FINANCIAL TIMES

HOW TO SPEND IT

29 MAY
2021

AN *ELEGANT* SUMMER

THE TUX REDUX

TADAO ANDO'S
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A UNICORN FERRARI –
UNVEILED

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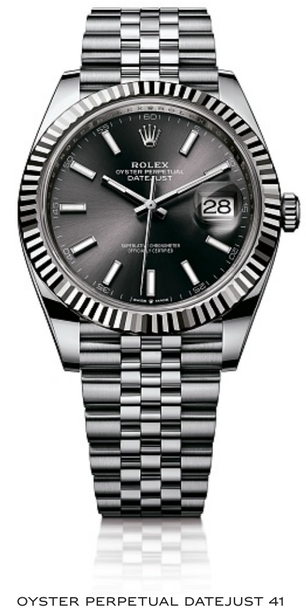

OYSTER PERPETUAL DATEJUST 41

THE DATEJUST

Introduced in 1945, the Datejust remains the archetype of the classic watch, with its timeless style and exceptional elegance. The first watch to display the date in a window, and the first to feature the patented Cyclops lens, its appeal has spanned eras. Over the years, it has continued to evolve with Rolex's latest technology, while remaining one of the purest expressions of the Oyster Perpetual collection.

#Perpetual

ROLEX

TAMBOUR STREET DIVER

LOUIS VUITTON


Cartier

CHANEL CELEBRATES N°5

In 1921, Gabrielle Chanel has an idea for a perfume which she calls N°5, her lucky number.

This vision of creation owes its singularity to the permanence of one perspective: the idea above all else.

In 2021, a High Jewellery collection celebrates the House's emblematic number with a creative act that combines the audacity of a technical challenge with the freedom of an original approach.

CHANEL High Jewellery creates the N°5 Collection, with a centrepiece that reveals a unique geometric virtuosity: a necklace whose design reflects all the defining features of the N°5 perfume bottle, composed of more than 700 diamonds set around a diamond specially cut to weigh 55.55 carats. The perfection of the idea has determined the weight in carats.

This is an unprecedented approach: to start with a rough diamond, aiming not for the greatest weight but for the perfection of the stone, cut to the exact dimensions of an idea.

Diamonds are eternal. To CHANEL, *éternité*, the French word for "eternity," is first and foremost an anagram of *étreinte*, the word for "embrace." As such, this is how the House defines creation: an embrace between matter and spirit, which alone can give birth to a style.

CHANEL reaffirms it today: creation is eternal.

CHANEL.COM

CHANEL

HIGH JEWELLERY

N°5 NECKLACE IN WHITE GOLD AND DIAMONDS,
FEATURING A 55.55-CARAT EMERALD-CUT DFL TYPE IIA DIAMOND.

GRAFF

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BIG BANG
TOURBILLON AUTOMATIC

Orange sapphire case. In-house tourbillon automatic movement. Limited to 50 pieces.

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THE FIX

All travel, exhibitions and events are being disrupted by the spread of coronavirus. Information published in the magazine may be susceptible to change.

ON THE COVER:
Photography by ROBIN GALIEGUE
Styling by ANDREAS PETER KRINGS

Leon Dame wears ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA linen jacket, £2,950. RALPH LAUREN cotton tuxedo shirt, £540. EMPORIO ARMANI cotton trousers, £430. CHARVET silk satin tie, £155

All products in the magazine are available to buy from each brand's website or store, unless otherwise stated

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEXANDER COGGIN. ERIN BENZAKEIN. NICHOLAS CALCOTT. RING IMAGE: A 1973 HARRY WINSTON 18-CARAT GOLD, DIAMOND AND EMERALD RING, POA, AVAILABLE VIA OMNEQUE

FEATURES

GUCCI

BELOVED

#GucciBeloved

Sienna Miller with Jackie 1961 Bag

gucci.com

OPENING SHOT

Long Distance, 2015, by Nicole Eisenman

GUILTY LEISURE

Inside Nicole Eisenman's darkly cartoonish world

In a career spanning three decades, French-born New York-based artist Nicole Eisenman has become known for her large, figurative paintings that explore ideas of female eroticism, family dynamics and contemporary politics. Weaving together impressionistic and expressionistic styles with elements of pop culture, her comically grotesque compositions depict figures in moments of leisure: guests idly drinking at a dinner party, red wine sloshing out of their glasses; a tennis player mid-game; long-distance lovers on a video call.

Now, Eisenman's work is being examined in a new monograph, arranged into thematic chapters such as "Portrait of the Artist as a Hot Mess" and "Beer Gardens and Bohemians". In one of her best-known series, Eisenman reimagines the open-air café in Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* as a 21st-century New York beer garden filled with string lights and characters with lurid yellow flesh. It becomes, as Dan Cameron observes in the book, a place "where people whom we all feel that we know... get together by night to let off steam". **SARA SEMIC**

Nicole Eisenman by Dan Cameron is published by Lund Humphries, £39.95

CONTRIBUTORS

LEON DAME

The model first rose to prominence while closing the Maison Margiela show in 2019, where he stood apart from his peers with a dancer's physicality. He has since become a catwalk regular, inhabiting high couture and corsets for John Galliano and an easy louche masculinity for Salvatore Ferragamo. In this issue he wears modern tailoring. "There was no pressure on set. It was about trying things out and seeing what worked," he says.

MOUSTAPHA SY

The 19-year-old model grew up in Senegal and moved to Antwerp where he was recently scouted. Now one of the faces of the Loewe fragrance campaign, he still finds time to play basketball, rap and, under his grandfather's tutelage, sew. He stars alongside Leon in this week's shoot. "Everyone was caring and there was a great atmosphere. I even enjoyed the rain when we were shooting outside," he says. "Every job is a new adventure."

JO NESBØ

The bestselling crime writer, known for his Harry Hole detective series, is a man of many talents. He played professional football in the Norwegian premier league in his teens, worked as a financial analyst and is lead singer and guitarist in the band Di Derre. In *How I Spend It*, he talks about his love for guitars – and the difference between writing novels and songs: "With the guitar... you can sit there and write the greatest song of your life in 10 minutes."

CLARE COULSON

The former fashion journalist and now lecturer at Central Saint Martins orchestrated a midlife career change when she discovered gardening – creating her own on the Suffolk coast. For this issue she meets an emerging group of farmer florists growing what they sell, working more sustainably and increasing biodiversity: "These growers are working with a local, collaborative and ecological mindset – the bonus is unbelievably gorgeous blooms," she says.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ANTON KERN GALLERY, NEW YORK. © NICOLE EISENMAN. THRON ULLBERG

''BEAUTY LIES IN THE DETAILS OF THE GRANDEST STRUCTURES, AND THE FINEST.''

ORA ÏTO,
CREATOR OF SHAPES, WEARS THE
VACHERON CONSTANTIN TRADITIONNELLE.

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ONE OF
NOT MANY.

We invest half a year of work to make
an A. Lange & Söhne run flawlessly.
Then we take it apart again.

A. LANGE & SÖHNE
GLASHÜTTE I/SA

The LANGE 1 PERPETUAL CALENDAR is a timepiece for connoisseurs who appreciate the subtle differences. In true Lange fashion, the watch is assembled twice to ensure the highest standard of quality. The asymmetric dial arrangement as well as the peripheral month ring are hallmarks of the characteristic design of the LANGE 1 PERPETUAL CALENDAR. The moon-phase display with an integrated day/night indicator is a further striking feature. The new model is available in pink gold or in a white-gold limited edition of 150 pieces. **www.alange-soehne.com**

HTSI

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PHOTOGRAPHS: MICHAEL SINCLAIR, ROBIN GALIEGUE, HANA SNOW, MARILI ANDRE; LEON DAME WEARS ALEXANDER MCQUEEN WOOL GABARDINE COAT, £2,740. CHARVET COTTON BATHROBE (SEEN AT LAPELS), £665

TADAO ANDO'S ETTORE SOTSASS TYPEWRITER (PAGE 21)

I know nothing about cars, put off learning to drive until I was practically geriatric and could barely identify the difference between a Mini and a Maserati. But even I am not immune to the beauty of a vintage car, especially when that car is among the rarest models ever made. This week's issue introduces us to the wonder of the Ferrari 330 LMB, an enigmatic machine that competed in the 1963 24 Hours of Le Mans and which has an estimated value that reaches into millions of pounds. Not that they ever come up for sale: only four examples were ever made.

Hence, the model unveiled and test-driven in this issue by Simon de Burton (page 25) is a recreation undertaken by Bell Sport & Classic, a workshop that specialises in restoring old Ferraris. The story of this 330 LMB is one of obsession, a tragic accident and hours and hours of workmanship, not to mention the thousands of air miles that were notched up in the quest to find spare parts. And yet I would argue it was worth it: for the restored Ferrari is among the most elegant I've ever seen. It also sets the tone for this issue, "an elegant summer", celebrating all things beautiful and classic in design.

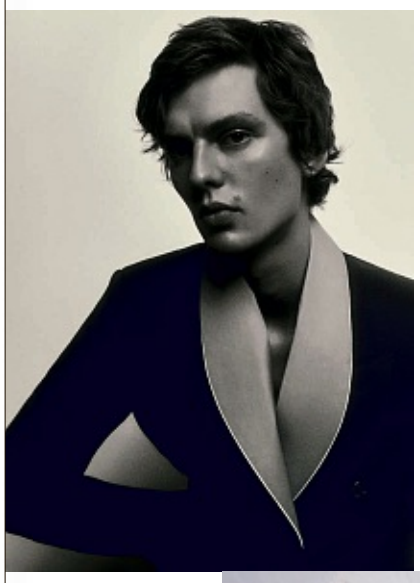
The men's tuxedo, for example, has been given a glamorous new consideration in a shoot by Robin Galiegue and stylist Andreas Peter Krings (page 44). Elegance is rarely considered much of a virtue in a gentleman, and yet, when someone has it, it can be utterly beguiling. When this week's cover star, Leon Dame, first turned up on a runway, he had a walk – part strut, part prowl, part swagger – and an attitude that no one had seen for years. Unlike the slack-eyed nonchalance one has now come to associate with modelling, Dame's sense of character and personality was completely out of the ordinary. Along with Moustapha Sy (the other model in our story) he has brought a welcome bit of drama back to fashion, in this instance a Wildean kind of grace.

EVEN I AM NOT IMMUNE TO THE BEAUTY OF A VINTAGE CAR

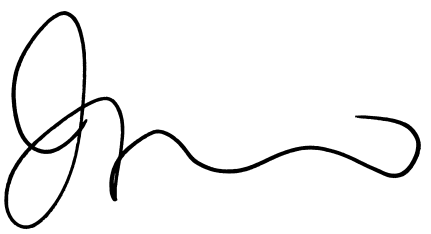
Elegant also are the answers provided by Tadao Ando, who talks us through his personal taste as the subject of this week's The Aesthete (page 21). Having survived an aggressive form of cancer in 2015, the Japanese architect offers a perspective driven by his tireless work ethic, yet always anchored in his sense of gratitude.

