

FINANCIAL TIMES

# HOW TO SPEAK IT

10 JULY  
2021

## COOL AS ICE

We've all taken a SHINE  
to PHOEBE DYNEVOR





**LOUIS VUITTON**

High Jewellery

Bravery Collection, Le Mythe Necklace.  
White gold, sapphires, emerald and diamonds.





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"LET TIME FLY. YOU MIGHT GET TO AN EXCEPTIONAL PLACE."

YIQING YIN,  
HAUTE COUTURE CREATOR, WEARS THE  
VACHERON CONSTANTIN ÉGÉRIE.

  
**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**  
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# HOW TO SPEND IT

10 JULY 2021



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ON THE COVER:  
Photography by  
THOMAS LOHR  
Styling by  
ISABELLE KOUNTOURE

Phoebe Dynevor wears  
LOUIS VUITTON cotton/  
viscose coat, €4,800, and  
white-gold and diamond  
La Star du Nord necklace  
and earrings, both POA and  
from the Bravery collection

Below left: SAINT  
LAURENT BY  
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boots, £1,940,  
and metal,  
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The race is on to create the first supersonic passenger jet since Concorde. *Ollie Williams* checks in

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



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# OPENING SHOT



Left: Bellefonte Area High School, Pennsylvania, 1989

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

The febrile complexities of physical intimacy are explored in a new book of Ken Graves and Eva Lipman's photographs

For husband and wife Ken Graves and Eva Lipman, marriage was more than an institution: it was a decades-long creative partnership that resulted in multiple exhibitions before Graves's death in 2016. One of two new publications, *Restraint and Desire* brings together a fresh edit of their work and adds unseen images to explore social interactions in public and private across the US: from the intimacy of a kiss stolen at a party to the many hands helping a sailor with his jacket.

These passing moments of closeness echo the ups and downs of the couple's own relationship. "Our work reflected back to us, like a mirror, the intensities and power dynamics of our shared life together," says Eva.

Many of the images seem almost alien after the rigours of the past year: gatherings in tight spaces, warm embraces, bodies packed together within a sauna – all compressed within the pair's narrow, monochrome shots.

But as the title implies, there is another side to the collection that illustrates the tensions and reticence that can go hand in hand with human interaction. In these photographs, the reluctant body language and lingering looks of subjects both young and old – reminders of the complexities of physical contact – are all the more noticeable after a year apart. **CHRIS ALLNUTT**  
*Restraint and Desire* is published by TBW Books at \$50

## CONTRIBUTORS



AMANDA KHO

The Hong Kong-based photographer works across lifestyle, portraiture and still life, all of which came into play when she was shooting this week's Aesthete, gallerist Arthur de Villepin: "What I appreciated the most about photographing Arthur was his energy. I felt this was someone who knew how to enjoy life. I sensed it in his space – family portraits, a bathroom with a carpet, a palm tree – there was a level of openness that was refreshing."



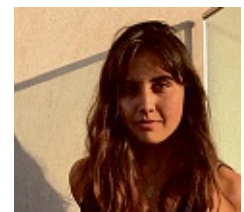
THOMAS LOHR

The photographer enjoys exploring different genres, from fashion to landscapes, and has published four books, including *View Point* (2020) in collaboration with artist Olu Odukoya, which documents the street outside his Paris flat in lockdown. For this week's issue he shot *Bridgerton* star Phoebe Dynevor in Louis Vuitton's new high-jewellery collection, Bravery: "I really enjoyed working with Phoebe. She is sweet, funny and totally down-to-earth."



GILLES KHOURY

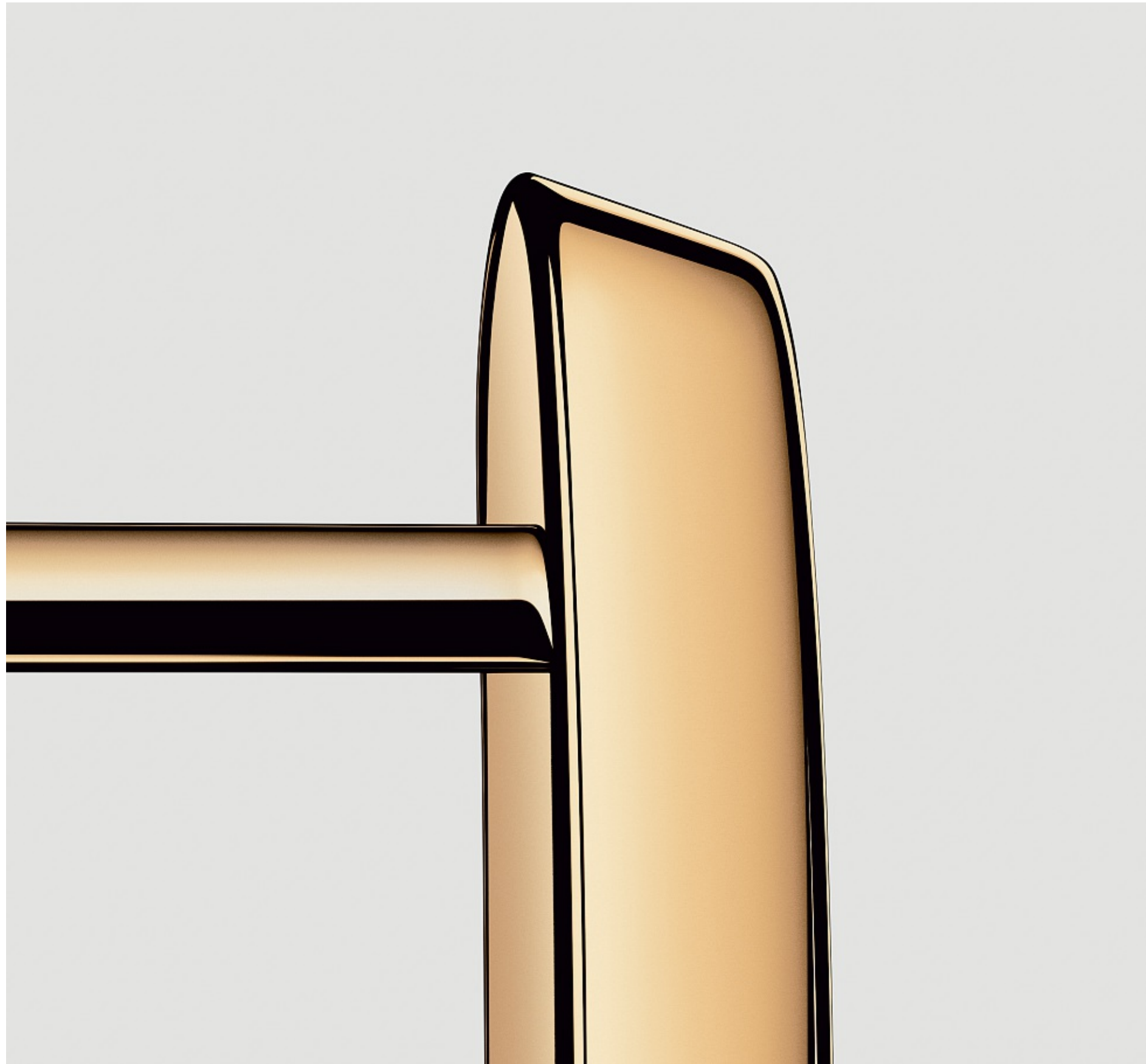
Living between Beirut and Paris, the writer tackles Lebanese culture and society in his column for *L'Orient-Le Jour* and is working on a new book about Beirut with photographer Oliver Hadlee Pearch. For us, he looks at designers reviving the city's creative community. "It was important for me to work on the piece because I believe at a time of such collapse, the people – and the creatives – are the invisible threads that keep the country together."



AYLIN BAYHAN

Our fashion coordinator studied architecture, but realised her passion lay in visual storytelling soon after graduating. In this issue she styles pre-fall accessories with photographer Kenny Whittle. "Kenny was inspired to shoot the pieces in the doorways he noted during his walks through Knightsbridge. The idea made us dream of what these doorways would look like once people start coming out with their chic post-lockdown purchases."





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## EDITOR'S LETTER

# HTSI

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ORIGINATION BY Dexter Premedia

**I**s it telling that, having been at *How To Spend It* for nearly two years now, I find myself preoccupied by jewels? The rocks illuminated by the actress Phoebe Dynevor as part of Louis Vuitton's new high-jewellery range by Francesca Amfitheatrof are unimaginably spectacular ("Diamond of the Season", page 36). Look closely at the cover image and you'll see that the 10.07-carat centrepiece of the Star du Nord necklace adorning the *Bridgerton* star's neck is in the quatrefoil star cut patented by the brand. Featuring between 61 and 77 facets, the cut is described by Amfitheatrof as a "holy grail" for jewellers, firstly because it makes a case for the house's extraordinary expertise, but also because it allows clients to identify a stone's provenance at a glance.

Finding the technical skill that makes this possible has been but one aspect of Amfitheatrof's focus since joining Louis Vuitton. The other is pure showmanship. In the world of high jewellery, Louis Vuitton is still something of a rookie, and so to establish the brand's status she and Michael Burke, the CEO, are acquiring the biggest and most expensive stones. These include the baseball-sized Sewelo diamond, a 1,758-carat whopper reported to be the second-largest rough diamond ever mined. It also includes myriad other diamonds and coloured gemstones, some of which have been used here.

The house's jewellery ambitions are unvaulted. In recent interviews, Burke has readily identified jewellery as "one of the highest-growth categories we have". This latest collection, Bravery, made up of 90 pieces, has been designed to honour the 200th anniversary of Louis Vuitton's birth. Like the brand's founder, and all its métiers, it encapsulates Vuitton's legendary chutzpah as well as his unapologetic vision to be among the best.

In stark contrast to the capabilities of Vuitton, the designers of Beirut have this year faced an extraordinary



STELLA  
McCARTNEY  
RAINFOREST  
TSHIRT, £325  
(PAGE 28)



### LUXURY MAY NOT BE A NECESSITY, BUT IT IS A SOURCE OF OPTIMISM

challenge simply to stay afloat. A year after the port explosion that devastated much of the city's creative centre and ateliers, and amid financial crises, writer Gilles Khoury follows the jewellers, designers and craftspeople who have made it their mission to stay open in the city, keep their businesses operational and offer beauty in a landscape where, it could be argued, there is little to be found ("Our future is in Beirut", page 52). As we have seen in other countries, creative endeavours such as luxury or fashion are often rendered low-priority when it comes to the broader question of urgent financial aid. These designers echo a universal message when they claim that while luxury may not be a first necessity it is still an invaluable source of optimism as well as a vital part in any economic wheel.

Some may delight in material pleasures. Others derive enjoyment from pushing their bodies to the limits by cycling over mountain passes, running up sheer cliff faces

and swimming in freezing streams. In "River Deep, Mountain High" (page 48), Fergus Scholes, adrenaline junkie, adventurer and – arguably – masochist, admits himself to an exhausting four-day itinerary in the Dolomites designed to shake him to the core. Courtesy of the Rosa Alpina Hotel & Spa, he embarks on a punishing schedule of Ironmanish endeavour, largely in the interests of survival, from what I can discern. Such extreme sportsmanship will always seem anathema to someone like myself who would prefer to traverse the Dolomites at something like a gentle stroll. But as an experience in how to spend it... like a maniac, this Alpine "holiday" makes for an awe-inspiring read. ■HTSI

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Left: devastation in Beirut (page 52). Below: Phoebe Dynevor in Louis Vuitton fine jewellery (page 36). Bottom: Fergus Scholes in the Dolomites (page 48)





The logo for London Art Week, featuring the letters 'LA' stacked above 'W' in a stylized, white, outlined font. To the right of this, the words 'LONDON ART WEEK' are written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.

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The word 'SUMMER' is written in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters, centered horizontally across the middle of the poster.

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A small icon of a classical building with a pediment.

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The text 'HUNTERS' above 'LAW' with a horizontal line through the 'A' in 'LAW'.

HUNTERS  
LAW

Images courtesy of London Art Week exhibitors Galerie Canezzo (left) and Kallos Gallery (right)





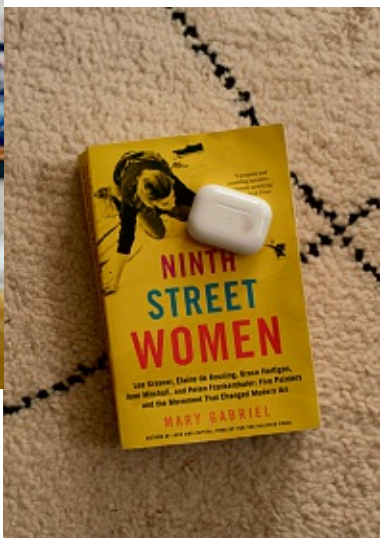
# Arthur de Villepin

The Hong Kong-based gallerist and curator gifts guitars, dreams of Ischia – and goes running with Van Gogh

INTERVIEW BY ROSANNA DODDS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMANDA KHO



Above: Arthur de Villepin at home in Hong Kong. Left: *Sans Titre*, 1949, by the Chinese-French artist Zao Wou-Ki. Below: his favourite recent reads include Mary Gabriel's *Ninth Street Women*



by English artists either from Cornwall or who made their home there – Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Terry Frost. Wallis was self-taught and his style is very simplistic. I love the way he painted the sea. We always talk about modern art emerging from Paris, but so many artists moved from London and gathered in Cornwall during the war. Their stories are amazing.

**THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN RECENTLY** is a 1967 Fender Jaguar electric guitar to my sister, Marie. She's an artist, but before that she was in rock bands. I've always been interested in how she relates her paintings to music. She already has a few guitars but it's never enough.

**AND THE BEST GIFT I'VE RECEIVED RECENTLY** is a painting by Korean artist Myonghi Kang, who I've known for more than 10 years and is the subject of our latest exhibition at Villepin, the gallery I co-founded with my father, Dominique. She gave me a painting called *Sky*, which is about how she looks at nature. She always paints in the wild, secluded from everyone.

**THE BEST BOOK I'VE READ IN THE PAST YEAR** is *Ninth Street Women* by Mary Gabriel. It's about the New York art scene in the 1940s and '50s from the perspective of five female artists: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell and Helen Frankenthaler. I found it so interesting to revisit history through their lens, and you realise there was a lot happening in the shadows of other successful artists from that period such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

**THE PLACE I CAN'T WAIT TO GO BACK TO** is Sant'Angelo on the south coast of the island of Ischia, off Naples. I usually go every summer. The food is amazing, and the few restaurants there will always remember you

**MY PERSONAL STYLE SIGNIFIER** depends on where I am. My background is multicultural – I was born in the US, raised in India and studied in the UK. What I love about style is how it changes according to different cities. When I go to New York, for instance, I might wear a T-shirt and boots – maybe even a hat. I usually shop at vintage stores when I'm there; my favourites are What Goes Around Comes Around and Stock Vintage, which focuses on American menswear from the 1930s to the 1960s. In Hong Kong, I dress more smartly – I might wear a Tom Ford suit paired with Vans. For downtime, I like classic activewear pieces by Acne Studios.

**THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED** was a small photo by Brassai. He is famous for capturing 1920s Paris by night and much of his work depicts lovers or people in bars, but this image is of a dog's head drawn on a napkin. The drawing was a gift from Picasso to Dora Maar, who had lost her beloved dog. Every time they went to a restaurant, Picasso would draw her dog on a napkin to cheer her up. I love that story, and I love that Brassai recorded one of these moments with this photo.

