, a converted theatre where I last went with my *koadrila* [gang] – we've known each other forever. For shopping, I'm lucky enough to be sponsored by Ecoalf, a sustainable clothing company who are working with me on a new line of surfwear, but when I need something else I get down to the department store El Corte Inglés, where I might visit Scalpers.

The old town centre, called the Siete Calles, is where

I go with friends for a few beers, a few pintxos. We'll order this or that depending on what's in season – I like a pintxo of wild mushrooms at one of the bars on Plaza Nueva. Then it's dinner: if I'm celebrating something, like winning a big surf contest, it has to be sushi at Kuma. Or Asador Guetaria for grilled meat and fish – I'll have the T-bone steak with a glass of Ribera del Duero. Here in Euskadi we really like to eat. Whenever I go to California they say: “Basque Country: amazing people, amazing food.”

A few weeks ago we drove over to Mundaka at low tide, surfed all morning, then went to a cider house, Restaurante Andraka, for a big lunch of octopus, chuleta and a special cake for a friend's birthday. I love easy days like this – and yet, if there's a big wave somewhere in the world, I'll be on that plane. This year I've been to Africa, Tahiti, Indonesia... If the waves are good, nothing else matters. ■HTSI

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