And of all the elegant professions, a florist must surely rank most highly. It's the stuff of childhood fantasies to spend one's working days surrounded by fresh flowers. However, the flower business is especially vulnerable to bad practice, various species have been bred out for not being hardy or commercially appealing, and the environmental cost of floristry with its widespread refrigeration and transportation can be dear. Mindful of the impact of mass cultivation, a new generation of florists has taken the growing upon themselves. Clare Coulson talks to five growers about their efforts to re-establish older, more traditional varieties and their attempts to create more local networks so that they don't need to import flowers from around the world ("A Bloom of One's Own", page 54). And the results are gorgeous. Certainly, when I was sent a bouquet of Kitten Grayson's recent crop of tulips, which she grows on her plot near Bruton, in Somerset, I was astonished by how strong their scent was and by the uniqueness of each flower. I then watched them bloom into a still-life reminiscent of my very own Dutch master before they slowly wilted, every petal dropping, elegant to the last. ■**HTSI**

jellison22



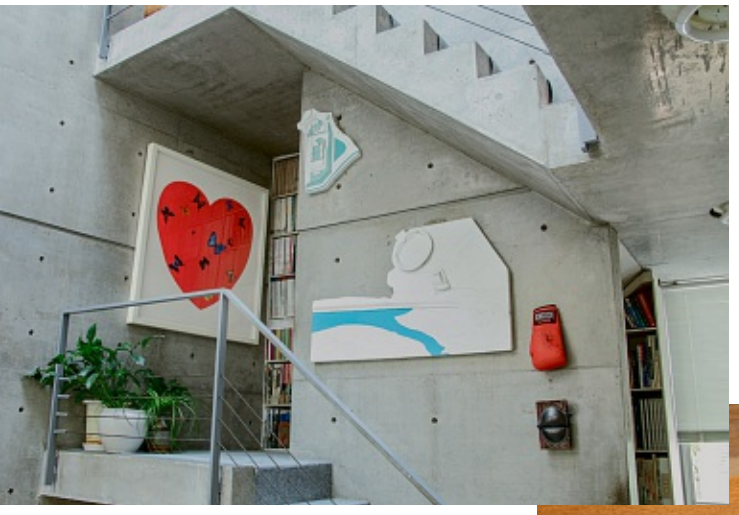
Left: Leon Dame in our men's tux shoot (page 44). Below: the Ferrari 330 LMB (page 25). Bottom: tulips from The Cutting Garden in Somerset (page 54)



SUPER CHRONOMAT

BREITLING
1884

#SQUADONAMISSION

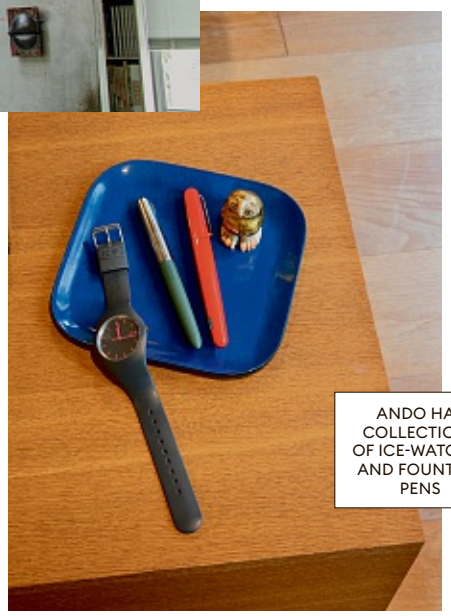


Tadao Ando

The Pritzker Prize-winning architect cherishes his Ettore Sottsass typewriter, English Breakfast tea – and uncertainty

INTERVIEW BY **CHRISTINA OHLY EVANS**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **YASUYUKI TAKAGI**

Above: artwork by Damien Hirst hanging in Ando's studio. Top: Ando with his Dream Chair, produced by Carl Hansen & Son. Below: Le Corbusier monograph



ANDO HAS COLLECTIONS OF ICE-WATCHES AND FOUNTAIN PENS

MY PERSONAL STYLE SIGNIFIER is a black jacket with a raised collar by Issey Miyake. Mr Miyake has a consistent philosophy that permeates his fashion, personality and lifestyle. His designs are not only masterful but embrace a productive sense of tension. I treat this apparel as my armour to enter the battlefield that is architecture.

THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED was a Le Corbusier monograph, *Oeuvre Complète Volume 6: 1952-1957*. This edition highlights projects such as the beginning of Chandigarh and the completion of Notre-Dame du Haut – the Ronchamp chapel. As humans, we lose our speed and energy as our minds and bodies age. However, in his mid-40s, Le Corbusier developed most as an architect. His work accelerated in both production and innovation.

THE PLACE I CAN'T WAIT TO RETURN TO is Paris. I look forward to visiting the Hôtel d'Angleterre as I've stayed there since the start of my career. And I long to walk around the Bourse de Commerce gallery, which I designed, now that it is opening. I'm excited to see the spectacular fresco restoration as well as artworks that have been specially commissioned for the space. *boursedecommerce.fr*

AN INDULGENCE I WOULD NEVER FORGO is being able to live and walk on my own two feet. In the past 10 years, I have had two major surgeries to remove five of my organs, including my pancreas. I am so happy to be able to continue working.

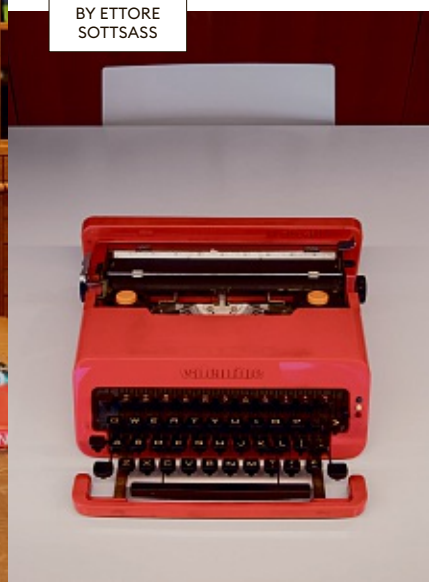
THE BEST BOOK I'VE READ THIS YEAR is *Botchan* by Natsume Sōseki, which in its beauty and depth is the origin of modern Japanese literature. I picked it up again this year for the first time in decades. It encapsulates the spirit of humanity, and like all great literature offers varying interpretations depending on what stage of life you are at when you read it.

IN MY FRIDGE YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND empty space. I have toast and English Breakfast tea

Above: Château La Coste rosé, given to Ando by Paddy McKillen. Right: the external view of Ando's Osaka studio

NONE OF US HAS ANY IDEA WHAT WILL UNFOLD – WE NEED UNBREAKABLE PASSION TO SURVIVE THE UNKNOWN FUTURE

ANDO'S TYPEWRITER BY ETTORE SOTTSASS



Above: Ando in his Osaka atelier. Below: a boxing glove signed by heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield and gifted to Ando. Right: a radio by Italian architect and designer Marco Zanuso. Far right: the best book Ando has read this year

first thing. After that there are a number of great restaurants in the Umeda area of Osaka, where I live. I like a simple udon from one of the bars near my studio. I'm not particularly picky, and while I am fine with any food, I do like to eat quickly and I prefer that it be healthy. I have coffee or tea with my lunch – I drink a few cups throughout the day – and I never drink alcohol.

THE WORK OF ART THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING is the collective work produced by the Gutai Group of Japan. They were extraordinarily prolific artists in the mid-20th century and have been significant influences in my life. From them, I learned the importance of thinking about things radically from their origins, and about materiality.

I HAVE A COLLECTION OF fountain pens, many of which I have received as gifts over the years. I don't necessarily have an interest in the act of collecting so much as I like designed objects to be simple, robust, and to balance cost, aesthetics and functionality. My favourite is a red Montblanc fountain pen designed by Marc Newson. An ingenious magnet mechanism allows the logo of the pen and the cap to perfectly align when it is closed. I also have what almost amounts to a collection of Ice-Watches in different colours. I rotate them depending on the day.

THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN RECENTLY was when I designed and funded the Nakanoshima Children's Book Forest, which opened last summer. I see this library as a gift from the adults to the children of Osaka.

AND THE BEST GIFT I'VE RECEIVED RECENTLY is a bottle of rosé from Château La Coste. It came from my client and friend, Paddy McKillen. Its pale amber colour seems to reflect the spirit of the architecture we collaborated on together. Whenever I see the bottle, I think back to the wonderful memories of working alongside him in the south of France and London.

THE DESIGN THAT INTRIGUES ME THE MOST is that hidden in anything we use habitually in our daily lives. A great master architect, Seiichi Shirai, once said he found beauty in the ordinary design, shape and colour of tofu, an everyday staple of the Japanese people.

MY FAVOURITE VIEW IN THE WORLD is of cherry blossom trees lining the Dojima River in Nakanoshima, a large body of water running through the middle of Osaka. About 6,000 trees bloom in unison across a 7.5km-long stretch of river. This natural spectacle was created by extending the original tree-lined path of less than a kilometre. I launched a tree-planting initiative over 15 years ago to beautify the area. My hope was to create a new urban axis within Osaka utilising the power of nature. It is a pleasure to see the results of this work every spring.

THE LAST ITEM OF CLOTHING I ADDED TO MY WARDROBE was a black raincoat from Mackintosh in London. I like how light and comfortable it is, and it works well for travel. *£995, mackintosh.com*

THE LAST MUSIC I DOWNLOADED was a song that Bono recorded just for the Nakanoshima Children's Book Forest. He sang it beautifully, improvising the lyrics and the melody on the spot. I recently added it to my playlist, but it hasn't been publicly released.

AN OBJECT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH is a typewriter designed by Ettore Sottsass that I found some 50 years ago when I first started my practice. I had wanted it since my 20s, and in my 30s I was finally able to get my hands on one. This object is inextricably connected with my memories of my early career, when I was running headfirst into an unpredictable future.

MY FAVOURITE ROOM is my studio, which is near my house and where I spend most of my days. I feel most at home when I'm working. This quadruple-height space, which is filled with light and books, gives me great energy.

RIGHT NOW, I'M PLANNING a large national art museum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. I'm also working on a modest seaside gallery of less than 20sq m next to a provincial Japanese city. It invigorates me to simultaneously take on such wildly different projects.

A RECENT FIND is uncertainty. I've been thinking about how none of us has any idea what will unfold in the future. One year ago, I could not imagine that the world would change so much because of this pandemic. We need unbreakable passion to survive the unknown future.

IF I WEREN'T DOING WHAT I DO, I WOULD BE a designer or a craftsman in another field. When I was younger, I got into the world of contemporary sculpture and product design, but I also remember having a passion for watching the carpenter's daily progress renovating the wooden house I lived in. I think I was always going to be involved in the business of creating things. ■**HTSI**

CHAUMET
PARIS

18+

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AVAXHOME-

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CARS

PRANCING IN THE STREET

Only four Ferrari 330 LMB Le Mans racers were ever made – until a team of engineers built a road version. *Simon de Burton* gets revved up

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MICHAEL SINCLAIR**

This page: the Ferrari 330 LMB replica built by Bell Sport & Classic

A good foot long and topped with a tactile aluminium sphere, the gear lever wouldn't look out of place on a one-arm bandit. And the first couple of times I haul it back to shift from third to fourth, I catch Elliot East nervously glancing at the beautifully sculpted turret that surrounds it.

He's stopped looking after half-a-dozen upshifts, not exactly confident but perhaps feeling slightly easier about my ability. And who could blame him for being a bit on edge? East has put three years of his life into building this car, and after knowing me for five minutes he's allowed me the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to find out what it's like to drive a 330 LMB, the enigmatic Ferrari that competed in the 1963 Le Mans 24 Hours. With just four made, the 330 LMB is almost 10 times rarer than the marque's 250 GTO, examples of which have fetched close to $50m at auction.

Classic competition Ferraris are notoriously demanding to drive, with heavy controls, deafeningly noisy interiors and engines that champ at the bit at low speeds – but not this one. Yes, the throttle is a little heavy on account of having to feed six hungry carburettors; the space between it and the brake pedal is clearly intended for the foot of a diminutive racer; and you do need to think a bit while changing gear.

Otherwise, driving the 330 LMB (which stands for Le Mans Berlinetta) is a pure joy. Its four-litre V12 provides visceral thrills,

The 330 LMB's bodywork was made by coachbuilder RS Panels

Left: the car's updated cockpit. Below: its four-litre V12 engine

both from a soundtrack that gets more mellifluous as the revs rise and from the way it causes the car to reel in the horizon, thanks to nearly 400 horsepower propelling a mere 1,200 kilos. It's even unfeasibly comfortable in there, with all-enveloping bucket seats, plenty of leg room and enough quilted leather and lightweight carpet to make this particular 330 LMB feel more tourer than racer.

