

FINANCIAL TIMES

# HITS!

11 FEBRUARY  
2023

SPRING FASHION SPECIAL

# CODE AMBER

The *SUPERMODEL* puts her *SPIN*  
on the new-season *STYLES*

PLUS \_\_\_\_\_

LUELLA BARTLEY – LUCIA PICA – ANINE BING – NENSI DOJAKA –  
AMY POWNEY – CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN – EDGARDO OSORIO – ANNA OCTOBER





MERCEDES GLEITZE



LINDSEY VONN



GARBIÑE MUGURUZA



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# HTSI

11 FEBRUARY  
2023

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ON THE COVER: Photography by *NATHANIEL GOLDBERG* Styling by *ISABELLE KOUNTOURE*

AMBER VALLETTA wears FERRAGAMO suede open-back dress, £4,140. TIFFANY & CO white-gold and diamond earring, £4,175 for pair



40



Hermès,  
cavalier jewellery



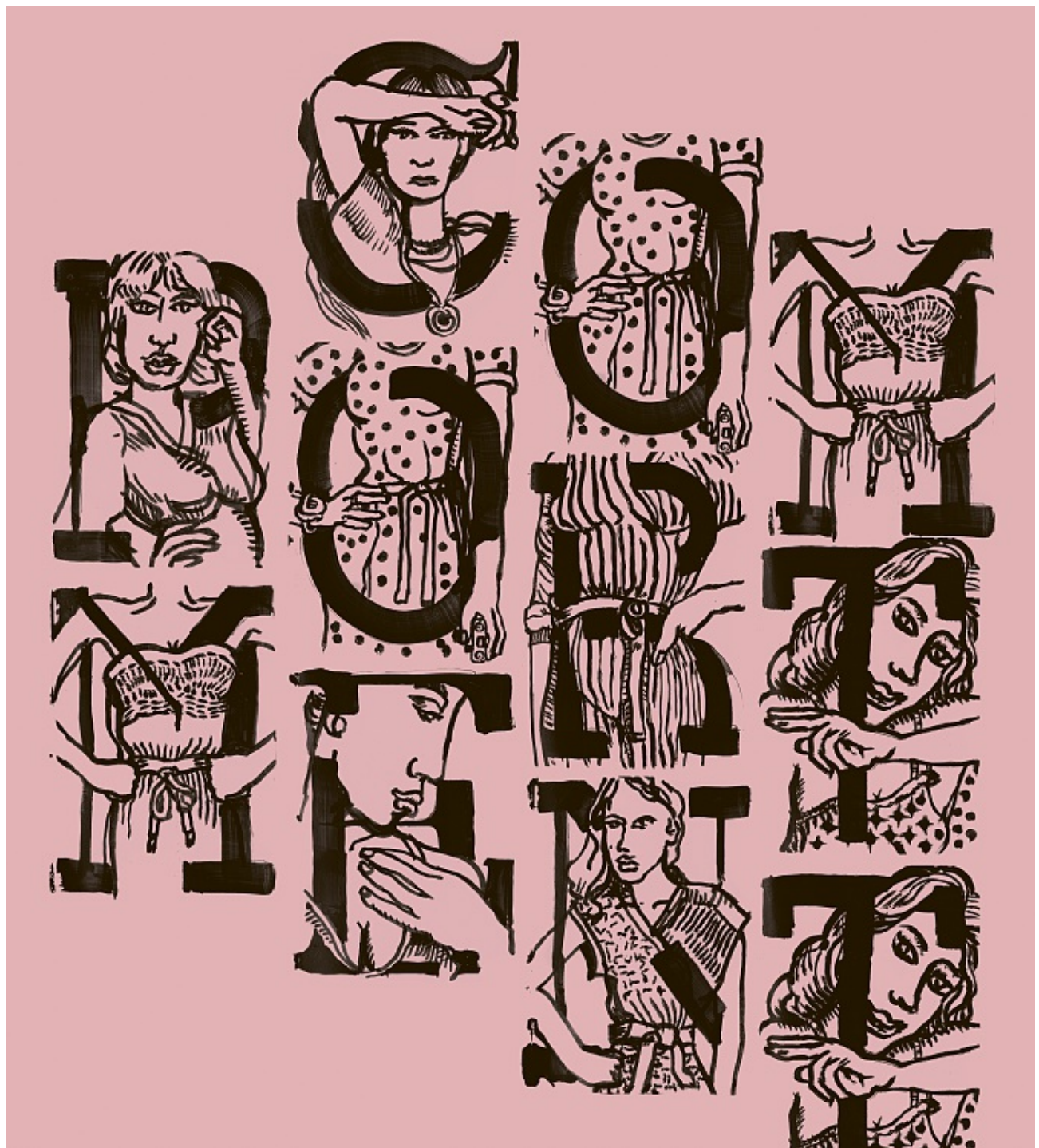
# OPENING SHOT

## FONT AND CENTRE

*Letters from M/M* celebrates the work of the cult Parisian design agency

“Kinda like font-psychics,” is how Icelandic singer Björk describes M/M, the Parisian graphic design agency founded by Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag, with which she has collaborated on her album artwork for two decades. “They are the method actors of letters.” The musician’s introduction opens *Letters from M/M*, a new book exploring 90 of the designers’ best fonts, which range across fashion, art, theatre and music. For Louis Vuitton’s 2014 rebrand, the agency took the house’s classic roman typeface down to its barest form before embedding “almost invisible idiosyncrasies” so that “it cannot be counterfeited”, Amzalag writes. For beauty brand Byredo, it produced a stencil typeface that sits somewhere between the handmade and the mass-produced, while for Miu Miu’s AW18 fashion show, it painted a woman dressed in different pieces from the collection for every character of the alphabet. **BAYA SIMONS**  
*Letters from M/M (Paris)* by Paul McNeil is published by Thames & Hudson at \$50

Above right: the Miu Miu Type, 2018



## CONTRIBUTORS



TOM PECHEUX

The French make-up artist worked as a pastry chef before enrolling in beauty school. He has been the creative director for both Shiseido and Estée Lauder in New York, after which he returned to Europe to develop make-up for Dolce & Gabbana. He was made global beauty director of Yves Saint Laurent in 2017. In this issue he worked with American model and actress Amber Valletta, “a dear friend with a unique beauty”, he says.