**AND ON MY WISHLIST** is a small painting by Alfred Wallis. I've always been fascinated





GIFTS FROM ARTISTS ARE THE THINGS YOU SHOULD CHERISH THE MOST

chose a pair that I usually wear during the winter in Paris. Travelling is really on my mind at the moment. £12.50, [mrporter.com](#)

**AN OBJECT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH** is a small artwork on paper by the Chinese-French artist Zao Wou-Ki, which he gave me when I was 18. I put it in *Friendship & Reconciliation*, my first exhibition in Hong Kong. A few people asked me how much it was, but I'd never sell it. Gifts from artists are things that you should cherish the most.

**THE GROOMING STAPLE I'M NEVER WITHOUT** is Scent One: Hinoki by Monocle and Comme des Garçons, which is inspired by hinoki soaking tubs at the Tawaraya, Kyoto's best ryokan. It's fresh, woody and full of character. £80 for 50ml, [monocle.com](#)

**MY WELLBEING GURUS** are my friends, who I join up with most Sundays for a big run along the catchwater in Lantau, which is surrounded by nature. Otherwise I run with my podcasts. Sometimes I come back and say, "I've just had a run with Van Gogh." It makes me feel I'm learning at the same time, and pushes me to keep a steady pace.

**IF I DIDN'T LIVE IN HONG KONG, THE CITY I WOULD LIVE IN** is Rome. I'm crazy for Rome. For me, it's all about the food. There are two main restaurants I love there: Trattoria al Moro, a family restaurant near the Trevi Fountain, and Pizzeria da Baffetto, which I think serves the best pizza in the city.

**MY FAVOURITE WEBSITES** are mostly related to my work. I use Artprice to check on the market, ARTnews for updates and, of course, Christie's and Sotheby's. I also love a site called [history.com](#) for fascinating takes on the subject, such as a recent piece about Josephine Baker, the Jazz Age entertainer employed by the French Resistance to collect information on Nazi Germany.

**AN INDULGENCE I WOULD NEVER FORGO** is wine. The thing I like most is the people behind the labels. When I first arrived in Hong Kong, I started a wine company called Pont des Arts with a friend of mine. Sometimes the winemakers I work with run châteaux that are worth a fortune, but they're so down-to-earth because they're dependent on the wine, which is dependent on nature. My current favourites are Pomerol 2016 from Château La Conseillante and Abbaye de Morgeot 2014, which was made in collaboration with Etienne de Montille in Chassagne-Montrachet. [pontdesarts-wine.com](#)

**IF I WEREN'T DOING WHAT I DO**, I'd be a diplomat, which is what my father started off doing. I studied international relations and politics at the University of Bath, and I love the idea of understanding different cultures and bringing people together. ■HTSI

when you return each year. You feel isolated from the whole world – I love it.

**AND THE BEST SOUVENIR I'VE BROUGHT HOME** is Harley, my dog. I got him from a shelter on Hong Kong Island. I only went there to look, but I couldn't stop thinking about him on my way back to Lantau, where I live. He's changed my life. There's no resentment with dogs – they'll always be there for you.

**MY STYLE ICON** is the late French fashion designer Emanuel Ungaro, who was a family friend. More than anything, I admired his attitude and the way he curated his life. Naturally, he was elegant, but it was more about how he wanted to live. And that is what I would consider style.

**IN MY FRIDGE YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND** lemons to have in hot water every morning, Dijon mustard and then pecorino, pancetta and tomatoes – the ingredients for my favourite dish, pasta all'amatriciana. I like my food spicy, so I'll usually have a bottle of Tabasco hanging around as well.

**THE LAST MUSIC I DOWNLOADED** was "Zombie" by Fela Kuti, the Nigerian Afrobeat artist. I love that he was so socially engaged – he used his music as a weapon. I want to dance every time I hear his songs.

**THE GADGET I COULDN'T DO WITHOUT** is a pair of Apple AirPods Pro. Hong Kong is like New York – there's noise everywhere, all day. These allow me to shut down and find silence in an instant. And, of course, I also use them to listen to music. £249, [apple.com](#)

**THE LAST ITEM OF CLOTHING I ADDED TO MY WARDROBE** was a warm pair of socks by John Smedley, from Mr Porter. This might sound ridiculous at this time of year, but I



Right: de Villepin with another work of art by Zao Wou-Ki. Below: the gadget he can't do without – Apple AirPods Pro



TABASCO – ONE OF HIS FRIDGE STAPLES



ON THE TERRACE OF HIS LANTAU HOME



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# THE FIX



PHOTOGRAPHS: HEROLDIAN ART CONCEPTS; ILLUSTRATION: WILLIAM LUZ

INTERIORS

## ME, MY SHELF AND I

Are you a decorative peacock? *Aimee Farrell* looks at how social media has captured an obsession with the stylish home

Above: a "still life" corner curated by Katharina Herold, art consultant and stylist



For so long, fashion has been the main way we communicate taste," says Austin Moro, product designer and co-founder (with Eliza Dabron) of the fragrance brand Moro Dabron. "But now that everyone has been spending so much more time at home, the conversation has shifted. It has become more about conveying your personality through your interior aesthetic." At its most intimate, this domestic self-expression is being played out on a small scale on shelves, tables and mantelpieces through decorative accessories and ornaments that are as thoughtfully arranged as any gallery space.

While these personal tableaux of figurines and found objects might once have been seen only by house guests, they're now shared for a mass audience with an appetite for interior inspiration. Well-executed compositions are saved, studied and emulated to the extent that, arguably, these miniature *mise-en-scènes* have evolved into their own art form – a kind of social media still-life. "Everyone is putting so much more thought into creating curated corners in their homes," agrees Eliza Dabron. "There was a time when people would just take a quick, natural snap of a shelf at home, but now everything is so considered."





Above: Egyptian objects in the London apartment of antiques dealer Robert Kime. Below: shelves arranged by the designer Bridie Hall



The duo apply the same approach to visualising their products using @moro\_dabron as their moodboard. Here, their candles, which come in unglazed boat-necked ceramic vessels – referencing the late and legendary florist Constance Spry’s highly collectable designs for the Fulham Pottery – are thoughtfully presented alongside 18th-century tapestries and antique vases. Everything is executed with the spare, pure spirit of the still-life artist. “We try to capture this static moment of perfection,” says Moro of the imagery, which draws on Vermeer and the British painter William Nicholson. “It motivates people to want to recreate it in their own homes.” Their Spry-style potteries have ignited a flurry of posts from florists and decorators doing just that – particularly as the original vessels now sell for thousands of pounds at auction.

Over the past year, demand for diminutive decor and home accessories has increased, notably giving rise to a new breed of Insta-seller catering to a penchant for vintage and antique objects. “Instead of spending money on going out to supper, people have been buying jugs,” says Charlie Porter of Tat London (@Tat.london), where, she says, there has been a surge in purchases of small, fun but otherwise impractical knick-knacks. “Getting that piece of oddity for your home is a real tick,” she adds. “There’s this cultural oneupmanship when it comes to what you’re buying and what pieces you’ve found.”

The designer Bridie Hall sees this proliferation of decorative peacocking as

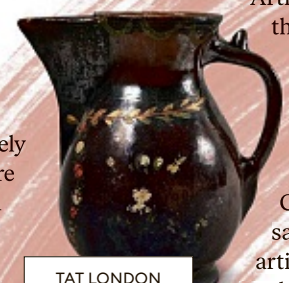
**“I TRY TO THINK ABOUT MY HOME AS A SERIES OF STILL LIVES”**

an attempt to reclaim dominion over our lives in a somewhat chaotic world. “It’s about taking control of your environment,” she says. “People are finally getting around to buying the piece they’ve wanted for ages but couldn’t justify. It gives you that shot of energy.” Together with the architectural designer and interior decorator Ben Pentreath, Hall is the co-owner of the beloved Bloomsbury store Pentreath & Hall, a cornucopia of decorative eye candy. “Sales have been absolutely mad,” says Hall, noting that more unusual objects and curios such as the vivid renderings of fruits, vegetables and conkers from Penkridge Ceramics, and quirky



Above: a window at Christie’s styled by Katharina Herold. Right: objects on a mantelpiece at François Halard’s Arles home

Staffordshire dogs, once ignored, are now swiftly selling out. “There’s been a very noticeable shift towards whimsy,” she says. The impulse to share these finds with followers appears irresistible, but despite the new technology it is not a novel concept. “Artists have always surrounded themselves with objects that creatively spur them on. Think of all the Dutch still-life painters and the way that has filtered down through the years to places such as Charleston or Kettle’s Yard,” says Hall. “Those midcentury artists lived beautifully while they worked, and then captured it



TAT LONDON 19TH-CENTURY GLAZED JUG, £77

PHOTOGRAPHS: BRETT WOOD FOR CABANA; VASE, SPINE, DISC: JUDIANA MACLENNAN; KATY BEVERIDGE; CANDLE: TOMLINSON; ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUZ



through paintings or photographs. Even the Grand Tour entailed aristocrats lugging stuff back from around the world to display in their homes as a way of showing off their knowledge, experience and aesthetic sensibilities.”

Swanking aside, Hall finds the act of creating the perfect vignette as creatively satisfying as making the obelisks, intaglio cases and alphabet pots for which she is known. “I love the way you can control how the eye moves around the room,” she says of the visual journey evoked in the store – and her own nearby home – by shifting around her collections of Victorian shells or replica Pantheon plaster reliefs. “Everything is chosen with the same eye, which creates a natural cohesion. You just play around until you find a pleasing little arrangement. For me, it’s a form of escapism that deeply connects you to the past.”

**THIS SENSE OF HISTORY** is key to creating an assemblage. Take the Arles home of the renowned interiors photographer François Halard. Testament to a life well spent, Halard’s mantelpiece displays everything from Japanese vases and classical sculpture to Cy Twombly artworks. This ever-evolving array of objects is informed by 40 years spent training his visual eye while photographing the homes of everyone from Yves Saint Laurent to Antony Gormley. It was only last year, during lockdown, that he turned his camera on his own interior, sharing vignettes from his 18th-century *hôtel particulier* on social media. These posts were an addictive daily dose of design that evolved into an exhibition of Polaroids that went on show at Avignon’s Lambert museum and formed a Libraryman book entitled *56 Days In Arles*. Each is masterfully composed, and there’s a synchronicity between Halard’s Polaroids and his original Insta posts. “My favourite format has always been the square,” he says. “It creates a more abstract moment – both share the same instantaneity.”

There’s much to be gleaned from Halard when it comes to the art of display. “When I look at the house I try to think about it as a series of still lifes,” he says. “So that everywhere you look, you find these moments of interest, not just for the pictures, but for my own eye.” The process



FRANCES PALMER CELADON VASE, £415, AT PENTREATH & HALL

**“SOMEONE COULD WRITE A HISTORY OF ME THROUGH OBJECTS”**

of recording his home has, for Halard, been utterly unique. “I’ve been photographing these scenes in other people’s homes my entire life,” he says. “But being a witness to my own collection is very personal. It’s a kind of bibliography of all the things I love.” It’s a sentiment that’s also shared by the interior decorator and antiques dealer Robert Kime. “Someone could write a history of me through objects,” says the lifelong collector, who began dealing at a young age. The art of arranging his unique finds, for Kime, is utterly instinctive. “If I put something very expensive next to something modest it helps both of them,” he says. “Everything has its own identity that you don’t get to uncover until you put it with something else.” More than a question of taste, it’s about revealing what an object symbolises that matters most to him. This is evident in his London apartment, which Kime put together in just three days – although it immediately looked as though it had been there 20 years – and hasn’t touched since. “Once something has a place, it has a place,” he says.

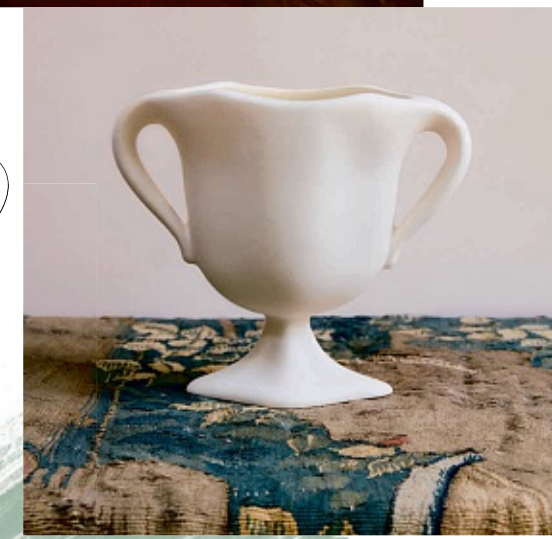
The art consultant and stylist Katharina Herold takes a much more transitory approach with the assemblages she conjures in her historic Hamburg apartment. Shared with her followers under the moniker @Heroldian\_Journal, they’re a way to communicate with a clientele who charge her with filling their homes with nuanced art and antique finds. “Creating these vignettes has become a real tool in my work. It’s a way for clients to imagine these things in their own spaces,” says Herold, who also works alongside her father, Rainer



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MAISON BALZAC LOULOU GLASS VASE, £75, AT PENTREATH & HALL



Herold, a specialist in northern German art at Galerie Herold in Hamburg. “Unconsciously, the idea of still life is always in my head,” she says. “When I create these scenes it’s like painting with objects.” Herold’s arrangements can include anything from a midcentury rattan lamp to an ancient Greek vessel, a 19th-century framed coral fan or an art nouveau glass box – all in a single frame. So for those looking to try their hand, what’s the secret? “There has to be a story behind every object,” concludes Herold. “Each of the objects feeds off, and speaks to, one another. I might select something for its appearance, but ultimately it’s the story and history that brings meaning to your home.” Let the *Wunderkammer* commence. ■HTSI

Top: an image showcasing the deliberately spare visual language of the scent brand Moro Dabron. Above: MORO DABRON ceramic Of Gardens scented candle, £135, at selfridges.com



## THE FIX

BEA BONGIASCA  
GOLD, SILVER  
AND ENAMEL  
EARRINGS, £295



JEWELLERY

# CANDY CRUSH

This enamel and lacquer jewellery looks good enough to eat, says *Kate Finnigan*

**S**weet candy colours and pastel hues, bolts of blue, stripes of neon, red hearts, pretty florals and cute fruits... Jewellery has taken on a colourful feel of late.

To celebrate 10 years of Repossi's Berbere collection – the minimalist rings that creative director Gaia Repossi calls an “everlasting signature” – the Italian jewellery house is launching a new range of bands called Berbere Chromatic Cities. Each uses different coloured enamel to represent each place: the London ring is painted with bright double-decker-bus-red lacquer, while the Tokyo style features a cool matcha-green alongside a band of pavé diamonds.

One of the world's foremost enamel jewellers is British designer Alice Cicolini, known for her modern take on the craft of minakari, which dates back to 1500BC. This month sees the launch of her Jacobean collection, inspired by the geometric ceiling patterns of the Red Fort in Lahore and Hampton Court Palace, which uses rose petal-pink enamel alongside pavé diamonds.

Cicolini has a long established partnership with the studio of Kamal Kumar Meenakar, the Indian master craftsman, and also works with a British master jeweller in Hatton Garden. Her 2012 Memphis collection, with its joyful graphic stripes, was something of a landmark in modern enamel jewellery. Her latest collection is much more intricate: “I like pushing the boundaries of the technology we use,” she says. “The Indian body of work we make is completely handmade, but the Memphis pieces are created in 3D CAD.