Indeed, that was part of the brief when the Hertfordshire-based collector, – Carter was involved in a fatal accident in 2015 while driving his prewar Bentley.

In 2017 the car was acquired by the owner of Bell Sport & Classic, who tasked his team with finishing it to an unimpeachable standard. In the name of authenticity, unobtainable parts were made from scratch, ranging from the fuel filler cap to the window catches and from key engine components to the aforementioned gearbox turret. As a result, it's fair to say that the car is better than the four original 330 LMBs ever were when they were built to contest at Le Mans in 1963.

THE ONE THING MISSING from the Bell Sport & Classic version, however, is a price tag. Managing director Tim Kearns says the car is there to demonstrate the level of attention to detail that remains consistent throughout its restorations, be they on similarly rare or more ubiquitous Ferrari models. But even without the showcase 330, the firm has already established a reputation for being among the best specialists in the business.

On the day of my visit alone, the multimillion-pound line-up of classic Ferraris awaiting meticulous, ground-up rebuilds included a rare Dino L-series (one of the very first made, and the actual car displayed at the 1969 Frankfurt Motor Show); a 1966 example of the elegant 330 GTC coupé that had recently returned from having its old paint removed by walnut blasting (gentler, says Kearns, than conventional shot blasting and better for preserving "vital originality") and a 1965 275 GTB short nose that, to my amateur eye, seemed to be in perfectly good shape.

IT'S BETTER THAN THE FOUR ORIGINAL 330 LMBS EVER WERE

"If you look more closely you'll see that it has just been tidied up at various stages in the past," says Kearns. "But it's an important and valuable car that has been in the UK from new – we'll strip it right down, scan it and then begin a process of preservation and restoration that will take around 18 months to complete, after which it will be in exquisite, concours condition."

So if you've ever wondered what it would be like to head back in time and see what a brand-new 275 looked like in '65, pay a visit to Kearns in 2022. ■**HTSI**

WATCHES

Woman's hour

The stars of the latest horlogerie collections are dressed in dazzling diamonds

CARTIER white-gold, diamond, sapphire and tsavorite Libre Baignoire Turtle, £69,500

OMEGA gold and diamond Constellation Small Seconds, £30,580

JAEGER-LECOULTRE white-gold and diamond Reverso One Precious Flowers, €100,000

LOUIS VUITTON pink-gold and diamond Tambour Spin Time Air Vivienne, £69,000

PATEK PHILIPPE pink-gold and diamond Twenty-4, £34,610

DIOR pink- and yellow-gold, diamond and gemstone Grand Soir Jardins de Nuit No 3, from £220,000

VACHERON CONSTANTIN white-gold and diamond Egerie, £54,000

ROLEX gold and diamond Lady Datejust, £105,100

ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ (2)

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* Founded in St-Tropez in 1971

THE FIND

The More Joy x LeSpecs limited-edition unisex sunglasses, £75, come in two different silhouettes, in red, white and black, christopherkane.com

SMART INVESTMENT

Christopher Kane's statement sunglasses are really rather "special"

EDITED BY **CLARA BALDOCK**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **ADAM GOODISON**

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ANOTHER TOMORROW ORGANIC COTTON COLLARLESS JUMPSUIT, $890

TREND

JUMP START

Leah Bhabha has found comfort in a different kind of suit – and isn't turning back

But would that really work on *me*?" I wondered dubiously, clicking through images of an olive jumpsuit by Alex Mill. I ordered it anyway and, soon after it arrived, bought a second in black. Made from a brushed washed twill with buttons and a belted waist, this one-piece felt like armour – streamlined and breathable without being restrictive or costumey.

ALEX MILL WASHED TWILL EXPEDITION JUMPSUIT, $198

Though much of my closet has remained largely untouched for the past year, my jumpsuit collection has provided a respite from the monotony of elastic waistbands and fleecy sweatshirts. Without having to pair a top and bottom, I can focus my energy on bold accessories and a swipe of lipstick that are more visible over Zoom anyway. I've worn them to work, to play, to lounge. The utility jumpsuit has become my uniform.

ISABEL MARANT

Since the late 19th century, when mechanics on the American railways wore them to protect their clothes from boiler soot, one-pieces have been favoured as workwear. But their practical nature has now featured in the collections of major fashion houses – Stella McCartney's takes on the silhouette include embellishments and acid-wash fabric, while Gucci's versions draw inspiration from the flared bottoms and cinched waists of the '70s.

Alexander Drexler founded Alex Mill as a menswear brand in 2012, with a goal of creating versatile and timeless clothing. "Uniforms are more inherent to menswear," says Somsack Sikhounmuong, its creative director and founding partner. "But we thought – why wouldn't a woman want that approach to dressing?" In 2019, it launched a collection of jumpsuits designed for women that quickly took off. "We always say, 'What's cooler or easier than a jumpsuit?'" he adds. "I think a lot of people are intimidated by them at first, but are pleasantly surprised at how uncomplicated they are once they put one on."

"WE ALWAYS SAY, WHAT'S COOLER OR EASIER THAN A JUMPSUIT?"

The hard-wearing jumpsuit as a uniform also speaks to another significant facet of design today: sustainability. Brooklyn-based Ilana Kohn, whose Tia Coverall I discovered last summer at the wonderful shop Folk, in Maine, was inspired to create collections of cotton twill jumpsuits, released in different shades each season, based on her own manner of getting dressed. "I find something that works and I buy it in every colour and wear it every day," she says. My poppy Tia coverall, with its helpfully oversized pockets, has seen me through chilly summer nights with drop pearl earrings, autumn afternoons accompanied by a leather jacket, and winter workdays from home. Her pieces are all fabricated in New York City, a choice she made early on. "Producing locally and knowing all of our vendors personally, we see firsthand what the conditions are like and how they are treated and compensated. That's important to us," she says.

For designer Molly Bloom, who is based in Lewiston, New York State, a single encounter with a jumpsuit clarified her point of view. In 2015, she purchased a 1930s one-piece Women Airforce Service Pilot uniform at a thrift shop in Tennessee. The vintage garment was sturdy yet comfortable, and fit its new wearer perfectly. "That jumpsuit set the course for me to rethink collections with focus and simplicity," she says. Later this year, Bloom will launch a line of men's and women's jumpsuits, which she sees as "a uniform for hard-workers". She is prioritising fit and size inclusivity – instead of basing her women's prototype on the ready-to-wear standard of a US 2 or 4, she'll use an 8. "To me, a jumpsuit replaces the suit and, like a suit, it should fit impeccably," the designer adds.

Looking ahead to the coming months, when anxiety and isolation will, hopefully, be replaced with optimism and togetherness, I don't doubt my wardrobe will emerge from its depths. But re-entering the world will require strength, confidence, and poise. Luckily, I've got just the outfit. ■HTSI

MOLLY BLOOM COTTON HERRINGBONE TWILL FRANCES (LEFT) AND BLOOMIE JUMPSUITS, BOTH $495

LOUIS VUITTON

Top: NANUSHKA vegan leather Ashton jumpsuit, £575. Above: ILANA KOHN linen and cotton Mapes jumpsuit, $334

FERRAGAMO

ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ (4). PHOTOGRAPHS: DUSTIN FENSTERMACHER. SANFORD RODRIGUEZ

JEWELLERY

TREASURE SEEKERS

Kate Finnigan meets the brains behind Omnēque, the online marketplace catering to today's thirst for pre-owned gems

BUCCELLATI 18CT-YELLOW- AND WHITE-GOLD COILED ROPE NECKLACE, c1970S, £14,500

Omnēque founder Amanda Zuydervelt wears vintage 1950s gold and diamond ring and VAN CLEEF & ARPELS earrings (just visible), necklace and bracelets

BOUCHERON 18CT-GOLD, DIAMOND, ONYX AND CORAL PARURE, c1970S, POA

VAN CLEEF & ARPELS 18ct-gold Chevron bracelet, 20th century, £11,500

BULGARI gold and pink tourmaline Tronchetto ear clips, late-20th century, £3,350

CARTIER 18ct-gold, platinum, green tourmaline and diamond brooch/double clips, c1940s, £58,000

CARTIER 18ct-gold gas-pipe style necklace, c1970s, £9,850

An outsider to the jewellery business might suppose that the finest necklaces, earrings or bracelets that come onto the secondary market are always sold at the kind of dazzling auctions you see in films. But this is often not the case. The trading of rare fine jewellery is discreet, even secretive, and according to Joanna Hardy, a fine-jewellery specialist and gemologist, some of the power and worth of a piece of jewellery can be lost if it has been seen by too many eyes. There's an industry word for it. "It's considered *burnt*," says Hardy. "People don't want stuff that's been all over the place, you know?"

Omnēque is a secondary jewellery marketplace that caters to a wide audience of treasure seekers. It deals in jewellery for the entry-point customer in the mood for some 1970s Saint Laurent costume earrings, and those wanting to invest in special pieces by big names like Cartier, Boucheron and Van Cleef & Arpels. It also attracts the elite buyer in search of jewels not known to be in circulation by the rest of the world.

The website was launched by Amanda Zuydervelt, entrepreneur and founder of luxury concierge service Stylebible, at the end of last year. And her timing was spot-on. According to a Boston Consulting Group report from September 2020, the market for secondary "hard luxury items" (primarily watches and jewellery) is currently worth about $21bn and predicted to grow at eight per cent a year (compared with the projected 1.1 per cent growth of the primary market) through to 2023. The report suggests that second-hand luxury sales are growing for many reasons, "among them an increase in online sales, changing consumer preferences and rising concern about the sustainability of luxury goods, particularly among younger consumers". These trends have been current for a while now, but the pandemic and the global slowdown have accelerated them.

Moreover, as this market is still in the early stages, there is opportunity for brands and retailers to shape demand and stake their claim. This is what Omnēque is poised to do with an offering that is both digital – customers can buy directly online – and highly personalised, with its services ranging from sourcing to bespoke commissions, remodelling, cleaning and repairing. Recent requests through its personal shopping service have included a £50,000 budget for a 50th-birthday present and the replacement of a specific art deco ring that had been lost.

IT HAS ACCESS TO THE PIECES THAT ARE HIGHLY HUSH-HUSH

What sets Omnēque apart from many other purveyors in the market is its expert curation and authentication process, provided by Hardy and jewellery writer (and *HTSI* contributing editor) Vivienne Becker. With a combined experience of more than 70 years, they have an unrivalled knowledge of antique and vintage jewellery, and an extensive network of the best international dealers to call on. "The antique jewellery world is all about relationships and who you know," says Becker.

That network of jewellery authorities means that every piece available on Omnēque has a trusted provenance. It also means that the brand has unique access to the finest jewellery coming onto the market. Pieces that are highly hush-hush and don't stay around for long. This will come into its own with Omnēque's just-launched new concept, the Rarities Collection. Dropping twice yearly, it is a curation of the crème de la crème of jewels, sourced from across the world, discovered via long-distance phone calls and late-night WhatsApps. To keep them out of sight, "unburnt", these antique and vintage pieces won't appear on the Omnēque website but will be privately presented to registered clients through a concierge service. "It's the opposite of red-carpet dressing where people want to go out and buy a necklace that has been seen on a Hollywood star," says Becker. "The clients we're talking about absolutely hate that sort of thing."