ENA POPPE

The model, who has a background from Togo and Belgium, made her runway debut for Loewe last autumn and walked for Miu Miu, Valentino and Alexander McQueen the same season. In her spare time she likes to read, visit museums and dance. For this issue she was shot by Antoni Ciufu wearing designs featuring oversized details. “I find it very interesting how collections translate into editorial images with pieces mixed in a subtle way,” she says.



JULIEN LIENARD

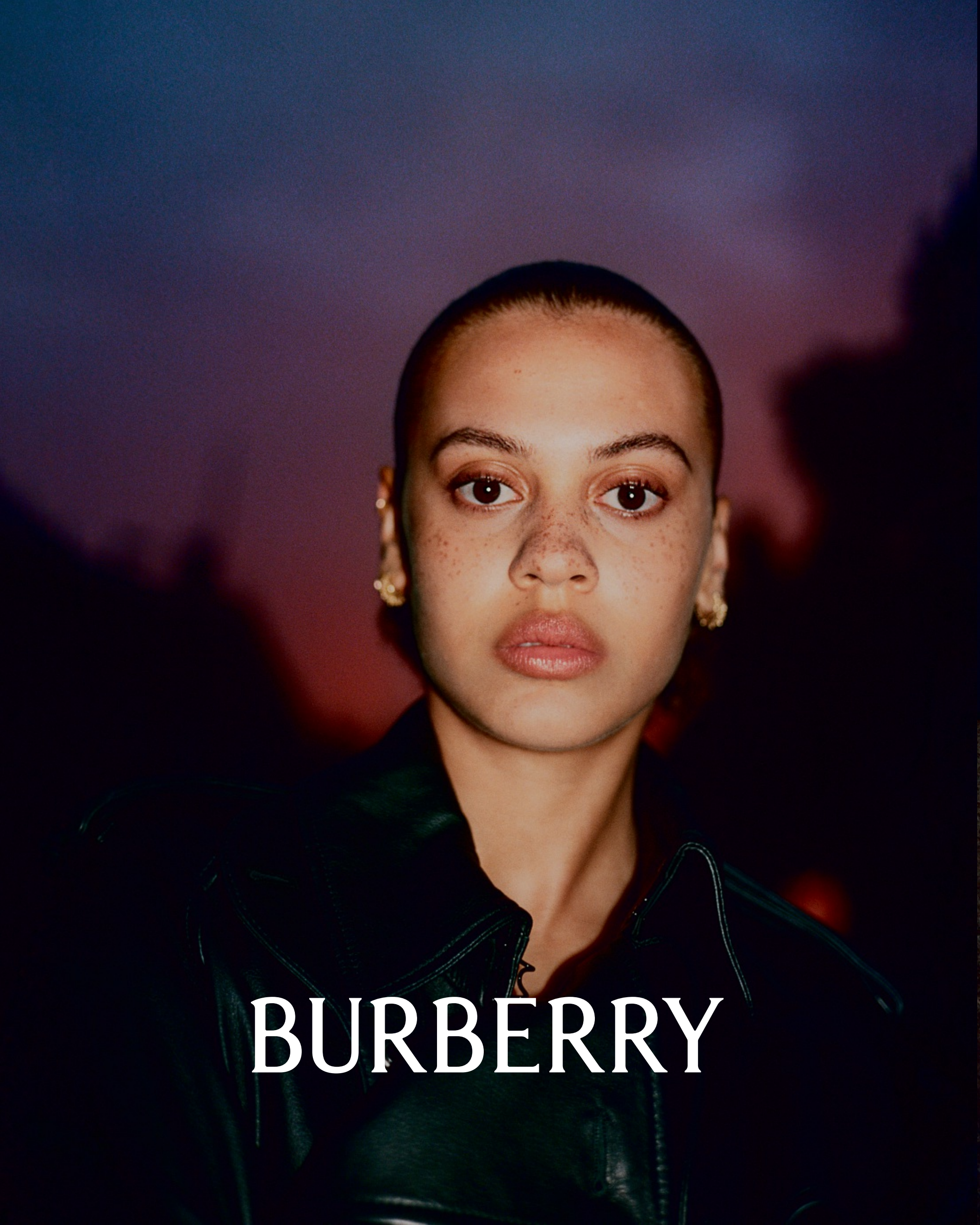
The French photographer learnt portraiture while assisting creatives such as Nicolas Guérin, who famously captures movie stars in black and white. After branching out on his own, Lienard began shooting children’s fashion in 2015. For this week’s *The Aesthete*, he shot Byredo’s make-up artist Lucia Pica in her Paris apartment. “Lucia welcomed me with an Italian coffee and a French croissant. Best breakfast ever!”



EMMANUELLE RAMOS

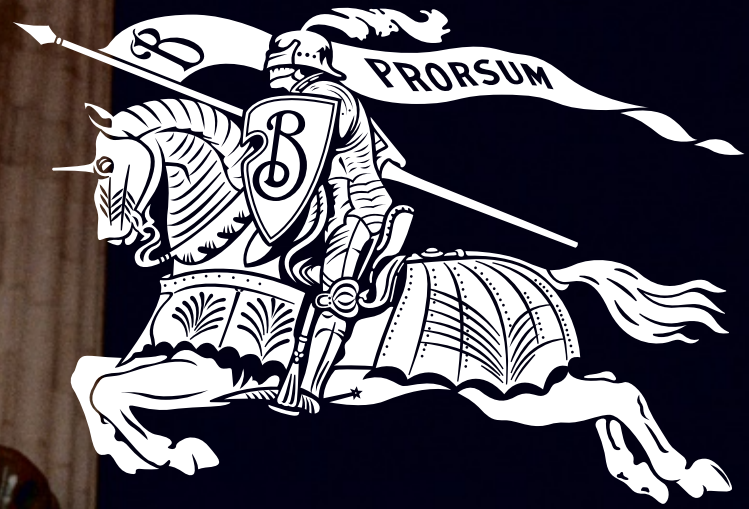
Having assisted stylists including Marie-Amélie Sauvé and Carine Roitfeld, Ramos set up the young talents and assistant agency NOOB in 2020. She styled this week’s animal-print shoot, which is captured through the imagined lens of the paparazzi. “During my youth, I was cutting out pictures from magazines and would spend hours googling snaps of my favourite celebrities such as the Olsen sisters and Lindsay Lohan,” she recalls.