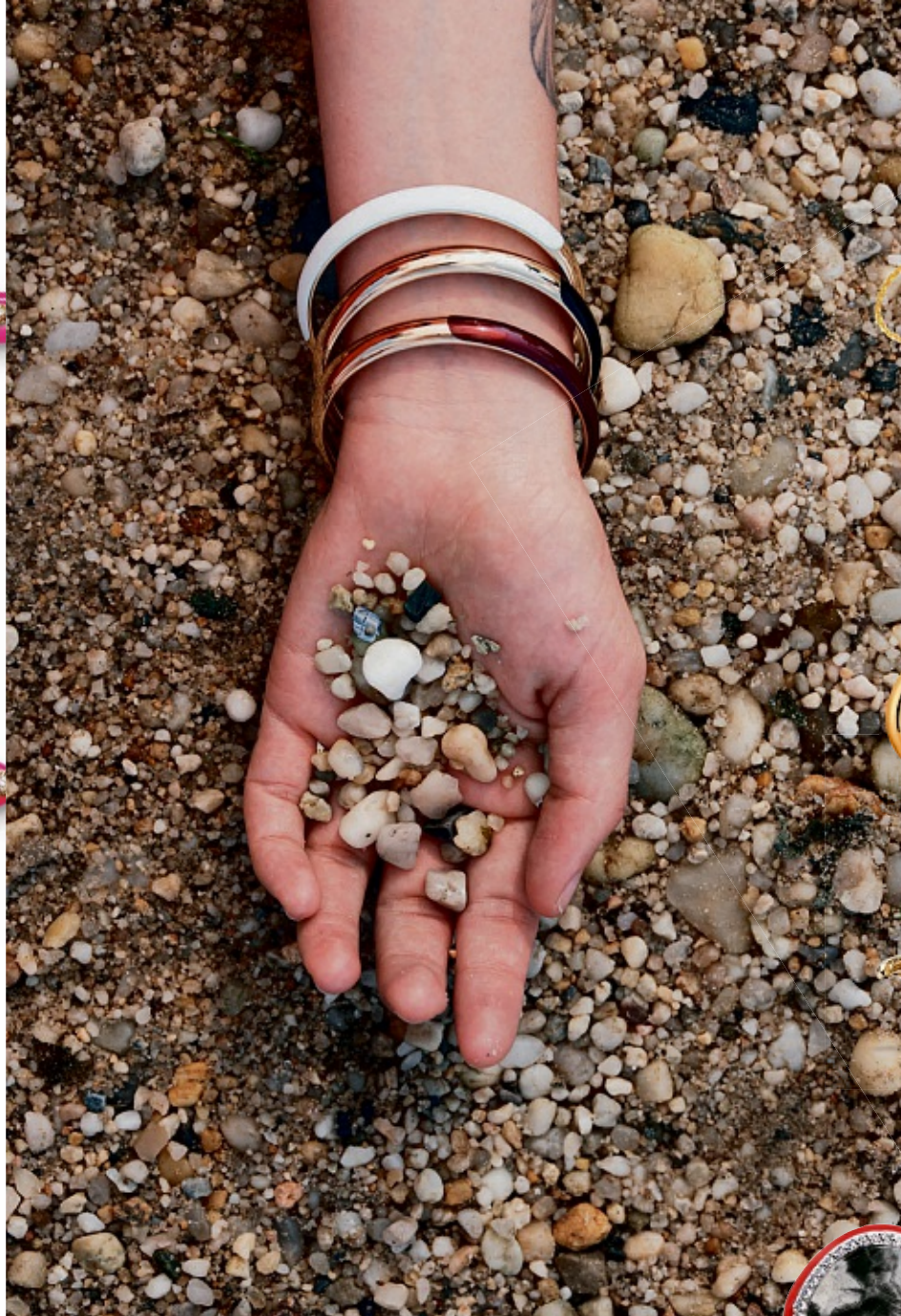


Above: BOODLES platinum, enamel and diamond Paris ring, POA. Below: ALICE CICOLINI gold, topaz, diamond and lacquer-enamel Jacobean Baroque Shield earrings, £6,835



REPOSSI PINK-GOLD, DIAMOND AND LACQUER BERBERE CHROMATIC TOKYO RING, ¥438,900 (ABOUT £2,844)

Right: GABRIELA HEARST rose-gold and vitreous enamel bangles, POA. Left: MELISSA KAYE pink-gold, enamel and diamond Ada bracelet, £8,750, at net-a-porter.com



The 3D printing tech – where you print waxes that are then cast into gold – has significantly changed. What you see in these pieces, small decorative flowers and small patterns, would have been impossible even a year and a half ago.”

So much fun can be had with enamel. Jaipur-based Amrapali's Holi collection uses traditional techniques to create striking flower petals for rings and earrings, while in New York, Nina Runsdorf's signature sliced stones are surrounded with slicks of fire-engine red or mustard. Runsdorf calls it “adding a fresh coat of paint” to the jewels. In Paris, Charlotte Chesnais's stackable rings and wavy hoops bring pared-back sophistication to the genre, while in Milan Bea Bongiasca's mismatched flower earrings are like beautiful felt-tip doodles come to life. Gabriela Hearst uses glass enamel for its sleek bangles, as does British brand Ferian, with a collection of rings in colours chosen for their emotional significance – coral red for courage, faith and love, and pool blue for tranquillity and truth.

For many of the larger houses, the use of enamel or lacquer – which are low-cost materials in the grand scheme of jewellery making – is often contrasted with higher-value stones. Victoire de Castellane, the creative director of Dior's fine jewellery department, is

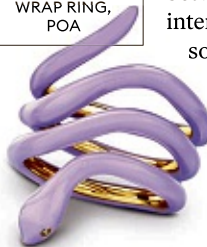
a master of this mix: see the brand's playful Milly Carnivora ring, launched in 2008, which uses green, pink and blue lacquer to create the petals of a flower, in which a two-carat diamond is the centrepiece; similarly in the large Diorette ring an aquamarine is encircled by a hand-lacquered garland of blooms,

**“IT ADDS PERSONALITY AND EVOKES A SENSE OF HAPPINESS”**

butterflies and ladybirds. This idea is taken to the extreme at Boodles, where delicate strips of enamel accent some of the rings in the brand's latest high-jewellery collection, and at Bulgari, where enamel has long been used as detailing in the house's Serpenti pieces.

Browns Fashion has gone big on enamel jewellery recently, stocking the bright and textured pieces of Yvonne Léon, Alison Lou's tiny enamel rainbow studs and Marla Aaron's signature customisable locks, which have been updated with neon stripes this season. For the store's womenswear buying manager, Hollie Harding, it's the juxtaposition of enamel or lacquer with precious metal that hits the spot. “The contrast between the opposing materials is so interesting and unconventional. It adds so much personality and statement to jewellery, along with evoking a sense of happiness,” she says. “Customers are loving the bright colours. They provide a small flash of positivity.” ■HTSI

JESSICA MCCORMACK X HAAS BROTHERS ENAMEL SNAKE WRAP RING, POA



AMRAPALI GOLD AND ENAMEL HOLI COLOUR BRACELET, £585



Second from top: CHARLOTTE CHESNAIS vermeil and enamel Inner Naho Colours earrings, £335. Above: BULGARI gold, sapphire and enamel bracelet-watch, c1965.

Left: NINA RUNSDORF enamel and diamond Grey Slice ring, \$6,500

ALISON LOU GOLD AND ENAMEL SINGLE RAINBOW EARRING, £225



Below: DIOR JOAILLERIE diamond, aquamarine, amethyst, sapphire, garnet and lacquer Diorette ring, £15,200



Above: YVONNE LEON gold, diamond and enamel hoop earrings, £1,285. Right: MARIA AARON gold and enamel Medium Lock charm, £850





# THE FIND

SMART INVESTMENT

This watering can is  
best in glass

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

&KLEVERING 1l glass  
watering cans in  
green or yellow, £42,  
[spicerandwood.co.uk](http://spicerandwood.co.uk)



# POLITICAL, TO A TEE

The “body billboard” tells the story of our times, says *Kin Woo*



Right: NO MORE PLASTIC, DAS MOT and SAMAR SERAQUI DE BUTTAFOCO T-shirt, €65. Far right: Lewis Hamilton wears a T-shirt in tribute to Breonna Taylor

The protest, political or statement T-shirt is experiencing a renewed and shifting moment of popularity. Over the past year T-shirts have been used to signpost everything, from political allegiances to supporting favourite restaurants struggling to survive, and as a way of raising funds. One abiding image from the awards ceremonies last season was of the actresses Regina King and Uzo Aduba receiving their respective Emmys wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the face of Breonna Taylor. Supreme's T-shirt with Takashi Murakami raised more than \$1m for Covid-19 relief efforts, while US brand Fear of God raised \$100,000 from the proceeds of its “GF” shirt – made in tribute to George Floyd – for his youngest daughter, Gianna.

But these T-shirts are also a crucial means of self-expression at a significant time. “T-shirts have become part of our identities,” says Kim Hastreiter, co-founder of *Paper* magazine and new community art project The New Now, who has an archive of over 400 T-shirts that she’s been collecting for more than 30 years. “It’s an analogue, tangible way for people to communicate who they are.” She also adds: “A good message T-shirt is like a historical marker that can tell the stories of the times they were created.”

Hastreiter’s interest in the power of T-shirts stems from memories of her mother wearing her “Impeach Nixon” T-shirt in the early ’70s. It was then that the graphic T-shirt – with messages extolling Black Power and the anti-Vietnam war movement – became a form of expression so effective that *The New York Times* dubbed the T-shirt “the medium for a message”.

The turbulent year we’ve just lived through often feels like a flashback to 1968, a year marked by high-profile murders (of Martin Luther King Jr and Robert Kennedy), racial tensions and protests, a fiercely fought US presidential election and even a flu pandemic. As the Black Lives Matter protests grew to become the biggest grassroots demonstration of civil unrest in a generation,

so protest T-shirts gained new currency as activists took to the streets, amplifying their message through the slogans on their chests. This year has seen T-shirts supporting other causes, from “Stop Asian Hate” to “Choose Earth” (£25, with all profits going to indigenous leaders across Brazil).

Dennis Nothdruff, co-curator of the exhibition *T-Shirt: Cult – Culture – Subversion* at the Fashion and Textile

Museum in 2018 says all T-shirts have their place, even when they might be controversial. He points to Maria Grazia Chiuri’s 2016 debut at Dior, which featured a slogan T-shirt reading “We Should All Be

**“WE FEEL VOICELESS... AND PROTEST T-SHIRTS GIVE YOU A VOICE”**

Feminists”, a reference to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED talk. “I can see where people think it’s a marketing exercise but she got people really talking about it and it elevated the discussion around feminism,” he says. While a T-shirt may be the most basic garment, “it can also be the most powerful body billboard or way to verbalise one’s beliefs and politics”. With Grazia Chiuri, “it set out her stall as the new designer at Dior and her feminist beliefs”.

**FEW DESIGNERS HAVE** been able to stoke controversy through the medium of T-shirts as mischievously as Katharine Hamnett. Over the years, the designer has promoted messages like “Choose Life”, “Worldwide Nuclear Ban Now” and “Cancel Brexit”, and recently partnered with sustainable fashion designer Patrick McDowell to make a capsule collection of jackets and T-shirts (from £110) printed with the word “HELP” designed to highlight the negative effects of Brexit on the fashion industry. “We feel voiceless under the present government and protest T-shirts give you a voice,” she says. “The tragedy is that they are even more relevant now than they were when I started making them, 39 years ago.”

For Hamnett, grabbing attention with a T-shirt is only the first step. “We haven’t done our bit until we’ve effected change,” she says. “We need to write to our MPs. We must follow it up with action otherwise it’s a waste of time.”

Recently, artists have also taken up the baton, creating politicised T-shirts as collectable artworks. Sterling Ruby’s one-off handcrafted pieces are considered part of his catalogue raisonné: his Death Angel T-shirts (\$3,500) are juxtaposed with the covers of some of his favourite books, including Hannah Arendt’s *On Violence*, Audre Lorde’s *The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House* and James Baldwin’s *Dark Days*. These works are equal parts “exercises in appropriation, hybrids of politicised language and highly designed fonts”, he says. “These are all things that I wore when I was younger. It’s a reminder of where I came from, my earliest group of friends and how it shaped my working process as an artist today. I made these pieces during a politically dark, yet also hopeful time.”

Of course, there’s also the option to make a statement T-shirt all of one’s own.

JJ Hudson (better known by his nom de plume, Dr Noki) has been chopping, slashing and collaging “brand subversions” (such as reworking the GAP logo to say “Gay” or hybridising Adidas tracksuits with heavy-metal T-shirts) ever since he was a student at Edinburgh College of Art. Now his influence can be seen in a new generation of designers such as Max Allen, Claire Barrow and Matty Bovan (with whom he’s collaborating on a capsule collection later this year) who share his passion for sustainability, recycling and make-do-and-mend. But a punk DIY ethos remains his overriding principle. He implores: “You can custom-build new ideas – things those brands can’t give you. Don’t buy me – copy me! Turn your bedroom into your own atelier.”

I still have my first (and only) attempt at customisation – a screenprint of the singer Aaliyah I did after her death. Ultimately, “the T-shirt is about communication”, agrees Nothdruff. “It’s a really basic way of telling the world who and what you are.” T-shirts tell the story of who we are, what we care about and what needs to change – now more so than ever. ■HTSI



SUPREME X TAKASHI MURAKAMI, \$60



KATHARINE HAMNETT X PATRICK MCDOWELL, FROM £110



VICTORIA BECKHAM PRIDE WANNABE, £80



VERSACE X LADY GAGA, \$250, BENEFITTING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR LGBTQIA+ YOUTH



CHOOSE EARTH X EARTHRISSE, £25



STERLING RUBY DEATH ANGEL, \$3,500

Below: Kate Hudson and daughter Rani Rose wear STELLA McCARTNEY x GREENPEACE Rainforest T-shirt, £325. Bottom right: demonstrators at a “Stop Asian Hate” rally in March







Y/PROJECT  
ruched  
leather tote  
bag, £411,  
farfetch.com



JUNYA  
WATANABE  
Man  
tapered-  
leg crop  
jeans, £438,  
farfetch.com



LAURA MERONI Drapé ottoman  
by Bartoli Design, £5,120,  
artemest.com



MICHAEL KORS  
COLLECTION  
cashmere ribbed  
sweater, £525,  
net-a-porter.com



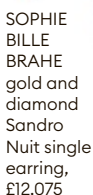
TIFFANY & CO  
Elsa Peretti  
18ct-gold mesh  
scarf necklace,  
£25,800



VIVIENNE  
WESTWOOD  
wool jacket,  
£800, matches  
fashion.com



JIMMY CHOO leather  
Ocean draped-  
detail sandals, £675,  
farfetch.com



SOPHIE  
BILLE  
BRAHE  
gold and  
diamond  
Sandro  
Nuit single  
earring,  
£12,075



A BY ARTURO  
ALVAREZ  
stainless-steel  
Tempo  
Vivace ceiling  
light, £490,  
amara.com



PACO RABANNE  
mesh skirt, £2,320

SHOPPING

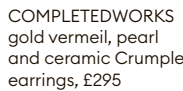
# INTO THE FOLD

Go with the flow in these draped pieces. By *Aylin Bayhan*

The inspiration:  
*Seated Draped  
Figure* by Henry  
Moore at the  
National Gallery  
of Victoria, 1986



GIORGIO  
ARMANI  
pre-owned  
asymmetric  
silk dress, £861,  
farfetch.com



COMPLETEDWORKS  
gold vermeil, pearl  
and ceramic Crumple  
earrings, £295



TASAKI  
WATERFALL  
white-gold,  
South Sea  
pearl and  
diamond  
ring, POA

BRANDON  
MAXWELL  
layered crepe  
trousers, £723,  
net-a-porter.com



VENINI  
FAZZOLETTO  
glass Opalino  
vase, £306, store.  
wallpaper.com



ACANTHUS STUDIO  
ROMA steel, concrete  
and leather Titano  
lamp, £5,610,  
artemest.com



GALLERIA  
ROMANELLI  
bronze  
Fortunata  
sculpture,  
£8,420,  
artemest.com



GIANFRANCO FERRE  
pre-owned 1990s  
pinstripe swimsuit,  
£362, farfetch.com



FENDI draped  
metallic knitted  
minidress, £1,390,  
net-a-porter.com



BALENCIAGA  
leather Drapy  
mules, £595,  
farfetch.com



LAURA MERONI  
Drapé leather sofa,  
£23,280, 1stdibs.com



# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?