The significant pieces include a full Boucheron suite from the 1960s ("Full suites are almost impossible to find," says Becker); two rings by JAR (Joel Arthur Rosenthal, the master jeweller who produces less than a hundred pieces each year); a Kunzite agate diamond (£170,000); and a mind-blowing Padparadscha sapphire (£845,000). Art deco is a period in demand at the moment and a diamond cuff from 1935 by Charlton, the New York jeweller, is a showstopper (£235,000). There are also two pieces by Wallace Chan, the Hong Kong-based stone carver turned fine jeweller who in 2015 became famous for creating the most expensive diamond necklace ever made (a $200m piece). "Some of his pieces are coming back on the market now and, yes, they're very expensive," says Becker. Omnēque's finds include a gorgeously plump ruby diamond ring (£655,000) and a conch-pearl necklace (£280,000).

WALLACE CHAN 18ct-gold, diamond, pink hardstone and conch pearl necklace, POA

BULGARI 18CT-YELLOW- AND WHITE-GOLD, LOLITE, PINK TOURMALINE AND GREEN TOURMALINE TRIPLE CUFF BANGLE, c1980S, £12,500

BUT THERE ARE PLENTY of treasures available to buy directly from the website. Among the most expensive pieces are the art deco ones – Hardy points to a Cartier tourmaline and diamond bow brooch/double clips (£58,000). "It is inspired by an escalator, which at the time was quite the novelty." The entry-level fine jewellery might include an Elizabeth Gage zodiac band ring from the '80s – which is less than £2,000. More accessible is the vintage fashion jewellery from the likes of Chanel, Dior and Tom Ford, priced from £125.

"We didn't want people to look at Omnēque like a museum – that is untouchable, unwearable, unaffordable," says Becker, "and so that's our first thing. We are also showing pieces that are reachable, so a wide range of people can afford to buy them."

Omnēque also shines a spotlight on contemporary design talent, who can be overlooked in the loud business of big-brand commercial jewellery. Its list includes the designers Emefa Cole, Jacqueline Cullen and Mark Nuell. "They've got a really good understanding of what goes into making a piece of jewellery, and they've spent years perfecting their craft and are often one-man bands. Mark Nuell, for example, cuts his own sapphires and there are very few people who can design a jewel, make a jewel and cut the stone," says Hardy. "He was brought up in the outback and his father was a sapphire miner in the '70s. With all of these people there is a fabulous backstory. The big mass-produced brands are fine, but I want the buyers to know what's out there, so that they have a real choice of what is available." Old, new, antique or retro, big brand or tiny independent maker – all jewellery tastes have been accounted for. ■HTSI

CARTIER 18ct-white-gold, diamond and onyx Pelage ring, c1980s, £29,500

PORTRAIT BY JACK MARGERSON, PHOTOGRAPHED AT LOFT STUDIOS, LONDON. ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ (5). PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY; AP PHOTO; EAMONN MCCABE/POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES; EMERSON UTRACK

SERGIO TACCHINI Rainier tracksuit, $225. Left: John McEnroe and Bjorn Borg at Wimbledon, July 1980

JM WESTON X ROLAND-GARROS SNEAKERS, £495

MENSWEAR

MAN OF THE MATCH

Modern men are wearing retro sports kit for the win. By *Daniel Yaw-Miller*

The outfits worn by sports stars are often as memorable as any of their respective triumphs. When the French football team lifted the World Cup in 1998, their blue and white Adidas-designed kit became intertwined with their milestone victory. The radical goalkeeper jerseys of the mid '90s, such as the style worn by Newcastle United's Hackney-born, Trinidadian international Shaka Hislop, remain in our collective memory as indelibly as his saves.

It's perhaps this play on nostalgia and heroism that has encouraged the recent surge in retro sportswear. This season, Gucci has sweatshirts reminiscent of those worn by Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe in the '80s; Aimé Leon Dore has collaborated with New Balance on a collection filled with retro basketball jerseys and team jackets; Polo Ralph Lauren's capsule for Browns features vintage-style, block-coloured rugby shirts; JM Weston has released a velcro trainer with Roland-Garros that draws on the historic style of the French Grand Slam tournament; and British brand NE Blake, which makes cable-knit cricket sweaters and vests inspired by star players in the '70s, can't keep pace with demand.

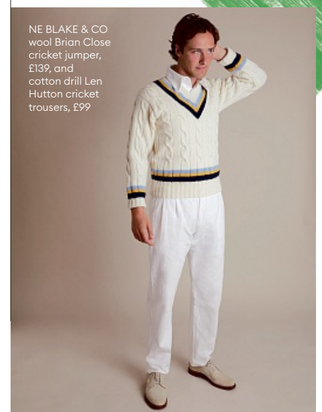
"This season we've seen a number of brands reference retro designs," says Daniel Todd, buying manager at Mr Porter, "specifically styles reminiscent of iconic sporting uniforms." The e-tailer stocks Wales Bonner's collaboration with Adidas, which includes sneakers inspired by images of Bob Marley playing football in the '70s.

For Sergio Tacchini's ongoing collaboration with the Rolex Monte Carlo Masters, the Italian house has paid homage to the crinkly "shell suits" that were popular across European tennis and football culture in the '80s. Sergio Tacchini has a long history when it comes to designing vintage tennis outfits, such as McEnroe's era-defining white short shorts, red and navy fitted tracksuit top and headband in the 1980 men's singles final at Wimbledon. His opponent, Borg, was sporting an almost identical look designed by Fila, in what is still considered one of the greatest tennis matches of all time.

TACCHINI DESIGNED MCENROE'S ERA-DEFINING SHORT SHORTS

Much of the appeal of vintage sportswear is in its creativity, designed at a time when brands were more experimental with their uniforms and less commercially minded. Today, teams have multiple kit launches each year, geared at generating millions in sales worldwide. Ironically, the same teams' vintage uniforms have now become highly commercialised, with major clubs and teams relaunching their most famous retro looks to huge success.

At a time when many are calling for a return to the heart and soul of sport – football or otherwise – these retro looks provide a form of escapism to simpler times. Whether you're an athlete or spectator, wearing for fitness or leisure, these vintage-inspired outfits are the real players of the day. ■HTSI



NE BLAKE & CO wool Brian Close cricket jumper, £139, and cotton drill Len Hutton cricket trousers, £99

Above: POLO RALPH LAUREN X BROWNS cotton polo shirt, £140, and ADIDAS CONSORTIUM X WALES BONNER leather Samba sneakers, £160

Bob Marley in Paris, May 1977

ZINEDINE ZIDANE IN THE 1998 FIFA WORLD CUP

GUCCI tech-jersey track jacket, £1,050, mrporter.com

Angle 3-seater sofa GBP 5.515,- I Angle lounge chair GBP 2.835,-

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Design by Foersom & Hiort-Lorenzen MDD

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DOLCE & GABBANA stretch-denim patchwork shirt, £1,500

COMME DES GARCONS HOMME PLUS polyester asymmetric blazer, £1,065

BODE Souvenir merino wool twill jacket, £2,123, mrporter.com

BASSHU cotton quilt, £225, farfetch.com

LOEWE PAULA'S IBIZA cotton shirt, £450, mrporter.com

BITOSSI ceramic lamps by Ettore Sottsass, £7,109 for a pair, 1stdibs.com

ETRO leather shoes, £585

BOTTEGA VENETA wool cutout sweater, £1,280, mrporter.com

ZIGGY CHEN cattle-horn half-frame sunglasses, £734, farfetch.com

JW ANDERSON recycled-polyester asymmetric bucket hat, £115, farfetch.com

SHOPPING

PIECE AND LOVE

Play with a patchwork of textures and colours. By *Aylin Bayhan*

The inspiration: a sailing boat on the Jamuna River, Bangladesh

ROCHE BOBOIS walnut console table by Raphael Navot, £2,810

DARIO ALFONSI patchwork leather and teak Tripolina chair, £1,615, artemest.com

MSGM gabardine cargo trousers, £330

CHILDREN OF THE DISCORDANCE cotton Tranch jeans, £854, farfetch.com

FENG CHEN WANG panelled denim jacket, £939, farfetch.com

READYMADE cotton Kermit toy, £370, farfetch.com

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN deconstructed wool intarsia cricket sweater, £890

DOSHI LEVIEN glass and aluminium cabinet by BD, £11,785, 1stdibs.com

DIOR calfskin low-top B27 sneakers, £850

SERAPIAN eco-leather card holder, €165

PHOTOGRAPH: ALBERTO BUZZOLA/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

“I’m a lark and Mother is an owl”

Alex and Olga Polizzi’s personalities may be night and day, but it makes them a formidable force. *Aimee Farrell* finds them reviving old-school service at a new country hotel

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **YUKI SUGIURA**

At the start of the year, as schools closed and life in England once again screeched to a dramatic halt, Alex Polizzi, 49, found herself doing something she hadn’t done in decades – moving in with her mother. “We haven’t lived together since I was 20,” says the hotelier and television host of decamping from London with her two children to the home of Olga Polizzi and her husband, the writer William Shawcross, in Friston, East Sussex. The move proved pivotal. As the world of hospitality navigated a bewildering roller-coaster ride between periods of shuttered doors and full-scale openings, the Polizzis used the enforced downtime to embark on their first official joint hotel venture – The Star.

The pair secured a site back in November 2019. A convenient half-hour hop from the family home, the 30-room 16th-century inn sits on the edge of the Cuckmere River in the bucolic South Downs village of Alfriston. Steeped in history, the site once served as a stopover for monks and pilgrims en route to Chichester Cathedral, and with its atmospheric low-beamed bar and intelligently stocked library, it promises to be a cocooning bolthole from which to explore the county’s increasingly fashionable bounties of Bloomsbury culture, antiques and ravishing scenery.

“We’ve literally never spent so much time together,” laughs Alex, of what has turned out to be an all-consuming project. The Star, nonetheless, has been an opportunity to bring their uncomplicated shared vision of laid-back-but-lovely hotels to life. “We’ve all been through this phase of going to the types of places where you just pick up a card and let yourself into your room,” says Olga. “But now, more than ever, I think people really want to be looked after – and we really want to look after people.”

Polizzi is well-placed to reinstate traditional values at the hotel – hospitality, of the wonderfully old-school variety, is in the blood. The daughter of the influential hotelier Charles Forte (who inadvertently kick-started the family empire in 1934 when opening the first-of-its-kind dining-based milk bar in London’s Upper Regent Street), Polizzi has been the design director of Rocco Forte Hotels for 25 years – the group set up with her brother, Sir Rocco, which includes Brown’s Hotel in London.

The global pandemic has done little to dampen her productivity: she is currently overseeing interiors for Rocco Forte projects from Shanghai to Sicily – largely, and much to her irritation, over Zoom. “It takes the joy out of it,” she says. But it’s The Star, the third offering from her own small clutch of English country hotels, The Polizzi Collection (which includes Tresanton, a former yacht club in the Cornish village of St Mawes, and Hotel Endsleigh, a Regency hunting and fishing lodge in Devon’s Tamar Valley), that has been commanding her attention.

> “NOW, MORE THAN EVER, PEOPLE WANT TO BE LOOKED AFTER”

This joint project has been both exhilarating and exhausting, given that the intimacy of their relationship dissolved the usual divisions between the personal and professional. “At home all we talk about is work,” admits Alex. “The children get incredibly bored by it.” Even without the significant issues posed by Covid-19, from labour problems to shortages of material (including Italian marble), the project has spiralled into a mammoth task. “The building was in a much worse state than we first thought. We’ve discovered as we’ve gone on that generations of owners have fudged it,” says Olga.

FUDGING IT IS NOT THE Polizzi way. Every roof tile and plastic window has been replaced, and the inner workings of the building painstakingly restored. It’s meant too that the pair have been very much going it alone, working without a project manager or the usual support team. “Normally, when Mum asks me to do something, I desperately try to ask someone else,” says Alex. “But there isn’t anyone. We’ve just got on with it.”