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Spring Summer 2023  
Photographed by David Sims

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**S**canning the SS23 shows at the fashion capitals last autumn, I found my eye increasingly drawn to collections that looked “fresh”: those that offered an unclouded palette, wearability and a clean line. Many may roll their eyes at what might sound a rather anti-fashion statement: to look for something so mundane as wearability at a fashion show? How boring.

On the contrary, the most interesting, intelligent offerings were those that gave an unexpected spin to the most quotidian of clothes. Take Matthieu Blazy's collection for Bottega Veneta, one of the most talked about and arresting of the season. The first few looks seemed like your average wardrobe basics, until it was revealed the outfits were all made of leather – a *trompe l'oeil* most brilliantly effected by Kate Moss in faux-denim jeans and a flannel shirt. Likewise, at Louis Vuitton, Nicolas Ghesquière elevated staples with details such as supersized zippers and poppers. Sara Semic looks at “the age of hyperinflation” to find out why, when analysts predicted stealthy luxury in fashion, designers seem to have gone the other way (page 33).

It was Amber Valletta, walking for Stella McCartney in a simple black tuxedo, who embodied everything I'm craving at the moment. The look was a combination of insouciant glamour and classic pieces with an early '90s flavour; mixed with Valletta's own innate approachability, it made total sense in a season of disparate silhouettes and shapes. I'm delighted that she agreed to be on the cover of this spring fashion issue, offering a smart take on the most sophisticated styles (page 70). The edit offers an easy directive for how to navigate the fashions – “keep it simple” – as well as inspiration for how to rework pieces you likely already have.

### VALLETTA EMBODIES EVERYTHING I CRAVE IN FASHION

I'm also happy to feature a host of other talents. Jessica Beresford talks to the fabulous Edgardo Osorio, who is expanding Aquazzura with a line of appropriately bedazzling handbags (page 40). Edgardo launched his footwear brand in 2011 and has since shoe'd women in ever higher places – quite literally, as his heels are among the most sky-scrapery on the market. His mission to make the brand a more rounded accessories proposition is ambitious, but I don't doubt his plan to pull in €100mn by 2025. Meanwhile, the Albanian designer Nensi Dojaka has channelled her training in lingerie to create a cult brand of sheer, sexy and seductive evening dresses (page 62). The former LVMH Prize-winner's gowns are now a regular of the red carpet, and her growth has been as uplifting as her structurally impressive yet exquisite corsetry. No surprise that Nensi, who only launched in 2019, is this year set to turn a profit. This month she debuts a line of wedding dresses, perfect for brides who have no interest in “blushing” and are more focused on letting the congregation know that their intended is indeed one very lucky chap.



Above: model and actress Amber Valletta (page 70). Right: Christian Louboutin's hotel in Melides, Portugal (page 90). Below: artist Luella Bartley (page 86)



NENSI DOJAKA SS23

Lastly, two designers with long experience in the fashion trenches who have decided to spread their wings in different creative fields. Christian Louboutin offers us a first look at his new hotel Vermelho, in Melides, a Portuguese village south of the more popular Comporta, where he has kept a home for years (page 90). The 13-room haven is built in the style of the region's classic architecture, albeit one with Luxor alabaster (reflecting Louboutin's Egyptian heritage), Parisian paint details and loads of Portuguese tiles. Inevitably, there are also touches of the designer's own bold signature, with ceramics and interior details to match his glossy carmine soles. With plans to incorporate further properties into the hotel project, Louboutin has ensured the sleepy village has become a red-hot place to stay.

By contrast, designer and brand founder Luella Bartley has spent recent years pursuing painting and ceramics, at a time when fashion has failed to hold her in its thrall. She was inspired to draw while caring for her son Kip, who was diagnosed with leukaemia as a teenager, and art has offered a focus for her feelings since his death in 2021 (page 86). The work – sinuous, twisted and bestial – has a visceral power. As an act of self-expression, it's emotionally vulnerable and raw. “Fashion was about creating a mask that I could hide behind,” she tells Victoria Woodcock about her new outlet. “Here, I was desperate to be honest about who we are.” ■HTSI

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# Lucia Pica

The make-up artist and Byredo partner loves the light in Naples, red lipstick and the style of Lauren Bacall

INTERVIEW BY **JO ELLISON**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JULIEN LIENARD**



Top: Lucia Pica at home in Paris. Above: her The Row velvet evening bag. Right: Byredo scents in her bathroom

BYREDO  
SCARLET RIVER  
LIPSTICK, £40



**M**Y PERSONAL STYLE SIGNIFIER is a vintage suit. I have so many: I go back to Naples and there's a tiny little shop called Doctor Vintage, and he's my guy. He's not a tailor, but he sources everything himself and has a good eye. I find all these nice old '70s linens – usually light blue or dark blue. It's men's tailoring but I don't really change much. And then there is the birthmark on my hand. I've been really lucky that I've met people who have seen it as this beautiful, attractive, interesting thing. When I was younger, there was this moment where I wanted to look like everyone else. And then I came to understand, well, this is part of me – I'm not going to be sorry about it for the rest of my life. I carry it well now. I am who I am.

**THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED** was a The Row velvet evening bag, with a thin strap. It's speaking to my nostalgic '90s mood. I like things that are not too obvious or of the "now" – not screaming something.

**THE PLACE THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME** is Naples, because I was born there, and because I feel like if you survive that, you're

good! It's interesting, it's difficult, it's a place with strong energy. When I think of the city, I think of the summer when the light turns orange and warm and there's the contrast of the blue of the sea and sky. There's also the texture of the air – this density, because the heat makes it quite heavy and sensual. I know I'm home when I land off the plane and smell the scent of the city. I get this feeling of unconditional love.

**I'VE RECENTLY REDISCOVERED** breathing space. In the past few years I've had the opportunity to work on projects that sound interesting to me, like my work with Byredo, but I've also given myself more time to think, which allows for more creativity. I read this quote in a book recently that says, "your life is what you do every day", quite simply that. It really shocked me. Life isn't this idea; it's what happens every day.