# AVAXHOME-

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providing you various content:  
brand new books, trending movies,  
fresh magazines, hot games,  
recent software, latest music releases.

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Cheap constant access to piping hot media  
Protect your downloadings from Big brother  
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages  
Brand new content  
One site



**AVXLIVE** **ICU**

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We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>





Left: the meditation pyramid on the Cowdray Estate in West Sussex

Mexican artist Bosco Sodi spent several years persuading the great Tadao Ando to design Casa Wabi, his Oaxaca art foundation sitting on a 90-acre plot of coastline between the mountains and the Pacific. There is, as the Pritzker Architecture Prize jury said, “never a predictable moment” with Ando, and Sodi describes his excitement as he waited for the eventual proposal from the Osaka-based architect.

Sodi is not religious, balks at the word spiritual and does not meditate. Nonetheless, his dream for the foundation, completed in 2014, was that it be an escape from the monkey mind both for his family and for visiting artists. “Including a place for reflection, contemplation, introspection,” he says, was an essential part of the brief, which also included a swimming pool and an 8,000sq ft art gallery. Ando, famous for the transcendent poetry in his sacral architecture, such as the Church of the Light in Ibaraki, proposed a naked-eye observatory as a meditation and reflection space. It is simply a tube, cast in Ando’s signature silken concrete, standing 10m high and 10m across. “It leans at a 60-degree angle towards the sea; this bounces the sound of the waves so it seems as if they are going to break over you from the mountain’s direction,” explains Sodi. “The effect is both humbling and confusing – in a good way. The nights are very clear here; sitting inside the observatory, all you can see is sky. The first time I entered was a beautiful experience.”

Right: Sunoo Temple House in the Palghar district of Maharashtra, designed by Saket Sethi



## LOST IN headspace

Forget wine cellars and cinemas, the latest must-have luxury is a temple, says *Kate Spicer*

The structure epitomises the physical and mental luxury of a private space dedicated to stillness. Where once there were private chapels, today there are meditation pavilions, yoga shala and temples devoted to silence and ceremony. This approach to sacral architecture is not about religion, and more about a personal spiritual practice.

At the Cowdray Estate in West Sussex, with its polo club that hosts the Gold Cup for the British Open Polo Championship, Marina, Viscountess Cowdray and her husband, Michael, the 4th Viscount, built a meditation pyramid below an avenue of 150-year-old giant sequoias. “It has been a saving grace for me,” she says. “My husband and I love to meditate together there. It’s not grand. My husband drafted the plans and it was built by the guys here at Cowdray in a hardwood that could endure British winters.” The altar table was a gift from a friend, the Bhutanese Rinpoche: “His Holiness the 12th Gyalwang Drukpa dedicated the pyramid in 2000. He asked for the dimensions and had the altar built to fit.”

In 2016, the Rinpoche also blessed a deconsecrated chapel on the 16,500-acre estate, used by the community “for meditation, Qi Gong and yoga... but also for community activities such as plant sales. We live in a small Christian community and it could have been perceived as a bit ‘out there’ and, at first, I think a lot of people thought we were crazy. But we keep it all as normal as we can. We aren’t burning sacred woods or ringing bells; it’s not about the ‘stuff’ and the distractions and the kit.”

This lack of “stuff” is a sentiment echoed by interior designer Joanna Plant, who “can’t abide the Buddha-at-the-end-of-the-pool-type thing, which is just meaningless ostentation and decoration. Carving out a space away from the domestic humdrum is very different. It’s not about display, it’s about creating

physical distance between the self and our quotidian personality and roles in the world.”

James Fox, a former marketing manager of Green Retreats, which builds flat-packed outbuildings and garden rooms costing up to £33,000, says that after home offices and home gyms, the domestic yoga and wellness space has been one of the most popular enquiries since the lockdowns began. Site visits to the category increased by more than 1,250 per cent in the first three months of 2021 compared to 2020. The home retreat isn’t quite the new home cinema, but it is a rising trend, and a more regular presence in an architect’s brief. Take actress Cate Blanchett, who reportedly recently applied for planning permission to have outbuildings at her East Sussex home turned into an art gallery, home office and meditation room.

Francis Sultana, the decorator darling of the high-net-worth art collector, says: “Increasingly clients are looking for a space in their homes to attend to spiritual matters – whatever that may mean for them, the requirements are the same. It must be minimal yet warm and a complete break from the colour and artwork in the rest of the home.”

**AT PROPERTY ENTREPRENEUR** Anton Bilton’s Sabina development in the south of Ibiza, the international mix of residents have access to an 80ft pool with a private nightclub underneath. It’s not that unusual for the island, where it’s standard for high-end new-build homes to come with spas and a discotheque. Where Bilton sets himself apart is the “non-denominational temple of gratitude”, which has already been used by residents for a secular interpretation of a Bar Mitzvah; a cacao ceremony, in which the mildly mind-altering powers of the raw beans are paired with guided spiritual journeys; and a holotropic breathwork session.

Bilton has used a mix of starchitects such as Rick Joy, John Pawson and Sir David Chipperfield for the residences, but for the temple he turned to Rolf Blakstad, the island’s most sought-after architect for intelligent takes on the island’s vernacular. Blakstad underpinned his designs with sacred geometry. The space “is accessed between two pillars, and down a few steps reminiscent of those left by Phoenicians on the island”, he says. The footprint of the temple is a figure eight. The first circle is an amphitheatre in limestone, while the main temple space is accessed “via portal ramps sloping down into a sunken dome with water channels on all sides – for cleansing in all senses. The dome itself is a scale replica of the Pantheon and has a remarkable echo that vibrates through the body and is designed to aid contemplation.”

In India – where the home temple, even if it is just a nook in an apartment, is a cultural norm – the idea is



Above: the naked-eye observatory at Casa Wabi in Oaxaca, designed by Tadao Ando. Left: the temple on the Sabina development in Ibiza

evolving. In the Palghar district of Maharashtra, about 50 miles outside Mumbai, architect Saket Sethi was briefed for a private house with a temple as a surprise gift for the high-profile private-wealth lawyer, Nishith Desai, from his wife, Swati. “The Desais are one of the wealthiest families in the country, but they are from a humble background and haven’t forgotten who they are,” he explains. “They wanted a house and a space where they could be inspired and thankful for life. The husband is not religious, while the wife is a devout Hindu, but they were both looking for what you could call a spiritual strong room, a space where they can go and recharge.”

What makes Sethi’s Sunoo Temple House unusual is the relative proportions of the two spaces. The egg-shaped garden temple, wrapped in a swirling iridescent galaxy created from 1.3 million blue and gold Bisazza tiles, contradicts a Hindu belief dating back to the fifth century that domestic temples must not be seen. Sethi “decided to make the relationship between man (the house) and God (the temple) – whatever that may mean to you – manifest. The temple is taller than the house.”

Sethi’s practice has offices in Mumbai and Barcelona. He observes the eastern norm for spiritual spaces in domestic settings gaining traction among his clients in the west. “A yoga room, a sun room, a detox room... whatever you call it, more people are looking for something that will help them feel better. It is not just about meditation.

The west has always had extraordinary buildings built to ask what ‘God’ meant, yet new buildings forget that conversation man wants to have with the metaphysical. It is not enough to just have your family, make your

money, own your things. I want people to have an elevated moment.”

For Robert Seaton, one of the first figures in Bourne Leisure, which was recently sold to Blackstone for a rumoured £3bn, that elevated moment is found through meditating – something he has been practising for 50 years. “I’ve always found time for it,” he says, “but I’ve never

had a special place I went to do it.” Joanna Plant Interiors was part of a team that converted a cavernous basement in his Georgian-period Hampstead home into a space decorated with crystals and fossils, some very large, bought from Dale Rogers Ammonite in Pimlico.

Seaton and his wife Jo intended that the new space, which came up when the footings of their house needed replacing, should have multiple uses. “It became this place where we went when feeling scratchy and difficult, to just let go and smooth out the wrinkles. People with busy minds, they don’t get it. But other people, the minute they go in, they just fall into the stillness. Once I had a base, a space to meditate, I didn’t ever think of going anywhere else. Twice a day, I’d feel a pull. It’s never been used for anything else. It’s a wonderful place.” ■HTSI



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANA LUI, CHRISTINA MEDELIN



# “Let’s make gin SEXY”

The fashion photographer Mert Alas’s new passion project is designed to “ignite” you. *Alice Lascelles* has the first taste

It’s a hot Monday morning in June and Mert Alas, the Turkish half of fashion photography’s most dynamic duo Mert & Marcus, is feeling a little fragile. “I’m sorry,” he apologises, leading me through to the drawing room of his Hampstead home, “but a dear friend of mine was in town last night and we stayed up late drinking shots!”

That friend, it transpires, was Madonna. But the fact that the Queen of Pop was sitting on his velvet sofa less than 12 hours ago is not what Alas is excited about – his besties are all weapons-grade A-listers. It’s the fact that she was drinking his new creation, Seventy One Gin. “She normally only drinks Dom Perignon Rosé,” he says, wide-eyed, “so to see her drinking my gin was just incredible.”

Alas is no stranger to high-octane glamour. Over the past 30 years, his ultra-polished, almost hyper-real portraits of actresses, models and musicians have graced countless style magazine covers and fashion campaigns: there’s Kiera Knightley smoking a cigarette; Natalia Vodianova adrift in a room flooded with water; and Kate Moss in bondage gear.

That spirit of decadence, of hedonistic playfulness, is at the heart of his gin too. “Nighttime has always been a really important time for me. I love dressing up, enjoying a drink in a beautiful glass and talking to creative,

interesting people,” he says. “And yet I feel like we’ve come to an era when nightlife is almost viewed as a sin – we don’t talk about it. With this gin, I wanted to make the evenings desirable again.”

It would be easy to dismiss Seventy One Gin as just another off-the-peg celebrity drinks brand, but Alas is at pains to stress his involvement in its creation from beginning to end. “When I decide to do something I commit, I submit. I don’t know any other way.”

Conceived by Alas, with spirits supremo Stephen Wilson – the brains behind Johnnie Walker Blue Label, Tanqueray Ten and Ciroc vodka – on the team, and blessed by rockstar perfumer Dominique Ropion, Seventy One Gin looks and sounds a lot like a perfume. And that’s because in many ways it is. Blended, like a scent, from individually distilled botanicals including Queen of the Night – a rare cactus flower that blossoms in the North American desert for just one night a year – aged for 71 nights in

“WITH THIS GIN I WANTED TO MAKE THE EVENINGS DESIRABLE AGAIN”

three types of oak cask, and sealed in a bottle that wouldn’t look out of place on Coco Chanel’s dressing table, this £140 amber gin is the liquid equivalent of haute couture.

“I first became interested in gin in my 30s,” says Alas, now 50. “I tried so many of them and over time I became a real critic. I’d be like, ‘Ahh, too much cardamom in this one’, or ‘They should dial up the juniper on that.’” He started visiting distilleries to find out how gin was made. “I saw them putting all the different botanicals into the still in one go, and I thought, ‘Why do they do it like that? Why can’t a gin be constructed botanical by botanical?’”

Alas has always preferred his gin neat or on the rocks, rather than with a mixer. And he began to wonder if there was a way to create a blend with a richer, rounder profile that was more suited to sipping. “When I was growing up in Ankara my family would often take roasted hazelnuts from the winter, put them in a barrel and fill it with gin and sugar and it would become more of a liqueur,” he recalls. “And that sweeter taste and darker colour has always been linked with gin in my mind. In a way I guess I was chasing a sort of idea from my childhood.”

He began to flesh out a concept for a gin. Then, three years ago, he and his business head Tasso Ferreira met the straight-talking master distiller Stephen Wilson – and the dream started to become a reality. “Up to that point, every distiller I spoke to had treated the idea as ‘just another project’, but Steve was really excited,” Alas says. “I said to him, ‘I’ll only do this if I can do it properly, which means being part of everything, learning about it, understanding it.’ And he totally got that. He had so many ideas and gave us so much guidance. And all the way he kept pushing – but he was pushy in a good way!”

As a fledgling flavour scientist, Wilson had spent five years working in Grasse, France – the spiritual home of modern perfumery. So he was well acquainted with the language of scent. “A lot of the ingredients used in perfumery are not that dissimilar to the botanicals used



Above and below: Seventy One Gin, £140. Left: Kate Moss photographed by Mert and Marcus in 2020



PHOTOGRAPHS: MERT ALAS (6), MERT AND MARCUS (2)



Left: selecting botanicals for Seventy One Gin



Left: Mert (on right) and his business head Tasso Ferreira. Right: Natalia Vodianova shot by Mert and Marcus in 2012

in gin,” he says. “The difference is that perfume companies treat every single ingredient, each botanical, in there with unbelievable respect. They take it, they research it, they distil it and they create an absolute, an essence. It’s created like liquid gold. And then they bring an artist into the mix – the perfumer – who looks at all those notes and composes a perfume. We wanted to do it like that.”

Alas and Ferreira started by constructing a backbone of traditional gin botanicals – juniper, coriander, angelic and lemon – which they then layered up with grapefruit peel, earthy wild ivy from Albania, Damask roses and a hint of bitter Ecuadorian cinchona. The final, sensual flourish, was the addition of Queen of the Night. “I think of it like a desert version of jasmine,” says Alas. “It’s more earthy and raw, less cute.”

Not every botanical they tried made the cut. “At one point I said, ‘Oh, I’m Turkish, let’s try sumac’, and Steve said, ‘No, that’s a terrible idea’. I did anyway and it was awful!” laughs Alas.

“IT’S CREATED LIKE LIQUID GOLD”

In order to achieve a rounder, sweeter profile closer to the gin liqueurs of Alas’s childhood, they aged the gin in a mix of virgin Spanish oak, sherry casks and French oak. That time in cask gives the gin depth and warmth, as well as its amber colour.