In many ways the pandemic has also helped to draw them into the community. Aside from the Italian bedlinens, almost all the sourcing for the interior has been done close to home, and they’ve called on Alfriston’s talented coterie of blacksmiths, upholsterers and specialist artisans to infuse the space with Olga’s trademark refined and understated decorative flair. She likes to use a patterned wallpaper as a focal point, and layer rooms with decorative accessories such as cushions in contrasting prints, but will often temper these stronger statements with a simple window treatment and large-scale furniture – most importantly a comfortable Glencraft bed.

As part of this process, every decision, right down to the scale of the napkins, has been discussed, dissected and shared. “Neither of us are ‘yes’ people,” explains Alex. “We both argue our corners pretty darn hard.” But when their views inevitably diverge, after a dramatic exit or a brief sulk, things quickly get back to normal and the pair balance each other out rather well. “Often when one is down, the other is up and we end up lifting one another’s mood,” Olga says. The ebb and flow of their energy is similarly contrasting. “I’m a lark and Mother is an owl,” says Alex. “So by the time I’m ready for my first glass of wine, she gets her second wind.” On tricky days, they let off steam by laughing along to old episodes of *Fawlty Towers*.

ROCCO, OLGA AND LOUISE FORTE WITH THEIR PARENTS, LORD AND LADY FORTE, IN THE 1950S

Alex and Olga Polizzi in the Blue Room at The Star, Alfriston. The painting is by Sussex artist Anne de Geus

THE STAR, ALFRISTON, EAST SUSSEX

In truth, The Star nearly didn’t happen. While scouring locations in the West Country, Olga heard about the vacant site right on Alfriston’s medieval high street but was hesitant, even after viewing it several times with her husband. “It was relatively inexpensive and I absolutely love the area – it’s so great for walks and close to Glyndebourne – but I couldn’t quite see a way to make it work,” she explains. It was the *carpe diem* spirit of her daughter who saw The Star as a chance to collaborate, and propelled the project on. “I’d always wanted to work with Mum and this was my opportunity,” she says. “You talked me into it,” agrees Olga. “I certainly wouldn’t have done it on my own.”

It took the imagination of another member of the clan – Polizzi’s stepson, the artist and sculptor Conrad Shawcross – to conquer the aesthetic hurdles of the property. While The Star’s ancient beamed façade exudes all the character you’d expect of a village frequently voted England’s prettiest, the rest of the building was an odd assortment of add-ons. The sculptor’s solution has been to cleave away at the site much as one would a block of stone, by demolishing the hideous ’60s office block at the centre of the layout to make way for an interior courtyard. “We’ve tried to bring back the beauty of the place by getting rid of the ugly bits and creating something pretty at the heart of the hotel,” says Olga. As an avid horticulturist, she also drew on the experience of garden designer and historian George Carter, who also advised on the transformation of the formal 17th-century grounds of her own nearby home. “He’s given me lots of ideas,” she says. “Now I just have to get on with it.” So far, 26 Portuguese laurels and a sweep of beech trees have been installed.

Although both mother and daughter have strong views on food – bringing in chef Tim Kensett from Scotland’s The Fife Arms – the hotel’s culinary offer will be overseen by Alex. Olga, who has very fixed ideas on the specifics of bed-making, will take charge of housekeeping. Once the hotel opens to guests in June, Alex will be front-of-house, while Olga will oversee operations from behind-the-scenes, while maintaining her role at Rocco Forte hotels.

Despite the hotel business being written into their DNA, there’s a certain resistance to its allure as a profession. “My father used to say that you’d have to be dropped on your head at birth to work in hotels,” says Olga, who joined the design department of her father’s former company Forte Hotels straight after art school some 40 years ago. And yet, the cycle continues. “I wasn’t actually encouraged to go into the industry,” says Alex. “But now my daughter, Olga, is threatening to join the business, and I’m trying to dissuade her. So many of us must have been dropped on our heads!” ■**HTSI**

The 30 renovated bedrooms are hung with wallpaper by Madeaux in Hastings (above centre) and decorated with works by local artisans, such as this ceramic (above) from Objet Trouvé, a shop and gallery in the village

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Home WORKS

The Giant Dolls' House Project illustrates the refugee crisis from another perspective. By *Victoria Woodcock*

The self-designed West Sussex home of Dutch architect Catja de Haas is a window onto her principled aesthetics. Underlining the building's modernist-inspired, wood-clad form is a strict adherence to sustainability and a desire to blend in with the landscape. The coolly considered house gives few clues, however, to de Haas's other passion – a community arts initiative funded by profits from her architecture practice that aims to raise awareness of homelessness and the refugee crisis, and for which she has collaborated with Oxfam on projects since 2019.

The Giant Dolls' House Project asks its participants to create a miniature roomscape in a box. The dioramas are then displayed en masse as an installation, linked by ropes, ladders and ramps in a colourful cardboard maze that muses on the meaning of home. The idea was born out of de Haas's PhD studies on how dolls' houses – from elaborate 17th-century Dutch examples to the feminist *Dollhouse* created by artists Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody in the 1970s – reflect changing ideas about the home.

"Because dolls' houses are so friendly, they are a really good way to get serious messages across," says de Haas, who started the project in 2014 and has run workshops with London schoolchildren and community groups in Goa and Za'atari, the Jordanian camp that is home to around 80,000 Syrian refugees. "You see all the little personal stories and it becomes clear that we are all human and idiosyncratically different. It really is an equaliser. Once you start making, you think with your fingers and you develop a narrative."

Left: making dolls' houses at a project workshop. Right: applying the finishing touches to a box

For Sara Cowan, senior campaign manager at Oxfam GB, The Giant Dolls' House Project represents "a different way for people to share their stories". She points to a box by 12-year-old Mariam, in Za'atari, who had created a miniature clothing boutique to convey her ambition to become a fashion designer. "She built her dolls' house to be the vision of what she wants to do next," says Cowan, "and she also gave this great story about the importance of looking forward and being hopeful for the future."

Last year, when physical workshops and exhibitions were not an option, Oxfam and de Haas worked together to create a virtual dolls' house, entitled *Alone Together*, by collating submissions online. "It's a collection of all the voices from lockdown," says de Haas. Some have a stop-in-your-tracks power: "My dolls' house represents life before being evacuated as a refugee vs life as a refugee," says a young girl, Safa. "My theme is light and dark. The light side has a gold window that represents the window of golden opportunity shining on me. On the other hand, the dark side has blank, black and red windows with recycled items as a ladder trying to escape, reach for opportunities and find the light."

> "MARIAM BUILT HER HOUSE TO BE THE VISION OF WHAT SHE WANTS TO DO NEXT"

This year, the project will be online again as part of Refugee Week (14 to 20 June), for which it is accepting submissions until 7 June. It's a challenge without in-person contact. "Ideally, I'm interested in using it to tackle a problem in a specific area, and bring different people together," says de Haas. But the ultimate goal remains the same. "The Giant Dolls' House Project is a fund- and awareness raiser, and a discussion piece. It doesn't solve anything, unfortunately, but we hope it makes people think."

On a more personal level, de Haas hopes to fuse this project with her architectural practice in the creation of community housing. "It would be interesting to get residents to realise what they want by making it all in a dolls' house," she says. "You get a better story by doing and sticking, and not worrying about what the end result is, than if people grab lots of images from, say, Pinterest."

The project is also an opportunity to highlight the Families Together campaign, of which Oxfam is a founding member. "We are campaigning for the UK government to allow more refugee families to be reunited in the UK, and that includes providing safe and legal routes for people to get here," explains Cowan. "When refugee issues are being discussed in the media it can become very heated. Refugee Week is about celebrating what refugees are bringing to communities rather than thinking about what divides us. The Giant Dolls' House Project is really about feeling like we all can be part of this together." ■**HTSI**

HOW TO GIVE IT

See the virtual exhibition and submit a box by 7 June, giantdollshouse.org

Refugee Week 14 to 20 June, refugeeweek.org.uk

Oxfam joins more than 60 organisations as part of the Families Together campaign; familiestogether.uk

Top: a Giant Dolls' House Project installation at the V&A Museum of Childhood, London. Above: Haneen (left) and Hala, both 11, with their shoebox

12-YEAR-OLD MARIAM'S CLOTHING BOUTIQUE

PHOTOGRAPHS: KARIM IBRAHIM, NESMA AL NSOUR ON BEHALF OF OXFAM (4)

THE SURREAL THING

Photography by *Nicholas Calcott*

Julie Curtiss's desire to unsettle means her art asks more questions than it answers. And that's just the way she likes it, she tells *Lou Stoppard* on the occasion of her first solo show in London

Julie Curtiss in her studio in Brooklyn. Artworks (from left): *Le Futur*, 2021. Work in progress

The 38-year-old French-Vietnamese artist Julie Curtiss has been causing much excitement in the art world with her twisted, caustic representations of life's familiar visuals. Her rise has been rapid. In 2015, she was "a nobody", as she puts it. Three years later, New York dealer Anton Kern began showing her work. In 2019, a small painting of a woman's head with Princess Leia-style buns sold for $106,250 on the secondary market at Phillips New York, over an estimate of $6,000 to $8,000. It was followed by the sale that marks her record; a hammer price of $423,000 (around three times the estimate) for *Pas de Trois*, a canvas showing three hairy forms. Last year, Curtiss signed with White Cube: her first solo show in London opened earlier this month in its St James's space.

When we speak in early spring, Curtiss is alone in her New York apartment, save for her cat Houdini, trying to focus on painting, bored with restrictions. "I want to live," she says. "You need to experience life to paint about life." She misses, like everyone, "the unexpected", which is exactly what her work is all about: the odd, the perverse, the incongruous. Curtiss clashes the banal artefacts of pop culture and contemporary life with flickers of the grotesque. Things are not right, not where they should be.

The canvases at White Cube, titled *Monads and Dyads*, showcase the motifs that have become Curtiss's signatures: doubles and doppelgangers abound; there is a tension between order and disorder; the neat tiles of abattoir walls emphasise the curvaceous joints of hanging carcasses, and there is hair everywhere. Animals are covered in it – dark sweeps and licks and curls run across the hanging bodies of ducks or pigs. From above we see the shaggy scalps of nude figures, standing on hexagon tiles.

Hair is a great tool for perturbing; artists have used it to suggest beauty, other times to provoke, such as with Méret Oppenheim's fur teacup from 1936, arguably the greatest surrealist sculpture ever made. In Curtiss's work, hair appears both where one would expect – lush locks coiffed and lapping at collars – and where one wouldn't, morphing into something shocking, repulsive, a symbol of death, perversion, chaos. Hair is among the props of femininity that she uses to create "female characters that are mysterious, but then also menacing in a certain way."

Curtiss's work is often cited in relation to the surrealists (indeed, her first inclusion at a White Cube show was 2017's *Dreamers Awake*, about surrealism and featuring female artists). And yet, while *Monads and Dyads* certainly has a surrealist bent – visitors will see sculptures of sushi rice topped with lips, a straw hat filled with spaghetti – Curtiss, unlike Oppenheim with her teacup, does not seek to shock or surprise, but to "skewer", as the show's curator Susanna Greeves puts it.

Above: Curtiss's *Coldroom 1*, 2020

Left: Julie Curtiss in front of her artwork *Cells*, 2021

"ART IS NOT PROPAGANDA. I WANT TO EXPLORE THINGS"

"I have always been interested in the in-between. In the tension between opposites," says Curtiss, describing an obsession with shadow selves, knock-on effects and double meanings. If surrealism is showing things out of place through juxtaposition, Curtiss's work questions those boundaries, the very existence of "in place" at all. She feels that society's promises of fulfilment and stability, the dreams used to keep things flowing and the rules of the game no longer hold. "Any gesture in one direction will have a repercussion in another direction," she says. "Look at being married and trying to have a career. Or look at motherhood." Her generation have watched as women have become more independent, but "in that process they have to give up on some things", she says. "Even liberation has a price, freedom has a price." She is interested in a kind of "passive aggression", one that prioritises difficult questions, rather than a gut reaction.