**THE BEST SOUVENIR I'VE BROUGHT HOME** is art equipment: for example, some Japanese watercolours. I do my own quite naïve watercolours – I'm not prolific, but every now and then I sit there and play with colours and something happens. Watercolour is such a nice medium because it's kind of like it has its own life. You have to follow and see where it goes.



# THE AESTHETE



Far left: Pica's bedroom, with its Sussy Cazalet wall hanging and Rupprecht Skrip lamp. Left: her bathroom

found for about €20. I'll also trawl the old-fashioned underwear shops in Italy – for little labels such as Cagi.

**IN MY FRIDGE YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND** Parmesan. In an Italian household you have to have that. Blueberries, goat's milk yoghurt, French cheeses and charcuterie of some kind. White wine, beers. I like to have a little bit of everything. Among my friends I'm considered a good cook but at home I'm considered the least successful in the kitchen – they all cook amazingly well and I'm always the little sister, though very well looked after.

**THE THING I COULDN'T DO WITHOUT** is a bathtub. It's not very eco, and I am trying on that front. I'm turning my radiators off but I run a bath... I don't think I could take a house or a hotel without a bath. It's the quickest way to ground yourself, especially when you go to a different country. Being in that element is comforting.



**THE LAST ITEM OF CLOTHING I ADDED TO MY WARDROBE** was a Celine tuxedo, to wear to a wedding. That kind of wider cut in a tuxedo is quite hard to find and Hedi Slimane does suits so very well.

**THE OBJECT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH** is a George Nakashima coffee table I bought a few years ago at a vintage auction that I think I will take with me wherever I go. It has a very organic, natural shape and has such simplicity and elegance to it.

**THE ONE ARTIST I WOULD COLLECT IF I COULD** is Cy Twombly. No question. I love the naïvety, the colours... I've just bought a book about the houses he had in Rome and Gaeta. I love his aesthetic – I'd love to live in his world. For my moodboards, when I'm developing make-up, I'll often look at someone like Rothko. It's about texture as much as colour – the two have to work in combination when I'm planning a product. A shiny red and a matte red are two very different things.

**MY WELLBEING GURU** is my yoga instructor Tatiana Avila Bouru, who does a very upbeat, dynamic yoga class. And I do Pilates in a studio, Rituel. It's five minutes from my house. Sometimes I see Elaine Huntzinger here for acupuncture, including face acupuncture. I get a lot of shoulder pain from my work, so I need to keep moving. Next on my list since I moved to Paris is finding an osteopath. [theyogalovers.com](http://theyogalovers.com), [studio-rituel.paris](http://studio-rituel.paris), [elainehuntzinger.com](http://elainehuntzinger.com)

**AN INDULGENCE I WOULD NEVER FORGO** is crisps. British crisps and also the Italian San Carlo Rustica wavy ones. It's a very commercial brand but they are my favourite.

**THE BEST BIT OF ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED** was on an uphill walk with my friend last summer that I was finding challenging, and she said, "It's when you push your limits that the magic happens." I laughed, then I thought about it. I liked the idea that you could break through boundaries you'd made for yourself. It's about getting outside of the box and being comfortable being uncomfortable. ■HTSI

**THE BEST BOOK I'VE READ IN THE PAST YEAR** is *The Body Keeps the Score*. It's about how the body keeps the memory of trauma and how the new generation of psilocybin and psychedelics can help with that. I find microdosing fascinating. I've read Michael Pollan's book but I'm leaning more towards this one.

**MY STYLE ICON** is Lauren Bacall, for her casual masculine-feminine vibe. The suits, the shirts, the lipstick, good brows, cheekbones, hair. Her look was so consistent. I'm thinking of that picture of her in a white shirt with the cigarette and the orange lipstick.

**THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN RECENTLY** was make-up to my mum's friends – they get so beyond excited. I sometimes give them makeovers, though less and less because I'm usually so busy. But they love them. If I give them a make-up or beauty tip on how to do something, it really touches them. The tip I usually give people is: use less foundation. Your skin is not as bad as you think it is. So use thin, glowy foundation with concealer where needed.

**AND THE BEST GIFT I'VE RECEIVED** is a star, which my friend named "Lucia" for me.

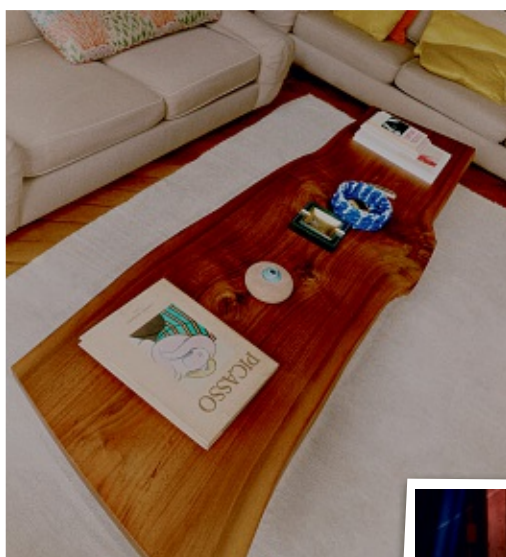
**THE LAST MUSIC I DOWNLOADED** was quite embarrassing – a Bad Bunny track, though my niece thinks it's really cool. I was on holiday with my friend. But my favourite song of all time is "Into My Arms" by Nick Cave.

**THE BEAUTY STAPLE I'M NEVER WITHOUT** is lipstick. Before mascara and sometimes even before foundation, I put colour on my face. Lipstick first. I used to use a lot of NARS. Then I started to create for Chanel so I had a few favourites there. From the last Byredo collection I like Scarlet River, which is between a gloss and a lipstick. It's quite easy to apply because it's got a pointy applicator so follows the shape of your mouth. Sometimes I use pencils underneath as well. Lipstick is about a feeling for me – you brighten your face, you brighten your mood. Recently I've been wearing Transported, a reddish/burgundy brown, which I created for the Byredo collection that's coming out in February.