Last but not least, they spike the gin with Ecuadorian Guayusa tea leaves to give

the whole thing a caffeinated lift. “I wanted to get away from this whole idea of ‘mother’s ruin,’” says Alas. “This is a gin designed to wake you up and get ignited for the night.” It took around 700 different samples, and several years of tasting, for them to arrive at the final recipe. “We tortured

Steve, literally!” says Alas. “Then, one night we finally said, ‘That’s it! This no longer tastes like gin, it tastes like something completely unique’.”

With the recipe complete, Alas took it to IFF master perfumer Dominique Ropion, the man Frédéric Malle once dubbed “the most skilled perfumer working today”. His verdict? “I have always found Alas’s style of photography fascinating, almost dreamlike, very sexy, eroticised even,” says Ropion. “I figured, when you create such beautiful photos, and go into a hedonistic venture, it’s bound to be beautiful too.”

Aesthetically, Seventy One Gin is a real statement piece. The octagonal, deco-style glass bottle – designed by Alas – looms over the table like an outsized scent flacon or decanter. And it weighs a tonne. “I was inspired by art deco architecture, jewellery, crystal formations,” says Alas. “I said, ‘Let’s make it sexy!’”

In a tribute to Alas’s hero Oscar Wilde, a pair of ornate Regency-style drinking vessels is being launched alongside the gin – a delicate little stemmed shot glass and a capacious rocks glass for sipping the gin on ice.

Alas and Ferreira won’t reveal how much money they’ve invested in the project thus far – but I get the sense that a few starry friends have helped them out. The first run of the gin will be 3,000 bottles – a quantity that someone with 1.5m Instagram followers should have no trouble shifting.

In the long run, Alas hopes to use the brand as a fundraising platform for up-and-coming artists. “I want it to be about giving back, as well as just having a good time,” he says. Expect to see more announcements on that front later in the year.

For now, though, he is focused on getting the gin into the hands of his friends, and behind his favourite bars. “Dukes Bar in London, or Chateau Marmont, would be amazing,” he says. That would be a long shot by most people’s standards – but something tells me he might just be in with a chance. ■HTSI [seventyonegin.com](http://seventyonegin.com)



MERT AT THE DISTILLERY





**BENNETT WINCH**

HANDMADE IN ENGLAND

## The capacity for adventure

Since starting the brand in 2014, all three founders have become fathers. In doing so we found ourselves faced with a new design challenge; the art of transporting an expanded flock and its associated cargo. Introducing the Bennett Winch Cargo Range.

Even the most discerning minimalist needs to overpack now and again. Be it wetsuits or waterproofs, towels or toys, the range has been designed specifically for those luggage-heavy road trips where capacity is king. The Large (125L) and Medium (85L) are the workhorses, whilst the Small (50L) is the rugged day tripper. Military grade cotton webbing, Tuscan leather trim and solid brass hardware are built to last a lifetime, and a 600-denier nylon construction makes each bag as lightweight as it is hard wearing. The Bennett Winch Cargo Range has been designed and tested by three well-travelled fathers in the knowledge that good adventure comes to those with the capacity for it.

THE CARGO RANGE *by* BENNETT WINCH



This page: LOUIS VUITTON wool/  
silk and glass-bead dress,  
€8,000, and platinum, gold,  
diamond and emerald L'Aventure  
earrings and ring

Opposite page: LOUIS VUITTON  
wool/polyamide pullover,  
€2,200, silk/polyamide tiered  
skirt, €3,600, and white-gold  
and diamond La Star du Nord  
necklace and bracelet

Throughout: all jewellery  
POA and from the Louis  
Vuitton Bravery collection





# Diamond of the season



Phoebe Dynevor captivated audiences in 19th-century period romp *Bridgerton*. Now the British actress is letting her own personality shine. Interview by *Kate Finnigan*.  
Photography by *Thomas Lohr*. Styling by *Isabelle Kountoure*



“EVERY TIME  
I FINISH A JOB  
I SEEM TO WANT TO  
DRESS IN TOTALLY  
THE OPPOSITE  
WAY TO THE  
CHARACTER”

**H**ow bittersweet to become a sudden star during lockdown. Phoebe Dynevor, who plays ingénue Daphne in the sexy Georgian TV series *Bridgerton*, became overnight famous during the most claustrophobic time in recent history. Her delicate features are now globally familiar and her Instagram following shot to more than 2.5m. But the 26-year-old hasn't been able to try on her fame in a public way; instead, like the rest of us, she has had to stay home.

Now she is emerging out of that cocoon into the spotlight of public recognition. “It is really surreal,” Dynevor says. “I feel like I’m having a double whammy. Even being with my friends last weekend, I thought it was weird to get back into the real world anyway and then there’s also [the new fame]. I still feel like no one knows who I am, but then I’m recognised.” And she doesn’t mind, she hastens to add. “People are always so lovely and sweet. I think because the show brought a lot of joy in lockdown, they’re always good interactions.”

In a way, it’s surprising she is recognised, given that people have only really seen her wearing 19th-century-Empire-waist gowns, long satin gloves and tiaras. “Yes, I think when people see me out they are somewhat surprised that I don’t dress like Daphne,” she says. “Like, ‘Is she really wearing Nike Air Force 1s?’”

Today, on a rare day off during filming of the second series of *Bridgerton*, Dynevor is sans sneakers and instead adorned with Louis Vuitton’s new high-jewellery launch, Bravery. It’s a collection worthy of the grandeur of Daphne (some of the pieces cost in the millions), yet is modern enough to look comfortable on the young actress. Behind the camera, Dynevor radiates with the same sweet, sculpted beauty and swan-like neck seen on screen. “Jewellery on her just sings,” says Francesca Amfitheatrof, Louis Vuitton’s artistic director of jewellery and watches. “You need to be enough of a person to carry it. I think that jewellery is the one accessory or object that we wear that has a way of rubbing off on you something that’s mythical, something that goes above and beyond.”

Bravery is a homage to the man Vuitton, in the 200th anniversary year of his birth, and comprises 90 pieces. The lead attraction, the Le Mythe necklace, is an engineering masterpiece that, by removing its various parts, can be worn in 12 ways. It also boasts an LV monogram flower (an impressive trio of sugar-loaf sapphires and an emerald) and six Louis Vuitton star-cut diamonds, which the house has been working on for three years. “It’s like the holy grail of jewellery to have a diamond cut that is recognisable from afar,” says Amfitheatrof. “How do you brand a diamond? How do you make a diamond recognisable from 10 tables away?”

Likewise, *Bridgerton* is a brand with a distinctive and all-consuming world around it, a world in which all the

This page: LOUIS VUITTON cotton T-shirt, €390, silk/polyamide tiered skirt, €3,600, and white-gold and diamond La Star du Nord necklace, bracelet, earrings and ring





sex and gossip and drama are iced in bright, fondant colours in an over-the-top millennial prettiness, setting it apart from other period costume shows. To watch it during the dull grey days of lockdown was to feel both stimulated by and nostalgic for a time we never knew. “I was excited to wear everything,” says Dynevor of the costumes. “Every dress was beautiful, but I really loved the day dresses in particular. There’s one in episode six when Daphne is in the garden picking lavender and there are little purple flowers on her dress. That attention to detail was incredible. There were some dresses I think I wore only to walk down a corridor and then I’d be in something completely different – so fabulous,” she laughs.

Although she says she “lucked out” by only having to wear a half-corset (unlike some of the other actors), the costumes were a significant part of her transformation into the role of “diamond of the season”, as she is dubbed in the show. Working out how to hold herself and wear the wardrobe was all part of the six weeks of preparation, including choreography, 19th-century etiquette and horse riding that she undertook alongside co-star Regé-Jean Page, who plays Simon Basset, and who has, to the disappointment of millions, decided not to return for an encore. “The wardrobe completely changes the way you carry yourself, and it really does do 80 per cent of the work for you. In real life – and my director said this to me the other day – I sort of stomp into rooms. I’m always wearing boots or trainers, but as soon as I got into costume for Daphne – the little tiny-heeled pumps and the way the dresses flow at the back – it makes you stand up straight and sort of flow. It makes you want to lift your head up.”

## “IT’S SO FUNNY, PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT MY NECK ACTING – IT REALLY MAKES ME LAUGH”

All the better for showing off the costume jewellery, made in the on-set workshops by a team of jewellers. “Daphne’s never without a pair of beautiful earrings or a necklace. There was a real obsession with necklines and collar bones at the time,” says Dynevor. “They wanted to draw the eye to the neck, so I’d always have beautiful matching earrings and a necklace. In episode four, when Prince Friedrich gives Daphne a highly valuable necklace that she then tears off – that was the most spectacular one. It’s so funny, people talking about my neck acting really makes me laugh.” (There are YouTube montages dedicated to Dynevor’s active neck and throat.) “I don’t think I’m a neck actor in other things,” she says wryly. “But in *Bridgerton*, particularly with the way the corset sits

and the attention on the neck, it makes you hold your shoulders a certain way.”

It’s a quality that didn’t escape the notice of Louis Vuitton, with which she has since become a “friend”. “Regal sounds manufactured as a word, but you have to have something in you that means you can carry high jewellery and Phoebe really does,” says Amfiteatrof of Dynevor’s affinity with her statement pieces. “It’s important that it’s on the right person and important for our clients to know how a piece of jewellery will affect them and give them a certain strength and power.”

**D**ynevor, who grew up in Manchester and now lives in a flat near Hampstead Heath, has acting in her blood. Her mother is the veteran *Coronation Street* actress, Sally Dynevor; her father, Tim Dynevor, is a TV scriptwriter. She started acting in 2009, when she was 14 and won a role in the fifth series of the long-running BBC show *Waterloo Road*. She has starred in period pieces before – *The Musketeers*, *The Village* and *Dickensian* – and says it’s the joy of her job to experience the dress of different eras: “It’s what I love most about it.” But it does impact her real-life wardrobe. “Every time I finish a job I seem to want to dress in totally the opposite way to the character. Before *Bridgerton* I was a little bit of a flowy-dress girl, but I’ve now definitely steered away, without really consciously doing it, from the feminine stuff.” To assert her own personality? “Yes, because you do lose yourself. Especially with something like *Bridgerton*, when it was five months of shooting every day. You show up in tracksuit bottoms because you’re not leaving till 8pm and you’re wearing a wig. So I’d wash my hair on Friday night and have one day of being myself before the wig went on again and suddenly you’re thinking, ‘Wait, who am I? What do I wear in real life?’ It’s bizarre.”

Before she went back to the series, she shot a film, *The Colour Room*, about the English ceramic artist Clarice Cliff. “That was great because it was so different to *Bridgerton*, a different time – the 1920s – and such a different character. Clarice was so outward-facing, such a creative. The way I played her is that she didn’t have any awareness of her appearance, didn’t even think about it, and I loved that. During the pandemic, none of us looked in the mirror really, so it was fun to be able to channel that into the role and not feel any pressure to look a certain way. Daphne is the complete opposite. She’s aware of herself in every way, but it has been nice stepping back into her shoes and being able to prance around and look good.”

With an actress as a mother, I imagine, there must have been a certain glamour in the house when she was growing up, but Dynevor dismisses the idea. “In real life my mum was always a dungaree wearer, which probably rubbed off on me a lot. Work for her was the dressy time, not home, and I always thought that was kind of cool.” Her paternal grandmother, Shirley, who also worked in television, was the fashion influence. “She always looked divine and still does. It was always one piece of really beautiful jewellery, a pearl necklace or pretty earrings. Always a flash of something – gold on her eyelids and a pop of colour.”

Dynevor’s own personal style is something she’s still working to define. “When I was growing up, the look was all quite flamboyant – big make-up, the little dresses and the heels. I did love the glamour of going out and had a couple of years when there was a lot of make-up and false eyelashes. But I think you have to go to the extremes to know what you like and then pull it back. Even today I’m still figuring it out,” she says. “Especially now, being in the public eye, seeing photographs of my outfits and thinking, ‘Oh... next time I... should not wear that,’” she laughs. “I’m definitely having a big learning experience.” ■HTSI



This page: LOUIS VUITTON  
cotton/viscose coat,  
€4,800, and white-gold and  
diamond L'Élan Vital necklace  
and earrings

Opposite page: LOUIS VUITTON  
silk/polyamide dress, €4,500,  
and white-gold and diamond  
L'Élan Vital earrings

Hair, James Rowe at Bryant  
Artists. Make-up, Georgina  
Colville at Management + Artists.  
Manicure, Michelle Class at LMC  
Worldwide. Photographer's  
assistants, Harry Hawkes and  
Max Hayter. Digital operator,  
Denis Schlovsky. Stylist's  
assistants, Zoë Sinclair and  
Aylin Bayhan. Production,  
Rosco Production







**BALENCIAGA**

**HOURGLASS**



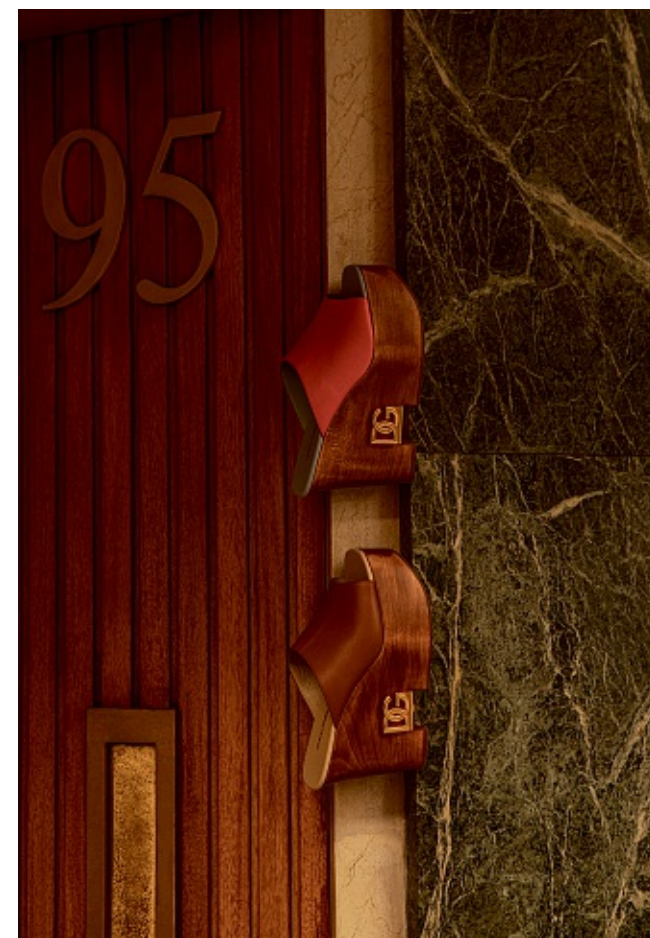
# RING MY BELL

Going out out? Step into the season with 1970s-inspired accessories. Photography by *Kenny Whittle* Styling by *Aylin Bayhan*



Above, clockwise from top: HERMES leather Essentielle riding crop, £1,050, swift leather Birkin 30 bag, £8,240, beechwood and pig-bristle soft body brush, £150, and leather quilting jumping boots, £2,060

Left, clockwise from top right: CHANEL patent goatskin purse, £2,020, embroidered silk handbag, £9,180, velvet vanity purse, £2,020, and checkers board, £5,015



Right: FENDI leather Baguette 1997 bags, £2,100 each, and skateboard, £980, from the Summer Capsule 2021 FF Vertigo collection. Below: BULGARI raffia, leather, brass, enamel and onyx Serpenti Diamond Blast bag, £1,450. Bottom: DOLCE & GABBANA leather and wood wedges, £683







Above: PRADA leather small tote bags, £1,300 each, and nylon padded headband, £310



Above left: LORO PIANA matte leather Sesia Bag M, £2,975. T LABEL deadstock tulle gloves, £150. Below left: DIOR leather 30 Montaigne bag, £2,500 each. Right: LOUIS VUITTON leather Silhouette ankle boots, £850



Below: GIORGIO ARMANI suede and leather 2004 bag, £1,550



Above: GUCCI straw-effect fabric and leather Jackie 1961 bag, £2,110, and leather gloves, £355





# RIVER DEEP MOUNTAIN HIGH

*Fergus Scholes* psychs up for a new breed of extreme but ultra-luxe adventure in the Dolomites

Photography by *James Mollison*





The author running over Forcella Salares, with a view down the valley and the Scotoni mountain hut. Previous pages: on the Sella massif, with the Val Gardena valley behind



**T**he fixed safety lines and ladders of the via ferrata wind their way up to the 2,400m summit of Col dei Bos. I step into the climbing harness, contemplate the 500m of near-vertical limestone rock and feel my courage falter. As lighthearted conversation turns to a more matter-of-fact briefing, Diego Zanesco – half mountain goat, half silver fox and 100 per cent cool customer – settles my nerves. He’s one of the most respected guides here in the Alta Badia region of the South Tyrol, with more than 30 years of experience under his belt, and you can feel it. I clip the carabiner on, grip the cable and get down to business.