As well as a surrealist, Curtiss is frequently dubbed a "millennial artist". "The Millennial Art Star Julie Curtiss's Paintings Now Sell for Half a Million Dollars. It's Kind of Freaking Her Out" read a 2019 Artnet headline. While she can accept the surrealist tag, the latter feels lazy. "I hardly qualify as a millennial," she says (Curtiss was born in 1982). And yet, she is pragmatic, conscious of the current art world vogue for young female representational painters. "There was a clear change after Trump happened," she says. "New cycles were started, and I feel that I jumped at the right time because of the work that I was doing, being a female artist doing a certain kind of figurative work. Maybe also the fact people see me as a person of colour."

The millennial tag is fed by the fact her work reproduces well on social media. She was, she says, "able to take advantage of the narrow Instagram moment when artists suddenly had a chance to promote their work independently of institutions or galleries and reach out to a new base of collectors". Without social media – now too saturated for making a splash – she says she would have got "nowhere".

Curtiss's success, as well as the fact her canvasses recall past artists such as the Chicago Imagists, including Christina Ramberg who regularly painted hair, have led to some critical mutters. Of the latter, Curtiss is open to the debt she owes. "Before I had any kind of success, Ramberg was a strong influence on my work," she says, adding: "It was a phase I had to go through. And I'm still working it out in the context of the work."

Likewise, her CV, which includes time working in the studio of the commercially successful American artist KAWS (aka Brian Donnelly) who is known for cartoons and clown-like figurines, and whose current show at the Brooklyn Museum caused much pearl-clutching among critics, has led others to be dismissive simply by association. "The art culture is totally snobbish," Curtiss says. "It's two forces again. It's the force of conservation, and the force of evolution... It's a clash of the establishment, a clash of a new emerging base of collectors, who don't have that elite art education and who have a different way to relate to art – but they now have the material means to push an artist when they really want to, and when they like it."

And yet, according to Zoë Klemme at Christie's, who presided over one of Curtiss's secondary market sales, the buyers' demographic is broader than you think. "You might be surprised – it's not just the young crowd. Julie really does talk to a wide range of collectors, including very established clients." For Curtiss, a priority is that: "I don't want people to flip my work", as was done by some early buyers who bought the works for a couple of thousand dollars. "You feel like you are losing control of it. And people become more interested in the retail value than what the work represents."

Because she is young, and female, people presume that Curtiss's work must be a pithy comment on feminism, consumerism, #MeToo, technology. But she is cautious of art as activism. Her canvases are not loaded with firm arguments, or single statements. "For me, art is not propaganda. I'm not sending a message," she says. "I want to explore things. And when you explore things you don't know where things are going to lead you."

Though a committed "leftie", Curtiss worries about the discourse of today, about whether there is space for such exploration. "There is so much focus on identity, what we are, and wanting to create a woman culture, a black culture, a white culture." She tires of hearing about cultural appropriation. "That point of view, that white people are somehow the worst people on earth, it's another side of narcissism," she says. Identity is broad, she argues: "We are not one thing, not even two things, we are a sum of so many things."

Visitors to White Cube will notice that Curtiss does not paint faces in her paintings. It's another unsettling signature: figures' heads are either turned away, or their features are absent, blank, the empty ovals sometimes grey, or ghoulish green, a void – who is this woman? What is she thinking? It can be read as a clapback to the very contemporary notion that all that any of us really want is to be "seen". Shortly before the show's opening, Curtiss reflected on the most visible parts of her identity and how they have helped make her a success: "I'm going to try and ride this wave for as long as I can." Yet, in using her paintings to offer the right to be an enigma, Curtiss makes a case for the strength of being indecipherable, illusive, perhaps coy, perhaps undecided, perhaps biding one's time. ■**HTSI**

PHOTOGRAPHS: NICHOLAS CALCOTT, WHITE CUBE (OLLIE HAMMICK) © JULIE CURTISS

Artworks by Julie Curtiss: clockwise from above: *States of Mind*, 2021. *Le Futur* (detail), 2021. *La Femme Secrète*, 2021. *Appetizer,* 2017

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHARLES BENTON, JULIE CURTISS (2) © JULIE CURTISS (3) COURTESY WHITE CUBE. NICHOLAS CALCOTT

TUX HAVEN

Eveningwear codes bring a touch of glamour to the everyday. Photography by *Robin Galiegue*. Styling by *Andreas Peter Krings*. Models *Moustapha Sy* and *Leon Dame*

This page: Moustapha wears SALVATORE FERRAGAMO suede Mangiarotti Carrara overcoat, £6,520. BOTTER cotton blazer (seen underneath), £985. JIL SANDER BY LUCIE AND LUKE MEIER rayon and cotton hooded scarf, £140

Opposite page: Leon wears LEMAIRE cotton ventile trench coat, £720. BOTTEGA VENETA cotton twill string knotted shirt, £810, and cotton/polyamide trousers, £715. Rubber shoes, stylist's own. CHARVET silk chiffon scarf, £200. KERSTIN ADOLPHSON wool socks, POA

This page: Leon wears EMPORIO ARMANI cotton and viscose top, £240. MAISON MARGIELA linen coat with wet-look detailing (seen around waist), £2,245. JW ANDERSON cotton trousers, £445. RALPH LAUREN silk cummerbund, £230

Opposite page: Moustapha wears ETRO wool jacket, £1,125. LUDOVIC DE SAINT SERNIN silk shirt, £475

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Stalking Joy on Open Ground, 2020
oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cms, 47 x 40 inches

Previous page: Leon wears CANALI cotton/linen/silk shirt, £330. ALLED-MARTINEZ satin and knitted viscose cummerbund trousers, £840. Vintage vest, hat and boxing trainers, stylist's own

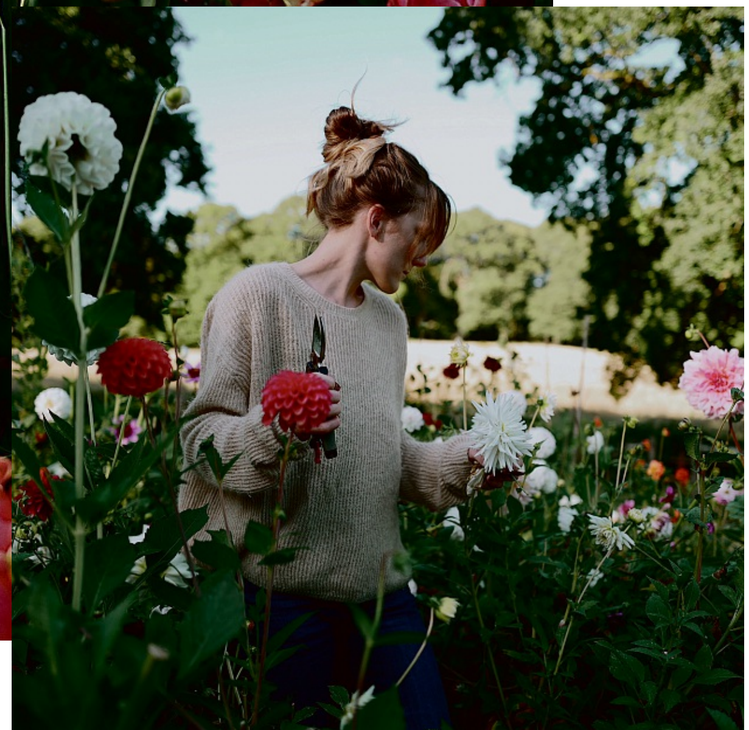
This page: Leon wears DIOR wool cavalry twill military jacket, £3,000. LUDOVIC DE SAINT SERNIN silk shirt (seen at collar), £475. CHARVET cotton piqué tuxedo belt, £260. Silk scarf, stylist's own

Opposite page: Moustapha wears PAUL SMITH linen blazer, £570. LOUIS VUITTON cashmere rollneck sweater, £915

This page: Leon wears ALEXANDER McQUEEN wool gabardine coat, £2,740. CHARVET cotton bathrobe (seen at lapels), £665

Opposite page: Moustapha wears CRAIG GREEN cotton Kimono parka, POA. HERNO bi-stretch technical fabric raincoat (seen underneath), £650. UNIQLO merino wool rollneck, £30. BOTTEGA VENETA natural linen canvas trousers, £905

Models, Leon Dame at Viva Paris and Moustapha Sy at Rebel Management. Casting, Mathilde Curel for Julia Lange Casting. Hair, Pawel Solis at Artlist Paris. Make-up, Mayumi Oda at Bryant Artists. Photographer's assistants, Thomas Charbois and Kévin Théard. Digital operator, Romain Courtois. Stylist's assistant, Marie Poulmarch. Production, Marie Godeau Robinson and Perle Rolland at Rosco Production



Tulips "Copper Image" and "Belle Epoque", grown by floral designer Milli Proust (pictured right) harvesting dahlias in her one-acre cutting garden in West Sussex. Opposite page: dahlias grown at Emily Avenson's Fleuropean flower school in Aubel, Belgium

PHOTOGRAPHS: EMILY AVENSON. @MILLIPROUST (2)

A BLOOM *of* ONE'S OWN

In search of rare, idiosyncratic colours, scents and forms, these floral designers turned growers have gone back to the roots. By *Clare Coulson*

When you grow flowers yourself, you watch how something thrives – or doesn't – and you understand the plants in a fundamental way," says floral designer Milli Proust. "And when you get those really amazing flowers, the whole design revolves around that one special thing." Proust started to raise chemical-free crops in her one-acre West Sussex garden four years ago, and today every corner of her cutting garden is packed with the bulbs, perennials, roses, shrubs and annual flowers that fuel her work for private clients, weddings and events. The latest additions are peony beds with her favourite luscious "Claire de Lune", as well as "Duchesse de Nemours", "Marie Lemoine", and the raspberry-ripple "Germaine Bigot". "I love it when they look like something from a fancy French patisserie," says Proust.

Seasonal and more sustainable, the micro farm has allowed Proust to grow varieties that are not available from commercial growers. These specialised cultivars may have a more interesting form, extraordinary scent or unusual colours; and, grown outdoors, they have a completely different aesthetic to flowers grown on an industrial scale.

"Garden-grown ingredients have so much personality and charisma," agrees California-born Emily Avenson, whose Fleuropean flower school is based in Aubel, in rural Belgium. Her favourites are "confused colours" – the shape-shifting blush-to-mauve of the delicate *Phlox drummondii* "Crème Brûlée" or the peach-to-pink daisies of *Cosmos bipinnatus* "Apricot Lemonade". "Choosing to grow from seed, we gain access to this whole new world of seemingly infinite possibilities that simply can't be sourced from wholesale providers," she continues. "These are all 'neither here nor there' colours that work wonderfully to create subtle shifts in shades."

Avenson was inspired to start growing her own flowers after she grew her wedding flowers as a complete amateur: her first experiments relied on information printed on seed packages. Until now her flower school – and her design aesthetic – has been somewhat of an anomaly in Belgium. "But a younger generation of flower growers and florists seems to be more in tune with this intentional, intuitive way of working," she says.

"It's like being the artist who makes his or her own paint," says floral designer Kitten Grayson, who has recently set up her own plot just below King Alfred's Tower near Bruton, Somerset, where she grew up. To have a grower's garden was a pipe dream that she had imagined would be five years in the making. But then the pandemic happened and she fast-tracked her long-term plan.

After working on a biodynamic farm in her 20s and collaborating with Fern Verrow's Jane Scotter on biodynamic flowers for Heckfield Place, Grayson was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“IT’S LIKE BEING THE ARTIST WHO MAKES HIS OR HER OWN PAINT”

determined to grow with the same principles. “The method of growing by the moon really sang to me – this idea of happier soil and happier plants,” she adds. Serendipitously, she found a plot where the artist owners – Quentin Seddon and his wife, Rowena, whose son Charlie runs the Knepp Estate in Sussex – had been working the land organically for decades with beds, polytunnels and services already in situ. Last September, she started preparing the soil with homemade compost and manure, and planned a calendar of flowers to fill the coming year, including a succession of spring bulbs, roses and shrubs as well as annuals. The flowers grown this way are, she says, “extraordinary – they are just worlds apart.”