**I HAVE A COLLECTION OF** jeans and white T-shirts, because I'm always on the search for the perfect example of each. The closest I've come so far is a Margaret Howell T-shirt – a men's one. It has a good neck, is really strong and a bit more elevated. And for jeans, probably a pair of straight-leg, mid-rise jeans my vintage dealer in Naples



Above: Pica at home in Paris. Below: suits from Doctor Vintage in Naples. Right: her George Nakashima coffee table



THE TIP I USUALLY GIVE PEOPLE?  
USE LESS FOUNDATION



Right: Lauren Bacall, Pica's style icon. Left: her Japanese watercolours. Below: *The Body Keeps the Score* – her favourite recent read





A woman with long blonde hair is sitting on a large, layered rock formation. She is wearing a white, sleeveless, cowl-neck dress with a subtle pattern. She is holding a light green, woven Bottega Veneta bag with a gold-tone knot detail. The background is a textured, layered rock wall. The overall mood is serene and minimalist.

BOTTEGA VENETA









**CHANEL**



QUATRE COLLECTION

# BOUCHERON

PARIS SINCE 1858



# THE FIX

TREND

## THE AGE OF HYPER INFLATION

Just when you thought fashion was becoming more stealthy, designers have taken details to the max. By *Sara Semic*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ANTONI CIUFO**  
STYLING BY **ISABELLE KOUNTOURE**  
MODEL **ENA POPPE**

LOUIS VUITTON  
wool and leather  
bomber jacket  
with oversized  
metal zip, £6,500





**D**esigners have long played with amped-up volume, but details have rarely been as inflated as they are this season.

At Louis Vuitton, Nicolas Ghesquière took functional elements and blew them up to out-of-this-world proportions: puffed-up space-age vests were festooned with mammoth-sized zippers (reportedly the largest ever manufactured), *trompe l'oeil* leather dresses had zoomed-in hardware details and camel-toned trench coats were fastened with poppers the size of plates. It was “a stylistic exercise that re-evaluates the proportions of clothing and its

adjuncts”, read the show notes, “one in which the codes of femininity unsettle scale”.

**THEIR SIZE SPEAKS TO THE IMPACT OF THE SMALL SCREEN**

Jonathan Anderson also took on the inflated trend. At Loewe’s SS23 collection, models walked the runway wearing giant anthurium flowers, pumped-up heels with balloon details and leather coats with floor-sweepingly long sleeves. Michael Kors paired ruched crimson dresses and fringed sarongs with large gold buckles, while at Miu Miu, giant ’90s-inspired utility belts featured exaggerated pouches, and burnished leather coats came with colossal cargo pockets. At Akris, creative director

Albert Kriemler repurposed the XL gold buttons from a vintage 1979 cashmere caban in tribute to the era that was all about making a statement. “Volume, structure, silhouette,” says Kriemler.

While these magnified details attest to the popularity of more functional clothing, their attention-grabbing size also speaks to the impact of consumption via the small screen. “We’ve seen, since the beginning of the iPhone era, that [the smartphone] has influenced design,” says Dr Valerie Steele, fashion historian and director/chief

curator of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. “We’ve seen many more colours and prints than before because that shows up so well, whereas an all-black ensemble doesn’t show up at all. Similarly, details of fabric, shiny fabric, matte fabric, velvet – you don’t see that on the screen.”

“It’s also a great way of distinguishing one designer’s work from all the others,” adds Dr Steele. “As you’re scrolling through a million things, you say, ‘Oh my God, it’s Louis Vuitton.’ You immediately

Above: LOEWE steel and brass anthurium-flower top, POA, wool tailored trousers, £825, and satin Comic Balloon pump 90 shoes, £1,400

Above left: JIL SANDER BY LUCIE AND LUKE MEIER gold brass chain necklace, POA





**DOLCE & GABBANA**

[DOLCEGABBANA.COM](http://DOLCEGABBANA.COM)





recognise its collection because of those hyper-inflated details.”

Fashion has long served as a barometer for the changing tides of the economy. In 1926, Professor George Taylor came up with the Hemline Index theory, suggesting that the length of women’s skirts and dresses was a metric for the direction of financial markets. Today’s supersized accessories perhaps represent a similar reaction. “This idea of ‘peacocking’, or showcasing your finest ‘magpie’ jewellery, is a way of people putting their best foot forward,” says Laura Yiannakou, senior strategist of womenswear at trend forecaster WGSN, “in an attempt to take back control by smartening up and feeling good about themselves.”

Feeling good was top of the agenda for Jeremy Scott, who tackled the issue of inflation literally by injecting blow-up elements into his collection for Moschino. Ladylike dresses featured inflatable lapels

and hemlines, while technicolour pool floats were fashioned into jaunty hats and peplum inserts, bringing a typically playful twist to the theme. From searingly bright-pink flamingos to dolphin armbands and turtle floaties, it was a collection abundant with optimism and humour.

**“THE MOTIVE OF THE COLLECTION IS MOOD BUOYANCY”**

“Obviously, when we are having so much stress in the world and negativity, you have to find a place for joy,” says Scott. “You kind of need a life-preserver... and hemlines, while technicolour pool floats were fashioned into jaunty hats and peplum inserts, bringing a typically playful twist to the theme. From searingly bright-pink flamingos to dolphin armbands and turtle floaties, it was a collection abundant with optimism and humour.”

Inflation is something everyone is talking about. You can see it in the news with the cost of everything going up: housing, food, life,” he adds. “I wanted the collection to be uplifting – its motive is mood buoyancy. We must be cognisant of what’s happening around us, yet we must also hold space for joy.” Escapist fashion to keep us afloat. ■HTSI

Above: MOSCHINO silk-mix fitted jacket with inflatable heart detailing, £1,305, and inflatable heart detailing earrings, £270

Model, Ena Poppe at Women Paris. Casting, Ben Grimes at Drive Represents. Hair, Alexander Soltermann at Home. Make-up, Ruben Masoliver at Walter Schupfer. Photographer’s assistant, Vassili Boclé. Digital operator, Sarah Reimann at Imagin. Stylist’s assistants, Aylin Bayhan and Elsa Durousseau. Production, Jason Le Berre at Home. Special thanks, Royal Cheese Studio and RVZ Paris



TREND

**Lime zones**

Step out in the ziest shade of the season. By Aylin Bayhan

STINE GOYA

REJINA PYO

SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO

FENDI leather Medium Peekaboo bag, £4,400

VICTORIA BECKHAM

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES, KIRK ROBERT, NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX/EVINE