It is day one of four in the Dolomites, where I am a guest at Rosa Alpina Hotel & Spa in San Cassiano – a legendary property, equal parts luxury chalet and rustic mountain lodge, with a multi-Michelin-starred destination restaurant, St Hubertus. It joined the Aman stable of hotels and resorts last year, but the Pizzinini family, its founding owners, remain a constant presence here: Hugo Pizzinini, the third-generation scion, was on hand to personally welcome me with a spaghetti carbonara when I rolled in from Venice at 10.30pm.

I am staying to test-run Aman’s new programme of multi-day extreme sports retreats, aimed at guests with a thirst for ultra-physical adventures layered with all the luxuries you’d expect from these hotels: massages, expert guides, fine cuisine and finer spas. Each retreat is tailored to leverage its respective landscape to the fullest: a desert-mountain adventure in Morocco, a triathlon through the

rainforest of Phuket, ocean challenges on a private island in the Philippines, and, here in the Dolomites, serious alpine adventures. Though the daily activity plans are fairly hardcore, everything is fairly minutely customisable to suit ability, length of stay, weather conditions and how you’re feeling on the day.

My predilection for endurance sports perfectly matches the terrain and its mountain traditions, so running, cycling and swimming are the mainstays of my itinerary. They vary in intensity and duration: some truly limit-pushing, others much more pleasurable, with doses of via ferrata thrown in for alpine adrenaline.

The Alta Badia region is a particular hotspot for road cycling, with several stunning mountain passes. The Giro d’Italia is a regular visitor, and the Maratona dles Dolomites starts and finishes a stone’s throw from Rosa Alpina. With an international field of 9,000 entrants taking part, it strings together several passes into one epic ride, covering 138km and gaining 4,230m in elevation. (To put that into context, a ride of that distance in England would typically have around one third as much climbing.) It’s the kind of challenge that I’m seeking. The Rosa Alpina equips me with a Pinarello – a top-spec, ultra-lightweight Italian carbon road bike (in Ferrari red, naturally) and issues me with a guide, Franz Wieser – a tall, reedy 26-year-old who looks every bit the champion cyclist. Regardless of the activity, it seems, the hotel is ready with expert athletes to both instruct and push the guests.

The initial two-way buzz of conversation soon becomes a Franz monologue – I barely manage monosyllabic replies between gulping breaths as I realise my morning rides around Richmond Park have been laughably insufficient compared to the challenge of these endless, winding, uphill

climbs. The shorter, exhilarating descents seem ever shorter. After four hours, with five substantial passes in the legs and the strain of being unacclimatised to the altitude, I am utterly shattered. But the scenery – huge peaks and hulking massifs all around – is genuinely epic.

At a crossroads, Franz offers me two choices: turn left, to cut the ride by around 30km; or right, to commit to the monstrous Passo Giau. At 19.9km long, with an average of 9.3 per cent gradient and 29 hairpin bends, it’s a prospect to give even the most seasoned cyclist the nerves. Two hours – and the expenditure of every ounce of energy and grit in my body – later, the challenge is complete. It is one of the most daunting of my stay, but it’s a bucket list-proportioned adventure.

## **I AM SHATTERED. BUT THE SCENERY – HUGE PEAKS AND HULKING MASSIFS – IS EPIC**

On day two, my upper body gets a work out with an open-water lake swim. For this, we drive west, past the city of Bolzano, to a secluded private garden fronting onto Lake Caldaro. Diego, cool as ever, shadows me in a rowboat. With the sun on my back and the water at 21°C, the 2km swim in millpond-flat conditions is exactly the welcome, physiologically balancing tonic it has been calculated to be. With every inhale, I glimpse the lush green of the surrounding fruit trees and



snow-covered peaks, aware the entire time it is a world away from the packed swimming lanes of the 25m indoor pool I'm used to.

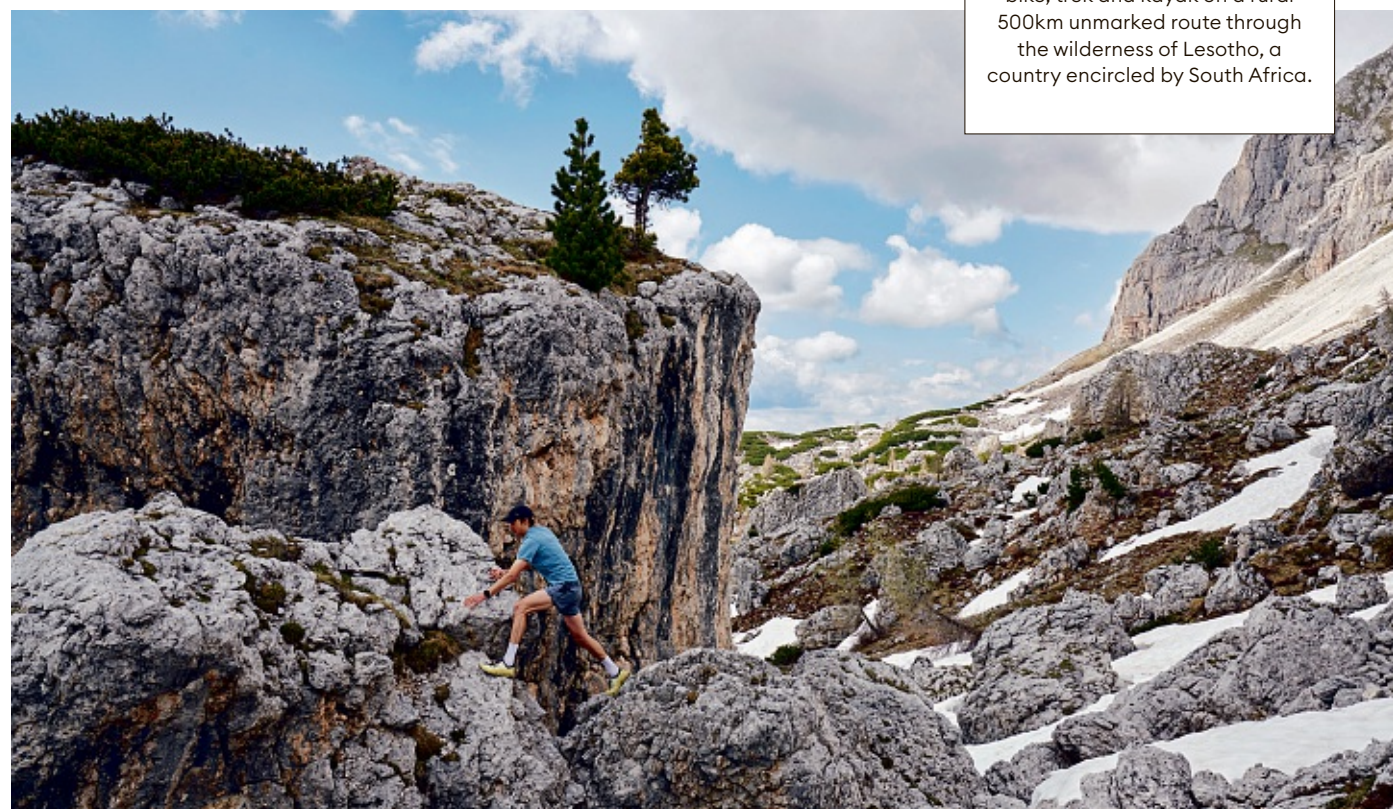
Trail running is the other order of the day in these parts; for mine, I am joined by Pizzinini himself and his restaurant director and head sommelier, Lukas Gerges, on a fairly advanced circular route from the hotel. With the fatigue of the previous three days suffusing my legs – and evident in my gait – our guide, Samuele Majoni, a multiple title-holder here, keeps a just-gentle-enough pace and after a three-hour push, with a via ferrata thrown in for good measure, we head down a hidden valley to enjoy a lunch of crispy polenta, pork sausages and a cheeky Kaiserschmarrn in the sun at Scotoni, one of the Val Badia's most loved mountain huts.

Beyond the expert guides and training, the Rosa Alpina difference is in these indulgences. Each day holds the most welcome punctuation in the form of a long spa treatment: alpine herbal massages with anti-inflammatory arnica for muscle-pain relief, and Thai massages to work out stiffness. Refuelling is elevated to a whole different level: I am welcomed back after each excursion with homemade sourdough, speck and horseradish – a simple but delicious (and complex carb-rich) local dinner – typically followed by fresh pasta and local sparkling wine. The gastronomic highlight is St Hubertus, Rosa Alpina's celebrated fine-dining restaurant. Norbert Niederkofler and his young team run a remarkably ordered kitchen, where at his butcher-block chef's table I enjoy the first three of an 11-course menu, with wine pairings, that begins at 7pm and wraps up at midnight.

What makes the four days feel so special is this balance of limit-testing and indulgence. Exert, relax, repeat – to the extreme. A mountain high indeed. ■HTSI



Clockwise from above: the author tackling the Maratona dles Dolomites' seven mountain passes. An early morning 2km swim in the waters of Lake Caldaro. The trail run up to Sass de Stria. The 11-course "Cook The Mountain" menu at St Hubertus. Mountain guide Diego Zanesco prepares Scholes for the via ferrata



## Are you game?

FIVE ADVENTURE CHALLENGES ON SCHEDULE FOR 2021-2022

### HAUTE ROUTE VENTOUX

1-3 October 2021

€799

[hauteroute.org](http://hauteroute.org)

Haute Route offers near-professional-level cycling events to amateurs, and this three-day event covers 288km with 8,100m of climbing up the famous "Giant of Provence" that is Ventoux.

### SOURCE TO CITY NEW YORK

1-4 October 2021

\$2,447

[sourcetocity.com](http://sourcetocity.com)

Run (or hike if you prefer), bike and kayak your way down the entire length of the mighty Hudson River, traversing all 300 miles in this fully supported event.

### ULTRA X MEXICO

6-13 November 2021

£1,495

[ultra-x.co/mexico](http://ultra-x.co/mexico)

Set in the Sierra Madre mountains, this supported five-day stage ultra-marathon covers 250km, with 11,835m of elevation gain, as you run through the colossal Copper Canyons.

### BIRKEBEINERRENNET

19-21 March 2022

Nkr1,525 (about £128)

[birkebeiner.no](http://birkebeiner.no)

Each year, Norway's legendary 54km cross-country ski race crosses two mountain ranges through breathtaking wilderness, finishing in the Olympic village of Lillehammer.

### EXPEDITION AFRICA

31 March-10 April 2022

From R30,000 (about £1,508)

[expafrica.net](http://expafrica.net)

Teams of two or four mountain-bike, trek and kayak on a rural 500km unmarked route through the wilderness of Lesotho, a country encircled by South Africa.



# “Our future is in Beirut”



One year after the blast that destroyed the city's artistic centres, *Gilles Khoury* meets the Lebanese designers who believe that recovery and beauty will always be entwined

Left: an abandoned home in Achrafieh, photographed by James Kerwin following the blast in August last year. Opposite page: Rabih Kayrouz with his latest collection, photographed by Bachar Srour







**I** will start healing the day my city starts healing,” says Rabih Kayrouz, his eyes wandering over the iridescent Mediterranean. The Lebanese fashion designer was in his atelier in the neighbourhood of Gemmayze, a mile away from the Port of Beirut, when an explosion tore through the city on 4 August last year. Caused by the ignition of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, which had been improperly stored there since 2013, the blast destroyed much in its path. Within a split second, the business that Kayrouz had been growing over the past 20 years was devastated; he was also severely wounded. For someone like Kayrouz, who is so entrenched in this city, it’s clear that it will take much longer to start recovering from the trauma. But despite everything, the designer’s atelier – where he now stands – has been rebuilt, and he has created temporary solutions for the Lebanese arm of his business.

To continue functioning in a country where nothing functions is in itself a miracle. However, such resilience should come as no surprise. Kayrouz was always a pioneer in his field. In 1995, after pursuing his studies in Paris, he came back to Beirut, then considered “the city of possibilities”, he says. “The war had ended a few years before, and a creative scene was being fuelled by the desire to simply do things.” Since 2009, the designer has had one foot in Paris, home to his prêt-à-porter business, and one foot in Beirut, where 12 employees focus on custom-made orders. Even in October 2019, when Lebanon’s latest economic crisis hit, instead of investing his efforts solely in Paris, Kayrouz rolled up his sleeves and explored ways to make his business viable. “It’s something that I find hard to explain, but no matter what happens in Lebanon, the minute I land here, I just feel like giving.”

Following the blast, he participated in raising almost \$400,000 via the United for Lebanese Creatives fund. The organisation helped rebuild spaces for some of the young designers of Starch foundation, an NGO he co-founded

## “BEIRUT WILL REMAIN A SOURCE OF WISDOM AND CULTURE. PEACE WILL PREVAIL”

in 2008 with designer Tala Hajjar to launch emerging Lebanese designers. On a professional level, Kayrouz revisited his business model from scratch: “What matters the most to me today is to adapt to the economic crisis Lebanon is going through. One could think that fashion doesn’t make sense any more, but I’d rather look at it differently. Why couldn’t we keep on creating clothes, while integrating a new system of execution that would fit those hard times and be respectful towards our clients?”

The designer conceived special collections sourced from deadstock fabric, fully produced in Lebanon and sold in “lollars” (US dollars within Lebanon’s collapsed banking system, which depositors have been blocked from accessing or transferring abroad, or can withdraw only in local currency at a low rate). Those items “take into account the financial difficulties of our clientele, allow them access to some beauty, and also support the families of the employees at Maison Rabih Kayrouz.” He continues: “But all of this is more crisis management than a long-term roadmap. It’s just a solution to stay in Beirut, and help it as much as we can.”