Grayson is part of the burgeoning slow flowers movement. The membership of the UK-based Flowers From The Farm – which for 10 years has linked together artisan growers who produce flowers as sustainably as possible – has grown by 75 per cent over the past two years, and 65 per cent of the organisation’s membership also offers floristry services. Flora Starkey, whose clients include Alexander McQueen, Dior and Sotheby’s, now has her own growing patch at Westhill Farm amid 30 acres on the Dorset/Devon border near Lyme Regis. Sister duo Alex Nutting and Jess Lister of Aesme Studio Flowers are growing in Hampshire, and Florence Kennedy, of Petalon, last year relocated her business from London and began growing in Cornwall.

The provenance of flowers has become important in the same way that we think about the source of our food. Awareness has boomed thanks to successful lobbying on social media, as well as high-profile annual events such as British Flowers Week in mid-June, which promotes home-grown blooms that do not contribute to air miles and are not grown under intense farming methods that use fertilisers and pesticides.

Erin Benzakein, author of *Discovering Dahlias* and *The New York Times* bestseller *A Year in Flowers*, grows on Floret Farm in the Skagit Valley, an hour north of Seattle, in Washington State. She has witnessed a similar explosion in America – Floret itself has grown from two acres to 24. “Fifteen or 20 years ago, there were probably only a few dozen small-scale flower farms like Floret in the US. Today there are thousands,” says Benzakein, who this summer stars in a TV series about her flower farm on the Magnolia Network. “Consumers increasingly want to know how, where and who produced what it is they are buying.”

And that goes hand in hand with a growing appreciation for wilder, more naturalistic flowers. When Juliet Glaves first started growing flowers on her five-acre Shropshire farm 13 years ago, very few florists were interested in her blooms, preferring the pristine uniformity of imported, largely Dutch flowers. Now it’s the idiosyncrasies of locally grown plants – the wonky stems and lack of uniformity – that many floral designers seek. Glaves worked as a television director and producer before spotting, via a programme she was working on, the potential of British-grown flowers. Since then she has juggled her intense work as a grower with events and installations where her work always has an abundant, gathered-from-the-garden feel. She also takes on one-off commissions, such as her stint as florist on the set of Paul Thomas Anderson’s *Phantom Thread*. For her, there is endless inspiration in the growing fields. “It’s an intrinsic part of the design process – the curve of a stem, petals illuminated at sunset, the movement of flower beds in the wind – as well as being able to work with a bloom at every stage of its life cycle.”

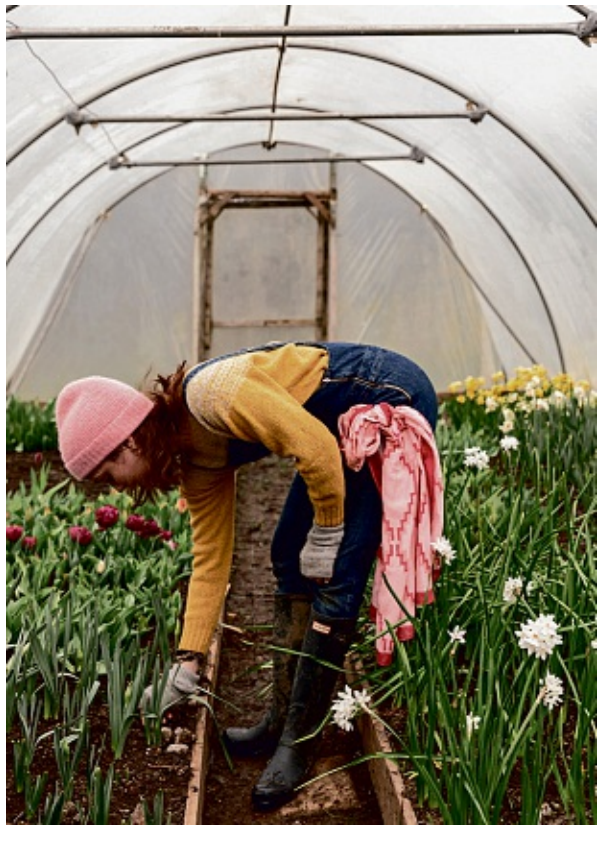
This is a collaborative endeavour. Grayson says that, despite developing her own set-up, she still wants to support other like-minded growers. The goal is to show customers what true seasonality means: “People are becoming mindful of sustainability and have started coming to us because of our ethos. That is really exciting.”

It’s a linked-up and international movement too – Erin Benzakein is currently hosting Chatsworth’s cut-flower grower Becky Crowley on a working sabbatical. In a similar vein, she has created a global map of like-minded, almost entirely female growers, available on the Floret website.

“This is most definitely a women-led movement,” says Benzakein who, after fielding a three-year waiting list for her sell-out workshops, has now created online courses for wannabe growers. “All the newest books on flowers are authored by women. And virtually all of the top floral design instructors are women. And everyone is eager to source the most coveted seasonal blooms.” ■ **HTSI**

fleuropean.com, floretflowers.com, julietglaves.com, kittengrayson.com, milliproust.com

Above: Erin Benzakein gathering dahlias at Floret Farm, just outside Seattle, and (near left) a selection in one of her polytunnels. Far left: flowers grown on Juliet Glaves’s farm in south Shropshire on sale at the Designers Guild store in Chelsea, London



Above: Harriette Tebbutt, managing director at Kitten Grayson Flowers, at The Cutting Garden in Bruton, Somerset

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS BENZAKEIN. EMMA LEWIS. NEIL ADAMS

A VISIBLE CONNECTION

OK, I know. We need to spend less time attached to our devices and more time listening to the wind, the sea, the birds and all that. But I can't ignore these Bluetooth-connected audio glasses from Austria because they are the first take on eyewear incorporating speakers and microphones in the spectacle arms that doesn't look like something worn by the geekiest male character in a 1960s science fiction TV puppet show.

Fauna Audio glasses are made for both men and women and look rather good. You can fit prescription lenses to them, tinted or clear, without invalidating the warranty, which is the issue with other brands. And they work really quite well for four hours of continuous audio and 20 hours' standby between charges.

Nothing is inserted into your ears, which means you're not isolated from the world. But the audio quality is modest at best. However, I think that's a positive because they're less immersive. You won't be tempted to drown yourself in music, but for phone calls, podcasts or listening to the radio while you're out and about, they're perfect. And you'll still hear the birds.

Fauna Audio Glasses, €249, wearfauna.com

FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

Three lockdowns down, and I bet you didn't quite get round to perfecting your guitar technique. Me neither. My sadly still-pristine Fender Telecaster has a thin layer of dust on it. My Mustang GT40 amp has mostly seen service these past 15 months as a foot rest (a very good one, too). My online Fender Play guitar lessons subscription has expired.

Such an opportunity wasted. If only this portable, personal Fender guitar amp had come out last year, I'd be the natural successor to Prince by now, without once bothering the neighbours.

The rechargeable Mustang Micro plugs neatly and directly into your guitar – no messy leads – and offers, just like a proper amp, a range of 12 different sounds and 12 effects into your wired headphones or earbuds – plus buttons to "lighten" or "darken", as Fender puts it, the overall sound. It has Bluetooth streaming too, so you can accompany recorded music – and there's no irritating latency. A splendid guitar accessory you might find your family loves as much as you will.

Fender Mustang Micro, £89.99, fender.com

DIAGNOSING IN THE DARK

If you suspect you suffer from sleep apnoea, it's quite a serious matter, for which you may need a mask to sleep properly and avoid health problems.

But for apnoea to be observed and diagnosed, you first have to be wired up like an astronaut and then perform the almost impossible feat under those circumstances of falling asleep. And it's not easy to get a test while hospitals are still tied up with more pressing matters.

Sunrise, from a Brussels startup headed by the son of one of Belgium's leading sleep doctors, simplifies the diagnosis. The device is a one-use sticky pad – perfectly comfortable on your chin – which measures your movements throughout the night with an accelerometer and a gyroscope.

By morning, the sensor will have uploaded all your sleep metrics to the Sunrise app and crunched them in the cloud to give an idea of whether you have apnoea. If it seems you do (I didn't), it will also connect you with a selection of sleep specialists to examine the data and advise you further.

Sunrise, from £89, uk.sunrise-sleep.com

ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ (5)

GADGETS

It was red and yellow and green...

The new iMac wears a coat of many colours

WORDS BY **JONATHAN MARGOLIS**

For more of Jonathan's reviews, visit ft.com/htsi

@thefuturecritic

The new 24in Apple iMacs look like something you'd find on the flight deck of a UFO – at least, one with an intergalactic interior designer onboard. In their seven delicious Fruit Gum colours (a welcome nod to the multi-hues of the original 1999 iMac) and with a ridiculously minimal profile, they are by a long chalk the most desirable desktop computers ever made.

It's not just their beauty. The performance is also stellar. Apple has used chips by Intel for a few years, and very good they were too. But now it has its own processor, the M1, currently installed in 24in iMacs, MacBook Air and selected 13in MacBook Pro models. It brings a speed and fluidity that makes a noticeable difference. Everything you open with an M1-equipped device snaps into action instantly. Also, if you have particularly haphazard web browsing habits, you can have several hundred tabs open simultaneously.

Thanks to the M1, along with better cameras and speakers, many everyday apps work perceptibly better, too. FaceTime on the new iMac, for instance, looks and sounds so crisp, vivid and "present" you might never want to leave home again. Which I say with heavy irony because bringing out the best desktop PC ever at the exact time we're all champing at the bit to travel again is not the most fortunate timing.

That said, we are being encouraged to regard the iMac, the iPad Pro and the iPhone 12 as an interconnected team. They share the squared-off design first seen in the 2010 iPhone 4 and again now found across the iMac/iPad/iPhone triumvirate. But they also work very much the same as one another. An iMac now looks and is used almost exactly as if it's the much bigger sister of an iPad Pro mounted on the "floating" Magic Keyboard stand Apple released a year ago. In this configuration, the iPad is now a portable near replica of the iMac. Genius. ■**HTSI**

DETAILS

New 24in iMac from £1,249, apple.com

EATING

Fry harder

It started with an experiment in how to cook the perfect chip. It became an obsession. *Ajesh Patalay* shares his adventures in hot oil

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALEXANDER COGGIN**

Some pieces of equipment you acquire for your kitchen, try once and never use again. I'm thinking here of the fish kettle I bought on a whim some years ago in order to make Cantonese-style steamed fish. Now it languishes at the back of a cupboard gathering dust. Other pieces of equipment you bring into your kitchen and they change the way you cook. They change you. They open up possibilities, spark ideas. Now you have them, you realise there is no going back. You are a different person. You are a person, in my case, who loves to deep-fat fry.

A few issues ago, I wrote a piece about making chips at home. For that column, I borrowed a deep-fat fryer from Tefal, its Oleoclean Pro model, which I liked because it filters the oil between sessions for easy reuse. Chips, as I discovered, don't shed that much during frying, so the same oil was good (with some topping up) for several fries. I made a lot of chips. But the chips were just the gateway.