TOD'S

TOD'S BOUTIQUES: TEL. 020.74932237 - 020.72351321





CHANEL leather boots, £1,610



ALANUI cashmere-wool jacquard Icon cardigan, £2,400



DIOR leather Saddle bag, £3,250



CHLOÉ recycled cotton-hemp denim trousers, £1,800



ALIGHIERI gold-plated-bronze and garnet The Burning Desire necklace, £395

MIU MIU leather jacket, £4,400



SHOPPING

# YEE-HA!

Swagger into spring with rodeo attitude. By Aylin Bayhan



The inspiration: Marilyn Monroe on the set of *The Misfits*, Nevada, 1960

LORO PIANA wool Geometric throw, £915



JACQUIE AICHE gold, diamond and turquoise ring, £8,400, matches fashion.com

Vintage 1980s metal-framed lounge chair, €2,800, 1stdibs.com



Y/PROJECT denim Classic Cowboy Cuff jeans, €580



TIFFANY & CO white-gold Tiffany T Hoop earrings, £1,400



LEMAIRE leather and metal buckle belt, £265, farfetch.com



RUSLAN BAGINSKIY leather-trimmed felt cowboy hat, £266, mytheresa.com



ARMANI CASA leather Fumo basket, £2,180



KNWLS silk-mix Scallop blouse, £485



BUTTERO suede ankle boots, £622, farfetch.com



LOUIS VUITTON leather jacket, £12,000



# JIMMY CHOO

SPRING 2023  
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ACCESSORIES

# THE DAZZLE OF AQUAZZURA

Edgardo Osorio found success with heels you can actually dance in. But the party's just getting started, he tells *Jessica Beresford*

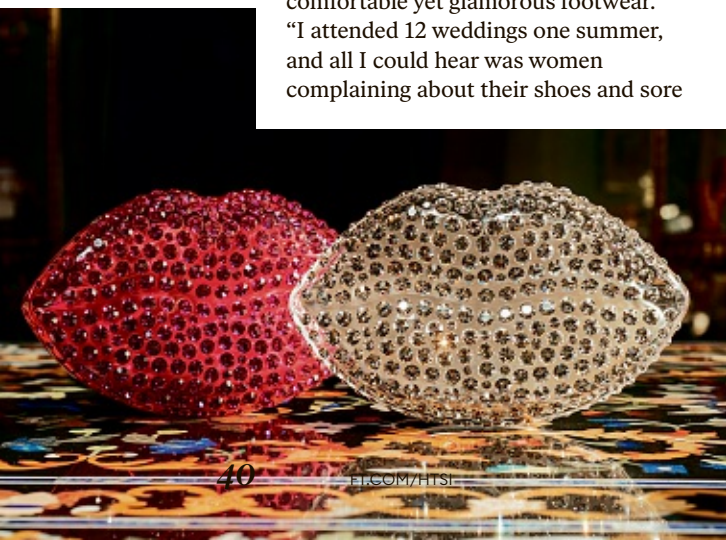
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTINA GIAMMARIA

I'm unloading on Edgardo Osorio about my issue with heels. How, after wearing impractically high shoes throughout my early 20s, I've been left with unsightly feet that couldn't squeeze into a strappy stiletto even if they tried. What could Aquazzura – the brand he founded in 2011, which is renowned for its elaborate, skyscraper heels – possibly have to counter such a dire situation?

Osorio, effortlessly playing the part of a sales clerk, rattles off my options: there are “sexy and cool” mid-heels that are still comfortable; boots made from malleable nappa that mould to the foot; Tequila stilettos that are high yet hug the foot through cleverly placed straps; or the lace-up, flat Christie style – of which Aquazzura has sold hundreds of thousands of pairs – which was specifically created for such a bugbear.

After all, Osorio started his business specifically to cater to women who wanted comfortable yet glamorous footwear. “I attended 12 weddings one summer, and all I could hear was women complaining about their shoes and sore

Top: AQUAZZURA nappa leather Downtown 24/7 shoulder bag, from £1,860, and satin Gatsby Sling 105 shoes, £950. Below: brass, resin, satin and strass Kiss Me minaudière, £2,145



feet,” says Osorio of his entrepreneurial catalyst. “I was curious because everyone was wearing beautiful, expensive shoes, but their feet were hurting even before they started dancing. It wasn't a good sign, and it dawned on me that it was an opportunity.”

It's a proposition that has seen Aquazzura stand out among the many contemporary shoemakers on the market today, and nip at the heels of its heritage counterparts. The brand, which recently celebrated a decade of business, has annual revenues of around €70mn, with growth up 82 per cent in 2022 on the previous year. With ambitious plans for product category expansion, including into leather handbags this month, the brand

is aiming to pull in €100mn by 2025. All while still being independently owned.

Osorio was born in Cartagena, Colombia, and recalls being creatively fired by the colour, prints and energy of the city.

**“WHETHER YOU HAVE MONEY OR NOT, THERE'S A LUST FOR LIFE”**

“If you walk down the street in Cartagena, there's always music playing, and everyone's smiling. Whether you have money or you don't, there's just a lust for life.” He did a summer course at Central Saint Martins aged just 14 and, after graduating high school at 16, went on to study accessories at London College of Fashion. At 19, Osorio moved to Florence to start a



SKETCHES OF NEW HANDBAGS



Left: Aquazzura founder Edgardo Osorio in his office in Milan

consulting company, advising some of the industry's top accessories brands, including Ferragamo and René Caovilla, as well as working at Roberto Cavalli as creative director of shoes.

Osorio took a "leap of faith" starting his own brand aged 25. He teamed up with a technician who had 50 years of experience, and who had studied the anatomy of the foot. Together they created what would become the base of Aquazzura's shoes, focusing on technique and construction. "I wanted the shoes to have a specific look, a specific lightness and sensuality, but also with a real focus on comfort, which at the time was almost a dirty word," says Osorio. "So many things that look beautiful on the shelf don't work because the designers don't work around humans; they are working to make an object, like a sculpture, that's in their mind. But, for me, the shoe needs to become part of the body." Osorio settled on a last specially developed to evenly distribute the weight of the body throughout the foot, and added a single, identifying marker – a pineapple – to the sole.

**AQUAZZURA'S EARLY SUCCESS** coincided with the explosion of street-style photography and the celebrification of fashion editors, such as Giovanna Battaglia Engelbert, who favoured the brand's look-at-me designs. "The shoes were not fashionable, but stylish, comfortable and incredibly feminine – they fit like gloves for the feet," says Battaglia Engelbert, now the creative director of Swarovski. "Those were the shoes where I had the most people stopping me to ask where they were from." Adds Osorio: "Three years into the brand, I remember going to a show in Milan, and half the front row of editors were wearing Aquazzura. I couldn't believe it."