Kayrouz is one of many creatives determined to help the city thrive again. Fashion designer Elie Saab, who is also based between Paris and Beirut, is donating a contribution from the sales of his fragrance *Le Parfum* throughout 2021 to Unicef’s programme to help vulnerable girls in Lebanon. A group of jewellers, including Gaëlle Khouri and Noor Fares, donated designs to a fundraiser hosted by retailer *Auverture*, which raised more than €51,000 for the Lebanese Red Cross and Lebanese Food Bank.

But more striking are the efforts being deployed by creatives to keep businesses alive and stay inspired in an environment where beauty is not considered a priority. “In these difficult moments, luxury is not a first necessity, but it is part of the vital economical wheel of any society,” says jeweller Selim Mouzannar. His business is based in Tabaris, among the worst-hit neighbourhoods; his shop and atelier were badly damaged in the blast. “You can destroy the walls, but you cannot change the spirits,” he says. The Kant quote “Optimism is a moral duty” is plastered on the windows of his new workshop, which has since been rebuilt. His decision to stay is not solely because relocating seems logistically and financially impossible, but because the city provides him with creative stimuli. “Beirut will remain a source of wisdom and culture and freedom; justice and peace will prevail. Beirut is my city and we are the real peaceful resistance. I am here to stay.”

That’s also the case for furniture and homeware label Bokja, which recently extended its distinct, patchworked aesthetic into ready-to-wear, which is all locally produced. “Our future is in Beirut,” say co-founders Huda Baroudi and Maria Hibri. “We owe it to our team of artisans to continue our growing legacy in craft, preserving an age-old tradition, a language that would otherwise begin to dwindle. A strong local presence is paramount. It is during these fragile times in the country that our roots sink deeper; we don’t plan to jump ship anytime soon.”

Both Baroudi and Hibri were quick to place their skills at the service of the people following the blast. “We immediately transformed the showroom into a community centre, offering it to local organisations on the ground which can dispense aid. As dedicated menders and fixers, we offered to repair and re-upholster damaged home goods from the most affected areas. A signature suture was used to stitch the pieces back together by our team of specialised artisans. Our aim was to offer a message of hope through preserving snippets of people’s homes.”

Even younger creatives, who were already struggling to sustain their businesses amid the successive crises, took part in rebuilding. Tatiana Fayad and Joanne Hayek, the co-founders of accessories and clothing brand *Vanina*, found their ateliers and store in Gemmayze completely in ruins, but started reconstructing the spaces the very next day. “We cannot fall” was their motto. The two women, both in their 30s, hold the reins of a social enterprise that encompasses a network of 70 women artisans. “Today, more than ever, we are determined to continue expanding our brand internationally, grow our local network of creation, and support our family of artisans.”

This is indicative of a broader issue that Cynthia Merhej, creative director and founder of fashion brand *Renaissance Renaissance*, explains: “As soon as the blast happened, I had to relocate to Paris, as it was impossible to have my business in Beirut, with the destruction of the banking system and the country’s infrastructure.” From there, Merhej started a GoFundMe for three Beirut creative businesses she knew would be left out of the recovery effort. “For me it was extremely important to help these creatives and business owners, because I could not see any future for our country if we did not have creative people in it and driving it. We successfully raised €50,000 and distributed the funds equally amongst the three recipients. It was the fastest way to raise money and get it to them, even though it was extremely difficult to do that with all the issues with the banks.”

That said, Merhej is as committed as her elders to stay rooted, at all costs, in Lebanon. “I am keeping my atelier in Beirut and I will finally be able to travel there this summer, to work on creative development,” she continues. “It’s important for me to still find ways to support our local fashion economy there. I hope once the pandemic is over, I will be able to go back and forth much more.”

This year, Merhej’s brand *Renaissance Renaissance* reached the semi-finals of the LVMH Prize. Proof, if needed, that even from afar, and against all the odds, this intrepid “young guard” of fashion will always manage to keep their country on the map. And give hope to a possible, and much brighter, future for Lebanon. ■HTSI





Right: Selim Mouzannar in his studio. Far right: SELIM MOUZANNAR pink-gold, diamond and tanzanite ring, \$3,650, and bracelet, \$13,020, and pink-gold, diamond and rhodolite ring, \$7,260



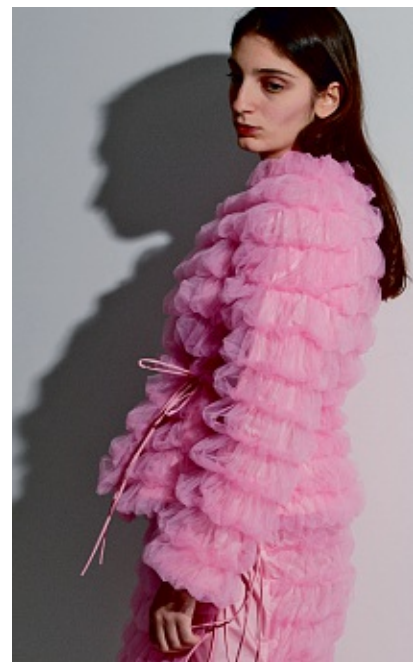
Right: Rabih Kayrouz's latest collection and (below right) outside his atelier in Beirut, photographed by Bachar Srour



Above: BOKJA Casablanca Bow dress, \$1,100. Opposite page: the front of a mansion on Surssock Street, Beirut, photographed by James Kerwin



“LUXURY IS NOT A FIRST NECESSITY, BUT IT’S A PART OF THE VITAL ECONOMIC WHEEL”



Above: RENAISSANCE tulle and silk outfit, POA. Left: Cynthia Merhej, the brand's founder and designer



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### Three jets to watch



**SPIKE AERONAUTICS S-512**  
**Passengers** 18  
**Speed** Mach 1.6  
**Altitude** 60,000ft  
**Range** 6,200 nautical miles  
**Cost** \$120m



**VIRGIN GALACTIC**  
**Passengers** 19  
**Speed** Mach 3  
**Altitude** 60,000ft+  
**Range** Not yet available  
**Cost** Not yet available



**BOOM OVERTURE**  
**Passengers** 88  
**Speed** Mach 1.7  
**Cruise altitude** 60,000ft  
**Range** 4,250 nautical miles  
**Cost** \$200m

# LHR to JFK in under two hours?

The race is on to create the first supersonic passenger plane since Concorde. *Ollie Williams* checks out the main contenders

ILLUSTRATION BY CARLO APOSTOLI

**I**f I'm going to buy a multimillion-dollar asset or hire a senior executive, I'm going to shake his hand. I'm going to look into his eye. I'm going to have dinner with him."

Vik Kachoria, the founder, president and CEO of Spike Aerospace, is setting out his expectations for the future of supersonic air travel, a concept many assumed had vanished in 2003 when Concorde was retired. Formerly employed in mergers and acquisitions in an investment bank on Wall Street, Kachoria is bullish about the future of the face-to-face meeting and the consumer demand for making day trips in one of his private jets, which will cost more than \$100m.

Despite scepticism about the potential for supersonic air travel – the cost, the culture, the environmental damage – Kachoria is one of the investors putting his faith, and money, in the future of a new breed of super-planes. Besides Spike, whose planned S-512 will carry 18 passengers and travel at Mach 1.6 (more than one-and-a-half times the speed of sound), Virgin Galactic is working on a commercial passenger jet that will transport up to 19 people at Mach 3 – that's 2,300mph and a flight time from New York to London of less than two hours. Boom Supersonic's Overture will carry 65 to 88 passengers at a speed of Mach 1.7. Russia's United Aircraft Corporation has joined forces with a UAE-owned investment company to develop a plane. And Japan's Aerospace Exploration Agency is talking about a hypersonic jet with 100 seats that could fly at Mach 5 and cross the Pacific in two hours.

And yet the challenges are many: one of the biggest potential players in the supersonic private-jet market, Aerion, has already thrown in the towel. Despite a \$11.2bn

sales backlog for its AS2 jet (including orders from NetJets and backing from Boeing and GE Aviation), it closed down its operations citing funding issues earlier this year.

Will there truly be a demand for such machines? In addition to passengers flying to business meetings or on holiday, Kachoria imagines his jet will be useful to mid-ranking employees or engineers. Say you have a car factory where something goes wrong on the production line: "You're losing \$100m a day and you need a specialist engineer fixing that problem right now. You do the math, that's an awful lot of money if the problem is not fixed." Then there will be those who just want to show off. Private jets have always had bragging rights, but a *supersonic* private jet? "It's a fantasy for some," says Kachoria.

Fantasy indeed. Aerion's AS2 had a price tag of \$120m. Spike's S-512 will cost around the same. By contrast the most spacious private jet on the market today, Gulfstream's G700, costs \$78m. Then there is the upkeep. Maintenance is going to be "at least double what the Gulfstream private jets are because you're burning the engines at a much higher temperature and much higher pressure", says Kachoria. A Gulfstream can cost anything from \$1m to \$3m a year to maintain – and that's excluding fuel, which will be a significant cost when travelling supersonic.

## IT IS LESS A SONIC BOOM AND MORE 'A GENTLE THUMP'

But the biggest issue is less a matter of price and more a question of physics. Concorde could only ever fly supersonic over the sea. The noise that the plane created when it passed the sound barrier was so loud that it was banned from supersonic flight over land in the US. Lockheed Martin, working in tandem with NASA, thinks it has found a solution with its X-59 QueSST prototype. A demonstration model will take to the air in 2022, and the aim, says Lockheed Martin, is to establish "an acceptable commercial supersonic noise standard and address current regulations banning commercial supersonic travel over land". The plan is to create a noise that is less a boom and more "a gentle

thump" (at 66 decibels, the X-59 should sound no louder than a car door being slammed shut next door).

If the supersonic ban is repealed in the US, that would open up some of the world's most popular private routes. At least an hour could be shaved off the New York to Los Angeles route. And trials in the US could convince other regulators that supersonic travel in their airspace is safe. While many countries have not banned supersonic passenger jets, any new aircraft would still need regulatory approval. That would be critical to travellers in Asia and the Middle East, where private jet usage in particular is growing rapidly. To further reduce noise both outside and in, Spike has also designed its S-512 without passenger windows. Instead, LCD screens run right down each side of the plane, which can be used for work and entertainment, or, the showstopper, to provide an unbroken view of the sky outside the plane, virtually opening its walls onto the roof of the world.

**BUT MAKING SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT** more efficient is about more than merely reducing noise. If private-jet and frequent flyers are already under fire because of their carbon footprint, then what of executives flying supersonic to Dubai for lunch? Some supersonic aerospace firms have foreseen this future PR disaster and have pledged to go carbon-neutral. Once its S-512 is in the air, Spike wants to start work on a "hybrid" supersonic jet before developing a liquid hydrogen model. Virgin Galactic's jet will have engines designed in collaboration with Rolls-Royce that use "state-of-the-art sustainable aviation fuel", it says.

Boom is talking about Overture flying on commercial routes as soon as 2029. United Airlines has an agreement to purchase 15 supersonic jets from Boom Supersonic. Blake Scholl, the founder and CEO of Boom, believes a gap in the market has opened up after airlines spent the past year retiring large Boeings and Airbuses. "People's tolerance for long, painful flights has gone down," he says. Yes, business travel might take a while to return, but leisure travel will bounce back: "You don't want to go on vacation on Zoom. You don't want to fall in love over Zoom." ■ HTSI



**SON ET LUMIERE**

There's a syndrome interior designers refer to as ceiling acne. It typically occurs when someone has several recessed spotlights and then decides it would be cool to add a bunch of ceiling speakers. I'm not normally a huge fan of ceiling speakers because up above doesn't sound to me the right place for music to be coming from, other than background music in shops.

But I have to hand it on several counts to British startup Zuma which has made downward-firing audio not only acceptable, but really good, by cleverly combining LED ceiling spots with some truly exceptional speakers.

The Zuma speakers are so good that you won't even need a concealed subwoofer behind a sofa. You can even configure your Zuma lights to act as the sound system for your TV, so no need for a sound bar.

Smart Bezels launching later this year will include features like movement sensors and smoke detectors. Four to six Zuma lights are enough for a sizeable room. The lighting warmth and intensity as well as the audio is controlled through an app. Nothing not to love here.

Zuma Lumisonic, £375 per unit, [zuma.ai](http://zuma.ai)

**ROUTE ONE PORTABLE 5G**

With the 5G phone network building up nicely but not used a lot – the need for 5G on a phone, for instance, is extremely limited – the opportunity to hijack 5G for all your home and office internet needs is there for the taking.

Netgear's newest portable router, the Nighthawk M5, offers internet speeds of up to 1Gbps where the 5G is up and running,

but also works on 4G, which can give a more than adequate 40-50Mbps.

Importantly, too, the M5 pumps out WiFi 6, the newest version, so can keep as many as 32 devices online simultaneously.

The M5 is rechargeable (13 hours of use per charge) but obviously works plugged into the mains, too. So if you were using

it in, say, a holiday home (and 5G is often available and barely used in rural-ish areas), all the family's and friends' internet needs, including gaming and high-end video streaming, can be dealt with easily without the need for fixed lines.

The M5 is one of those unglamorous black boxes that can nonetheless quietly semi-revolutionise home and work life.

Netgear Nighthawk M5, £739.99, [netgear.co.uk](http://netgear.co.uk)

**COOL BEANS**

Jura's new Z10 coffee machine shares all the excellent qualities of earlier Jura machines I have tested, but packs one magnificent new – and unique – feature, which will make this the summer of the iced latte macchiato.

Along with the wide range of hot espresso-based drinks the machine will make, it boasts a patented cold extraction process that speeds up the laboriously slow business of pulsing cold water over coarse coffee grounds at high pressure to make cold espresso.

The smoothness of that first latte macchiato I made with the Z10 was unforgettable, but bear in mind that you need a good supply of ice on hand to make sure it's perfectly chilled. Also, if you like to play barista at home, I should warn you that Jura's models are all press-button, so there's no manual portafilter to clunk into place with a flourish. Right across the range of recipes, however, the Jura coffee is every bit as good as any I've tasted from more professional-looking home espresso makers.

Jura Z10, from £2,145, [uk.jura.com](http://uk.jura.com)



For more of Jonathan's reviews, visit [@thefuturecritic](http://ft.com/htsi)

## GADGETS

**Do the twist**

An app-connected Rubik's cube for next-gen puzzlers – and more

WORDS BY JONATHAN MARGOLIS

If you'll forgive me the namedrop, I was taught to solve the Rubik's Cube by Dr Ernő Rubik himself. We met at his studio in 1985 to discuss how, in still communist Hungary, he had managed to sell tens of millions of the puzzles internationally without getting arrested or having his assets confiscated.

It was a fascinating political story about how the country was liberalising while still in the Soviet bloc. It was also a fascinating lesson in puzzle solving, even if I'd already forgotten how to do it within about 10 minutes. I still have the cube he gave me somewhere, but today my cat would probably solve it faster than me.

Enter, then, this app-connected cube, which is perfect for both experienced "cubers" and beginners. The first thing that struck me about the GoCube was what a delightful, smooth, fluent mechanism it has. It moves quickly, with 48 magnets in the corner pieces helping it click satisfyingly

into place. Early Rubik's Cubes, I seem to remember, were mechanically clumsy and prone to locking up. The GoCube is a delight to handle and ideal for what is now called "speedcubing" even if you don't exploit its tech prowess.

But the electronic innards, with a whole bunch of six-axis smart sensors and an inertial measurement unit in action, make the GoCube formidable. You sync it up – ideally to a tablet on a stand rather than a phone – and get a real time, full-3D representation on the screen in front of you of the cube you're holding. Twist the cube and every move appears with imperceptible time lag on-screen.