I moved on to vegetable tempura: baby courgettes, broccoli, aubergine, mushrooms. After a few uneven attempts where the batter failed to stick (possibly because the recipe I was using didn't include egg), I consulted Taiji Maruyama, executive chef of Taka Marylebone (one of last autumn's most exciting new restaurants) and the soon-to-open Maru in Shepherd's Market, London, who shared his batter recipe: 100g strong flour, 15g potato starch, 135g cold water, 17g cold sparkling water, 1 egg. The CO2 in the fizzy water, he explained, helps speed up the deep frying and expel water from whatever you're frying, so you get a crisper batter. Also, to minimise gluten formation and guarantee a lighter crust, he suggested using ice-cold water, chilling the flour in the fridge and mixing the batter as little as possible. I ended up with something much more tempura-like, this time using prawns. And, really, is there any better kind of tempura? Encased in hot, crispy batter, the prawns had a plump, springy texture and sweet juiciness that I loved. I was popping them like M&Ms. I also deep-fried some coriander, following a tip I'd got from countless chefs about using up leftover herbs. The frying deepened the coriander's already pungent flavour, turning its feathery leaves into intense, crunchy wisps.

KEEN TO UP THE ANTE, I turned next to perhaps the most prized food in the frying pantheon: fried chicken. First, I wanted some pointers from Andrew D'Ambrosi, the American-born chef behind D'Ambrosi Fine Foods in Stow-on-the-Wold. His southern fried chicken has garnered such a cult following that he's planning to open a fried chicken boutique in west London this summer. His top tip was about how to dredge the buttermilk-marinaded chicken before frying: "First, you want lots of flour so it remains dry and doesn't clump. Second, when you drop the chicken into the flour, give it a little squeeze so it exudes some of its marinade. That liquid will bond with the flour and create these delicious crispy ripples on your fried chicken."

I tried a few recipes. Nigella's (from *Cook, Eat, Repeat*) called for a marinade of buttermilk, maple syrup, Dijon mustard, hot-smoked paprika, lemon juice and garlic, before dredging the chicken in paprika-spiked flour. The end result was fine but tame for my tastes, though hers is meant as part of a fried chicken sandwich where pickles, red onion and garlic mayonnaise add oomph. James Martin's buttermilk chicken (from his website), which I prefer, requires an arsenal of dried spices to season the flour, including oregano, thyme, nutmeg, celery salt, garlic salt and onion salt. The flour was so headily scented I couldn't stop myself from inhaling deep pungent breaths of it like aromatherapy. Once deep-fried, the strong flavour was tempered but still pleasingly zingy.

But my craving wasn't satisfied. I got my taste for fried chicken early, eating KFC, which means I know what I like (a richly flavoured, almost crumbly breading) while accepting there are probably "better" versions. So when the internet brought me to "Grace's Perfect Blend", a fried chicken mix from County Limerick based on Colonel Sanders' original recipe, I was keen to try it. According to its instructions, there was no need to marinate the chicken first. I coated each drumstick in milk and egg, dredged it in the pepper-flecked powder and lowered it into the hot oil. Fifteen minutes later, I had the kind of strongly seasoned, crisp-crumbed fried chicken I'd been after. I binge-ate some with brown sauce, indulging my very worst teenage proclivities.

But why judge? D'Ambrosi serves his fried chicken with a homemade BBQ sauce based on the fast-food versions he grew up dunking his nuggets into. My point is, we like what we like. Deep-fried foods are implicitly a treat, an indulgence. If we're going to have them, we might as well have them just the way we want them. Guilt-free.

Now, I'm thinking about doughnuts. ■**HTSI**

@ajesh34

TEFAL OLEOCLEAN PRO DEEP-FAT FRYER, £130

Opposite and this page: the author deep-fries chicken drumsticks dredged in Grace's Perfect Blend seasoned flour from County Limerick, based on Colonel Sanders' original recipe

I BINGE-ATE THE STRONGLY SEASONED, CRISP-CRUMBED FRIED CHICKEN WITH BROWN SAUCE

ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ (5)

DRINKING

A bitter what you fancy

Spike your cocktails with a dash of botanical magic. By *Alice Lascelles*

A spritz, a dash, a drop – it's amazing what a difference bitters can make to a drink. They are the original quick fix, capable of bringing a whole new accent to cocktails, tonic, soda. Even a mug of hot water can be improved by a piquant hit of bitters. Barely a day goes by that I don't add them to something.

Angostura Bitters are a mainstay around the world – but they are by no means the only riff on the formula. Sticklers for tradition often prefer Dr Adam Elmegirab's Boker's Bitters (**9**), a reformulation of a widely used 19th-century brand. Intensely woody and spicy, with notes of eucalyptus, cardamom and orange peel, they're strictly for cocktails of the old school.

Peychaud's Bitters (**2**) are another essential in any well-equipped bar. Born in an apothecary in the French Quarter of New Orleans around 1830, these bitters are the signature ingredient of the Sazerac whisky cocktail with their unique minty/caraway profile.

Bitters have their roots in medicinal elixirs – brands like Peychaud's and Angostura started life as health tonics that were then mixed with booze to sweeten the pill. In line with that tradition, the St James's pharmacist DR Harris & Co recently teamed up with Bob's Bitters to create a new cocktail-friendly formulation of its famous "Pick-me-Up" – a botanical restorative that was favoured by Oscar Wilde. The new bitters layer up the original notes of gentian, clove and cardamom with warming ginger, liquorice, honey and a hint of bergamot. Try a few dashes in a Manhattan, or the morning after with soda, ice and a double measure of remorse (from £6.50, drharris.co.uk).

I can't make any medical claims for Fee's paper-wrapped Black Walnut Bitters (**7**), but they're a revelation in an Old Fashioned – nutty, chocolatey, with a backbone of bitter spice. Angostura's new Cocoa Bitters (**3**) are also excellent for giving whisky and rum drinks more depth.

I collect bitters like some people collect shoes – if I could only have one, though, it would be a bottle of orange bitters. They have the spice of aromatic bitters, but with a slightly sunnier disposition that works well with white spirits as well as brown. Up until Prohibition, martinis were made with a dash of orange bitters as a matter of course. Three varieties I have on heavy rotation are Bitter Truth Orange Bitters (juicy and zesty; £14.75, thewhiskyexchange.com), Angostura Orange Bitters (spicier; £7.95, thewhiskyexchange.com) and Regans' Orange Bitters (**8**, bittersweet in a more Campari-like way).

For a pithier citric bite try Bittermens Hopped Grapefruit Bitters (**5**) – a couple of dashes gives a Margarita or a Daiquiri real edge. Or freshen up your tonic with an anise-y blast of Bitter Bastards Fennel Bitters (**10**).

If you don't like the astringent spice notes of traditional bitters, try one of the burgeoning number of cocktail sprays. The natural essences from Tuscany's Santa Bianca (£31.95, thewhiskyexchange.com) are so good I'm not sure whether to spritz them on myself or on my drink – flavours include grapefruit, cedarwood, jasmine and damask rose. Linden Leaf also does an excellent quintet of Cocktail Elements sprays (**4**) including lime and yuzu.

This summer, I'll be droppering The Japanese Bitters' Shiso Bitters (**1**) into lemonade and making G&Ts scented with Meadowsweet Tincture from the Isle of Harris (**6**). A tonic for body and soul. ■**HTSI**

@alicelascelles

1. THE JAPANESE BITTERS Shiso Bitters, £29.95, masterofmalt.com. **2.** PEYCHAUD'S Bitters, £9.50, gerrys.uk.com. **3.** ANGOSTURA Cocoa Bitters, £8.95, thewhiskyexchange.com. **4.** LINDEN LEAF Cocktail Elements sprays, £27 for three. **5.** BITTERMENS Hopped Grapefruit Bitters, £13.45, masterofmalt.com. **6.** ISLE OF HARRIS Meadowsweet Tincture, £20, harrisdistillery.com. **7.** FEE BROTHERS Black Walnut Bitters, £12.98, masterofmalt.com. **8.** REGANS' Orange Bitters, £9.95, thewhiskyexchange.com. **9.** DR ADAM ELMEGIRAB'S Boker's Bitters, £10.67, masterofmalt.com. **10.** BITTER BASTARDS Fennel Bitters, £14.95, masterofmalt.com

HOW I SPEND IT

JO NESBØ ON GUITARS

ILLUSTRATION BY **EMILIE SETO**

Even though I've been lead singer and guitarist in the band Di Derre for 30 years, I am a terrible guitar player. Even the guys in the band will agree with that. When I was growing up my younger brother was in a band, as were most of my friends, and I'd write the lyrics for them. But it wasn't until I was in the army, aged 20, that I picked up the guitar. The guy who lived next door to me had a 12-string Yamaha, which is definitely not the kind of guitar you should learn to play on. I had to start composing my own songs to try and figure out easier chord changes. We were in a very northern part of Norway where there's no sun during winter. There wasn't much that you could do, so I would just sit in my room in total darkness and write songs – sad songs, of course.

After that, I bought my own guitar. It was a Watson, which is a copy of the Gibson Jumbo – the guitar that Elvis used. It ended up with a friend of mine. He sometimes calls me and says, "Do you want your guitar back?" I can hear in his voice that he's hoping I will say no. I do.

That Watson guitar was what made me join a band. At first I only played the guitar, and then I started singing. When I was finished studying, I went back to Oslo and started playing with my brother. We formed a band with friends from Molde, our hometown. It was just something we did for fun, but people caught on and we were offered a record deal. That was the start of my career as a songwriter. The novel writing came later.

My philosophy in life is this: don't own things you don't use. I've had a lot of guitars pass through my hands. My first electric guitar was a Squier. Then I bought a Fender Telecaster. I also had another Fender which I gave away to my daughter's boyfriend – he just had to promise that he would learn to play. Hopefully he has. But my first important guitar was a Takamine EF341. It's sort of a workhorse guitar. I think Bruce Springsteen has one; he plays a lot of Takamine guitars. I gave that one to my drummer.

In 1998, I went to Sydney, Australia, where I wrote my first novel. I got a bit lonesome, so I went to a music store. I had to choose between a Takamine Santa Fe and a Martin. When I was strumming the Takamine, I saw a guy stop on his way out. I could tell that he really liked the sound of it, so I said, "OK, I'll take the Takamine!" That was a case of mimetic desire – if somebody likes something, you will like it too. The Takamine has been with me ever since, and most of the songs I wrote after that were composed on it. It has a very small rosewood body, so it's perfect for travelling around with. When you're writing songs, you want to have your guitar at a low volume. The Santa Fe is good for that.

> YOU CAN SIT THERE AND WRITE THE GREATEST SONG OF YOUR LIFE IN 10 MINUTES

The opposite is a Taylor 810ce. If the Takamine Santa Fe is a reliable, modest friend, then the Taylor 810ce is a prima donna. It's really loud and when you strum it, it fills the whole spectrum of frequencies. It sounds like an organ. And like many prima donnas, it can be unpredictable. The mic system on mine has let me down at a couple of very important points during concerts. I just keep it at home and look at it from time to time. If I want to have a full, rich sound, I'll strum it. I now use a Larrivée onstage and I'm really happy with it.

With a guitar, you can quickly learn to play something that sounds like music. That was important for me, that I could come up with stories and make simple songs. I'm not the kind of musician who wants to learn songs by other artists. I don't have the patience for that. I'm more about telling my own stories through music. And for that, the guitar is perfect. For instance, we have a song called "90-Meters Bakken", or "The 90-Metre Hill". It's based on a true story from my hometown about ski jumping, which is of course very big in Norway. A boy was jumping in late December when the floodlights cut out. We could hear him flying through the air in total darkness. The song describes those seven seconds – how it must have felt for him. I chose chords that are high up on the neck and a recognisable riff. Whenever I go on stage and start that song, people start yelling as soon as they hear the first chord. It's very gratifying.

When you write a novel, you plan ahead. You spend a week wondering if there's a story there, then you write a synopsis. It can take at least a year, maybe two years. With the guitar, you know that you can sit there and write the greatest song of your life in 10 minutes. In fact, all the band's biggest hits were written in 20 minutes or less. You know there's a song out there, you just need to find it, to catch it. There are some very glorious moments when you're writing a song. It's bliss. ■**HTSI**

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