This was buoyed by celebrity endorsements from Rihanna, Julianne Moore and Nicole Kidman, as well as, more recently, Catherine, the Princess of Wales. Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, is a longtime supporter of Aquazzura; and wore a pair of white pumps with blue soles at her wedding reception (the bridesmaids sported Mary-Jane flats by the brand). The shoes have also featured in Hollywood blockbusters: on Lady Gaga in *House of Gucci*, and on Ana de Armas in the James Bond film *No Time to Die*.

Some of Aquazzura's most notable hits include the Papillon, a tie-up sandal with wee butterflies that garnish the foot, and the Wild Thing, a heel with tassels and fringing that became the subject of a 2016 lawsuit against Ivanka Trump, who was accused of copying the style for her own footwear brand. MatchesFashion, which has stocked Aquazzura since 2014, also cites its platforms and boots. "Aquazzura is well-known in the footwear industry for exceptionally combining innovative design with embellishments and vibrant colour

**"NONE OF THE BAGS HAVE A LOGO, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DESIGN"**

pops, all under the umbrella of great luxury Italian craftsmanship," says the retailer's head of womenswear Liane Wiggins.

Osorio expanded into costume jewellery in 2021 and homeware – including dinnerware, table linens and tea and coffee sets – last year. His new leather handbag line, launching this month, comprises half "day-to-night" bags, which are designed to work in an office setting, and half evening styles – "fun, emotional, party bags" – to go with the brand's occasion shoes. "None of the bags have a logo, it's all about the design," adds Osorio. "What I see on the market now is a bunch of very basic bags with a huge logo on them – they all look the same. I wanted to do the opposite."

Next, he's launching men's shoes, and is thinking about beauty, fragrance and eyewear. "Ready-to-wear is the only thing I would not do," Osorio says. "Sadly for the luxury world nowadays it's more of a communication tool, because no one really sells a lot of ready-to-wear, so it's kind of a waste of time. I like to sell products that people wear."

Which is all part of Osorio's grand plan to create something bigger than just shoes. "I named it Aquazzura because I had in mind to do a lifestyle brand," he adds. "I wanted it to mean something Italian: I wanted it to be the Italian dream, in a way." ■HTSI

GALACTIC CRYSTAL MINI BAGS, FROM £1,330



Above: nappa leather Twist 105 sandals, from £790. Right: nappa leather Soho Chain pouch, from £950



TREND

## On pointe

Footwear so dainty you'll want to do a pirouette. By Sara Semic

The humble ballet flat staged a return on the spring/summer catwalks. At Tod's, they came in citrus yellow and purple satin; Simone Rocha featured metallic green and tangerine versions with criss-crossed straps; Chanel offered sparkly slingback styles. "They make any outfit look effortless and polished," says stylist Therese Bassler. "With these in your wardrobe, you never have to worry about which shoes to wear."

PHOTOGRAPHS: BEN BROOMFIELD (2)

SIMONE ROCHA

MOLLY GODDARD

SANDY LIANG

JW ANDERSON

CHANEL

KIKO KOSTADINOV

DIOR

TOD'S







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# THE FIND

SMART INVESTMENT

It's a wrap with these vintage  
silk scarf cushion covers

EDITED BY **CLARA BALDOCK**  
PHOTOGRAPH BY **CHRIS BROOKS**



CLS CUSHIONS  
one-of-a-kind cushion  
covers recycled from  
vintage silk scarves, from  
£95. Pictured from top:  
Pucci Aqua, Christian Dior  
Oriental Theme Garden  
and Liberty Lily Pond





**ISABEL  
MARANT**



TREND

# GENERATION M

What's the McFlurry about fashion and fast food? *Grace Cook* finds out

Growing up in Ostrobothnia in western Finland, Jimi Vain did what lots of teens in rural areas do: he spent many nights at McDonald's. His order was a double cheeseburger without pickles; older kids would be doing wheelies on motorbikes in the car park. "It was like a youth club," says the 24-year old fashion designer, now based in Helsinki, who established his unisex label, Vain, in 2019. "We were so isolated... McDonald's was the first thing I saw from overseas that showed me we were part of a connected world."

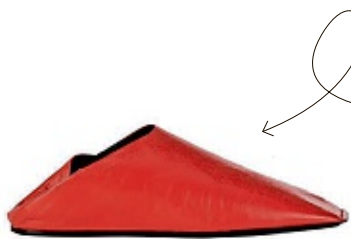
So when Vain got an email last summer asking him to collaborate with McDonald's, he jumped at the chance. "I heard that the M logo is more recognisable than the Christian cross," he says of the company that has almost 40,000 outlets globally and caters to 65 million customers a day.

The fast-food inspired Vain x McDonald's collection launched last November. "We sourced 150 McDonald's uniforms from across Helsinki, brought them back to our atelier, cut them up and turned them into 27 pieces," says Vain of the handmade, one-of-a-kind wares. These include a slouchy black track jacket with boxy sleeves, a button-down gingham midi skirt with an asymmetric hem, and an A-line tuxedo dress. "I wanted to create something that me and my friends would actually wear," says Vain of the clothes, which are mostly black, not red and yellow. Even the M logo has been repurposed into a love heart. "We wanted to propose McDonald's in a luxury, high-fashion context."

Vain's collaboration – which will be raffled to McDonald's staff rather

VAIN x  
McDONALD'S

BALENCIAGA'S 2018 LEATHER MULES WERE MOCKED FOR RESEMBLING McDONALD'S FRENCH FRY CARTONS



Top right: VAIN x McDONALD'S. Right: VETEMENTS SS20 menswear collection showed at the McDonald's Champs-Élysées branch, Paris



Above: Jeremy Scott for Moschino SS14. Below: ADIDAS x ERIC EMANUEL FOR McDONALD'S cotton T-shirt, £45, mrporter.com



than sold, adding to its exclusivity – is the latest in the line-up of partnerships with niche brands giving the Big Mac maker a new level of street cred. In October, it launched a collection with cult LA label Cactus Plant Flea Market (CPFM) – the brainchild of Pharrell Williams' stylist, Cynthia Lu. And last spring, sportswear designer Eric Emanuel and Adidas teamed up with McDonald's on an exclusive collection that included high tops and camel-coloured tracksuits. But its signature motifs have long inspired fashion brands. Jeremy Scott's SS14 collection for Moschino was an ode to McDonald's, while Vetements held its SS20 menswear show in the Paris Champs-Élysées branch.