That's clever, but then it starts teaching you exactly how to solve the cube in as few as 21 twists, setting higher-level problems for more experienced puzzlers, pitting you in real time against other cubers around the world (thanks, but no thanks) and ranking you against experts.

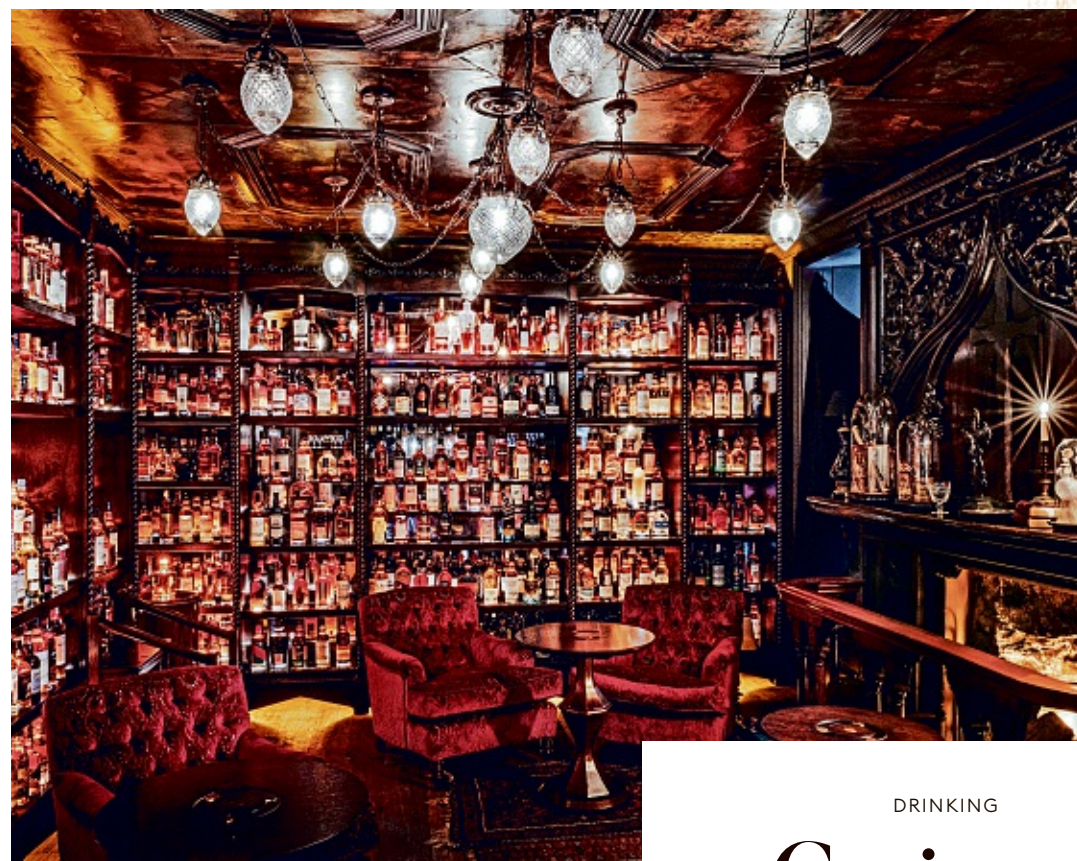
I got nowhere near the world record solution time of 3.47 seconds and was happy to complete the cube in 40 times that, which was nowhere near enough to get onto the GoCube global leaderboard. But I will continue in the pretence that it was Dr Rubik that taught me cubing in Budapest rather than a clever app and a teched-up cube. ■HTSI



## DETAILS

GoCube £79.99, [smartech.buzz](http://smartech.buzz)





DRINKING

## Grains of wisdom

Bertie's Bar at the Fife Arms in the Highlands is a whisky-lover's dream come true, writes *Alice Lascelles*

The world is full of luxury hotel bars with big-ticket whisky lists – lists created, all too often, with an eye on the bottom line, rather than any real heart. So when one of my favourite whisky writers, *World Atlas of Whisky* author Dave Broom, mentioned he was working on a new hotel bar in Braemar, my ears pricked up. When he added that it was in gallerists Hauser & Wirth's hotel The Fife Arms, and designed by Russell Sage, my ears pricked up even more: it sounded like a dream team.

And Bertie's is a gem. Furnished in the style of a sumptuous Edwardian library, and lined floor-to-ceiling with 365 back-lit whiskies that suffuse the room with an amber glow, this 15-seater lounge looks more like a liquid installation than a bar – a place to hole up on dark nights when the Highland rain is lashing down outside.

The whisky list Broom has created is naturally dominated by Scotland – but it features drams from all over the world, grouped by style rather than place of origin, to make the whole thing more navigable. “Doing it like this allows you to show commonalities and differences between different distilleries and regions and countries, and open up whole new conversations about whisky,” says Broom. “It’s not dumbing it down. Far from it – it actually takes you on a deeper dive.”

In the “Fragrance” section, a meadow-y Linkwood 12yo (£9) from Speyside rubs shoulders with Hakushu 12yo, a cool green single malt from the Japanese Alps (£22.50); in “Fruity” a luscious wine-cask-aged malt from

Starward in Australia is contrasted with a 17yo malt (£32.50) from Royal Lochnagar, a historic Highland distillery just a stone's throw from the hotel.

Broom has given unusual prominence to grain whisky – more often the unsung hero of Scotch blends. “Grain whisky is often dismissed as the Scottish answer to vodka – but it can be absolutely delicious and full of flavour,” he says, picking out a Cambus 29yo (£26) that’s all “runny honey and baked banana”.

**THE REAL THEATRE IS IN THE BOTTLES – ALL CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH**

The list is peppered with rarities from distilleries no longer in production: Littlemill, Rosebank, Mosstowie and the storied Islay distillery Port Ellen. But it also

features young drams from some of the world's newest producers: Cardrona in New Zealand and Torabhaig on Skye.

Bertie's is a real destination bar – yet almost half of the whiskies in it are priced at under £10 a dram: “It was really important for me to have that element of affordability,” says Broom, “so that people feel free to experiment.”

The bar also does whisky cocktails and posh bar snacks and a quartet of whiskies matched with different types of caviar. But the real theatre is in the bottles around you – all of them close enough to touch.

Broom is working with The Fife Arms to curate a series of house whiskies too, in partnership with the indie bottler Adelphi. I wonder, given their artistic connections, whether Hauser & Wirth might be planning a specially commissioned label for them, à la Mouton Rothschild? “We have been talking to our artists about creating something for Bertie's,” says Iwan Wirth. “But it will not be a label as I think artist labels are passé. What we are doing is looking at bottles as sort of sculptures.”

He won't reveal more, for now, except that he hopes to have something to show the world in about 12 months' time. Just the excuse, if it were needed, to start planning a return visit. ■HTSI

@aliciascelles

Above and left: the whiskies at Bertie's Bar at the Fife Arms

GLENDULLAN SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT



ILLUSTRATIONS: WILLIAM LUI; PHOTOGRAPHS: SIM CANNETTY-CLARKE (2)



Right: Max Rocha in his kitchen in London. Below: dishes include Guinness bread and butter, asparagus and new oil, and raspberry and almond tart



QUAIL, CHIPS AND MAYONNAISE

**“THIS PLACE IS AN ODE TO MY GRANDMA CECILIA”**

Naturally, his father and sister have weighed in on the design (“everything from the building to the aprons to the music”) and the 45-50 cover dining room, which overlooks Regent's Canal, is bright and airy with white walls, an open kitchen and a large refectory table at one end. On the wall hangs a photograph by Perry Ogden (a family friend) from his “Pony Kids” show from 1999, which Rocha remembers seeing as a kid.

The ethos of this place also feels personal to Rocha, who talks about it almost like a refuge for him and his staff. Rocha hasn't always had the easiest time. Up until seven years ago, he worked in the music industry. The stress got to him, he quit and was diagnosed with depression. Making soda bread one day, he found the kneading helped him get out of his head. His mother enrolled him on a baking course, which convinced him he wanted to spend the rest of his life in a kitchen. “Food saved me” is how he puts it now. Soon he landed a job at Skye Gyngell's Spring, followed by stints at St John Bread and Wine and The River Cafe. Working as a line chef gave him the confidence to “be my own person for the first time in my life,” he says, not just his father's son or sister's brother.

But his family had concerns. Restaurants are high-pressure environments. Despite his obvious commitment, Rocha was repeatedly burning out. The turning point came working under Farokh Talati, head chef at St John Bread and Wine, who supported and encouraged him. “Farokh is the reason I'm here,” says Rocha. “I learned from him how to treat staff, be kind and listen to how people are actually feeling.”

Applying those lessons, Café Cecilia will open for breakfast and lunch only (and build up to dinner) so staff can maintain some sort of work-life balance. Having assembled his “dream team” of former colleagues, he says simply: “I feel safe. They understand the food I want to cook and respect me as a chef. I just want to make this place work and have a happy career.”

Rocha has already drafted menus for the coming year according to what's seasonal. Breakfast dishes include white pudding and brown sauce, house sausage, borlotti beans and fried eggs, and a “beautiful bacon sandwich”. Several lunch plates are inspired by Rocha's early years in Dublin. “We grew up eating a lot of ham,” he says. Hence the Middlewhite collar with braised chard, and ham hock and chutney sandwiches.

The Irish influence doesn't end there. On asparagus, you find delicate curls of coolea, a smooth, Gouda-like cheese from Cork, while the dressed crab comes on Guinness bread, which is hearty and sweet from treacle in the dough. This also turns up on the breakfast menu with seven-minute eggs or toasted with preserves, as well as crumbled into ice cream for a delicious lunchtime dessert. You can order Guinness by the pint too.

Of the dishes I try, my favourite is the house terrine (a pork, apricot and pistachio version) with semi-jammy apricots and plenty of sweet/savoury/salty flavour. It's so appealing I give up rationing myself in the face of other dishes to simply dive in. I also fall hard for the raspberry and almond tart, which is buttery, biscuity and indisputably lovely. These, it turns out, are Rocha's favourite dishes too. “I like the process of making a terrine,” he says. “Lining the tin. Cooking it in a bain-marie. You feel like a real chef. And I love making tarts. I mean, I love it. There is nothing I enjoy more.” He recalls something said by his former boss at St John, Fergus Henderson, that how you feel shows in the food. Judging by these, Rocha is having a ball. ■HTSI

@ajesh34

EATING

## Hour of knead

Dublin-born Max Rocha conquered depression by baking soda bread. Now he's bringing his positivity to an Irish-themed canteen. By *Ajesh Patalay*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW NUDING

Don't count on seeing Max Rocha front of house at Café Cecilia in Hackney when it opens in mid-August. “I'll be in the kitchen,” he insists. “I don't want anyone to see me. I just want to cook. That's where I'm happiest.” No laps of honour for this 31-year-old chef-patron. And yet this place is so personal, you can't help seeing him wherever you look.

Take the name. Cecilia was his grandmother, the late mother of his fashion designer father, John Rocha. “My dad grew up in a council estate in Hong Kong, one of seven brothers and sisters,” he says. “Cecilia saved up money with her poker buddies to get Dad a plane to London, where he studied fashion and made a success of his life. This restaurant is an ode to her.” Cecilia is also the middle name of his fashion designer sister, Simone.



Above: Rocha's pork and apricot terrine





# HOW I SPEND IT



I walk a lot and I love that there is always the random opportunity to take a different path. I do that in the hope of seeing or learning something new. I have always been like that in all facets of my life, including backgammon, and feel that I've been very lucky overall. Some of my best relationships – with Bob Marley and the Wailers, for example, whom I met by chance when they were stranded in England after a show – have been formed with a bit of luck. I was asked to scout bands in Birmingham in 1965 and heard a voice that sounded like Ray Charles, but higher pitched. It ended up being Steve Winwood. I was just lucky to have been selected to scout that day, or I would have never met him.

Over the years I've bought many tables and sets, but my most prized one was purchased from Hugh Hefner's backgammon club/disco, Pips, in LA in the late 1960s.

## IT'S A GAME OF CHANCE, AND IN LIFE I VERY MUCH BELIEVE IN THE ROLL OF THE DICE

Pips was named for the 24 points on the backgammon board, and Hefner was very passionate about the game, though I never had the chance to play with him. This particular set is huge and painted in the striking red and green colours of Gucci. The pieces are also quite large – 1.5in diameter – which makes it even more unusual.

I went to the club one day, saw it and thought it was incredible, so I ordered one on the spot. It's currently at my country house in England and really is the game at its best.

Another favourite takes pride of place in the Fleming villa. It's designed with handpainted peacocks, and everyone who stays plays on that board. Another board I cherish is the one given to me by my late wife, Mary Vinson. It is a beautiful leather table. You take the top off to reveal the board. One day when I was cleaning out the apartment, inside the drawer was a letter from Mary to me. I left it there for safekeeping, and it still remains. This board is currently in my New York apartment and during Covid it was busy. I'd play, drink coffee and have cake every evening, stopping only to clap for the healthcare heroes at 7pm.

Ultimately, it is the company that makes the game so special and GoldenEye – and Jamaica in general – has seen a lot of action over the years. Prior to Covid, I'd play with our guests at Bizot Bar and we also used to host a tournament at my other resort Strawberry Hill; I look forward to being able to do these things again. Worthy opponents over the years have included everyone from Grace Jones to Princess Michael of Kent. I enjoyed long games with the late Broadway producer Terry Allen Kramer in New York, on Harbour Island and in London – and Dennis Hopper was an entertaining competitor too. The only place I've lived where I didn't play backgammon at all was in Miami; people there were more interested in looking at women in bikinis than concentrating on a board game.

I've played every day since returning to Jamaica after lockdown. My girlfriend beat me solidly the whole time we were in New York; she was on a lucky streak and it was unbelievable to both of us. That's the luck of the dice. ■HTSI

## CHRIS BLACKWELL ON BACKGAMMON

ILLUSTRATION BY EMILIE SETO

I started playing backgammon with my parents at the age of eight or nine. I loved everything about the game: the tactility of the pieces, the civility of it, spending time with friends. While I loved all games as a child, backgammon was my favourite. I still play at least once a week – and sometimes every day if time allows – and I've played all over the world: at Annabel's in Mayfair, on beaches, you name it. Anywhere that I sleep I have a board nearby.

When I was growing up in the 1950s in Montego Bay, the card game canasta was very big. My mother was always playing and there were times when I never got fed because the games would last for hours and there was often gambling involved. She also loved to play backgammon – and swim – at Ian Fleming's villa, GoldenEye, on the north coast of Jamaica, where friends like Errol Flynn and Noël Coward often gathered. After Fleming's death, I wanted to buy the property for her, but I wasn't in the best place financially, so I asked Bob Marley if he wanted to buy it. He didn't feel the vibe. A few years later, I was able to purchase the home myself and now run it as a hotel. It felt like there was a kind of serendipity at work.

Backgammon is a game of skill and chance, and in life I very much believe in luck, the roll of the dice.



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TRÉSOR COLLECTION

### KAIA'S CHOICE

Surrounded by fashion from a very young age, Kaia Gerber is no stranger to the modelling world. While following her famous mother onto the most exclusive runways and photoshoots, she is now choosing to walk a unique path, bringing her own sense of style and personality to the role. It's a family passion, with a very bright future.