"Traditional advertising doesn't cut it when you're trying to keep a brand like McDonald's relevant in the digital era," says Mats Nyström, a marketing director of McDonald's Finland, who helped spearhead the project with Vain. Much like its menu, it takes a localised approach to partnerships: young, up-and-coming names in different global regions give it an in-the-know kudos. The aim, says Nyström, is to "create popular culture... New generations want to consume our brand, not just eat our products."

The CPFM collection (from \$60) included T-shirts decorated with mascots such as the Hamburglar and Ronald McDonald, and sweatpants and hoodies with slogans like "All Are Welcome" and "I Came, I Saw, I Dipped!" But the must-have was the Happy Meal that tapped into nostalgia. Sold for around \$14, it included collectable mascot toys and caused a frenzy;

14,000 McDonald's sites across the US were inundated and boxes had to be restricted to one per customer.

Brett Turner, a 40-year old IT specialist, queued for hours in Brooklyn to get his hands on a toy. "It reminds me of being a kid, that feeling of not knowing what you're going to get inside," he says. "And the mascots are a bit like art." One Colorado-based eBay later sold his unopened Cactus Buddy, Birdie and Hamburglar toys for \$10,700.

"It's testament to our work merging culture and commerce," says Tariq Hassan, McDonald's USA chief marketing and customer experience officer. He says brands are given free rein to reinterpret its iconography. CPFM drove the highest

weekly digital transactions ever for the US business. And upon announcement, CPFM was the number one Google trend.

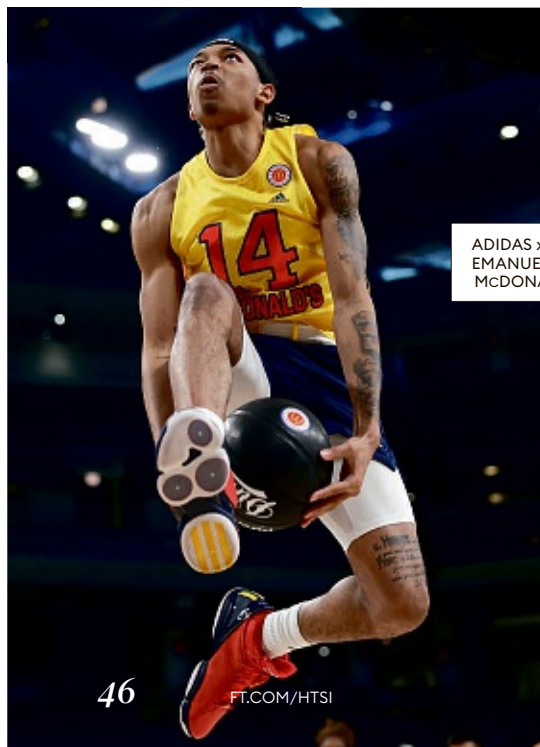
**"THEY WANT TO CONSUME OUR BRAND, NOT JUST EAT OUR FOOD"**

Of course, the "drop" format of McDonald's launches adds to the hype. "It's all about the scarcity aspect," says Andrea Hernández, the founder of Snaxshot, a zeitgeisty newsletter commenting on all things food and drink. This juxtaposition of mass appeal and exclusivity – especially in the realm of luxury fashion – is extra potent for younger generations who have grown up online.

Nigo, the Japanese streetwear designer who is now artistic director of Kenzo, is reportedly doing the next collaboration: he fuelled the rumour mill last November after posting on Instagram a black-and-white video from the oldest drive-thru hamburger stand in California, which opened in 1953. But for now, Hassan's lips are sealed. As he says: "Authenticity is our secret sauce." ■HTSI



Below: CACTUS PLANT FLEA MARKET x McDONALD'S sold-out hoodie and sweatpants



ADIDAS x ERIC EMANUEL FOR McDONALD'S



ART DIR: PAUL MARCIANO PH: VICCOLYA & SAIDA © GUESS, INC. 2023



# GUESS

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Yayoi Kusama





*Creating infinity*

**LOUIS VUITTON**





Yayoi Kusama







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# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?



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**A-K-R-I-S-**  
100 years





Above: CHLOÉ Edith phone pouch, £755. Left: ANNA OCTOBER wool-mix top, £550



THE ROW

is assembled by one artisan, taking around five days to complete.

October is one of several designers using this analogue technique – and rendering it anew. Once considered beachy and a bit homespun, crochet has come into its own this season, in silhouettes and patterns that are far from the hippie styles often found at market stalls.

Chanel offered monochromatic crochet: a mix of uptown polish and Left Bank bohemia that felt younger than its typical tweeds. Inspired by the court of the Medici, Dior’s Maria Grazia Chiuri realised regal coats and two-pieces in crocheted lace, while Rejina Pyo, Proenza Schouler and Wales Bonner focused on the female body; their crochet was see-through and sexy.

“DESIGNERS HAVE ELEVATED the art of crochet from being viewed as a hobby craft to something sophisticated and relevant,” says Lucinda Chambers, the stylist and co-founder of Colville and e-commerce site Collagerie. She notes how SS23’s crochet is more experimental and “interesting” owing to the boom in knitting and handcraft as “people have rediscovered skills that are beautiful and, importantly, stress-reducing”. Delsy Gouw, of New York brand Memorial Day, was taught to crochet as a child by her mother, and took up the craft again in 2020; now, her kaleidoscopic, checkerboard bucket hats and bikinis are worn by everyone from Bella Hadid to Ella Emhoff.

“With crochet hooks, there are no limits to colours, shapes and thickness,” says Marco Rambaldi, a finalist in the 2023 Woolmark Prize, who this season turned hand-linked motifs into miniskirts decorated with hearts and flowers. He prefers the technique to knitting as he can “reinvent” the yarns: if knitwear is a flat canvas, crochet is a sculpture, with each link forming a brand new shape and silhouette.

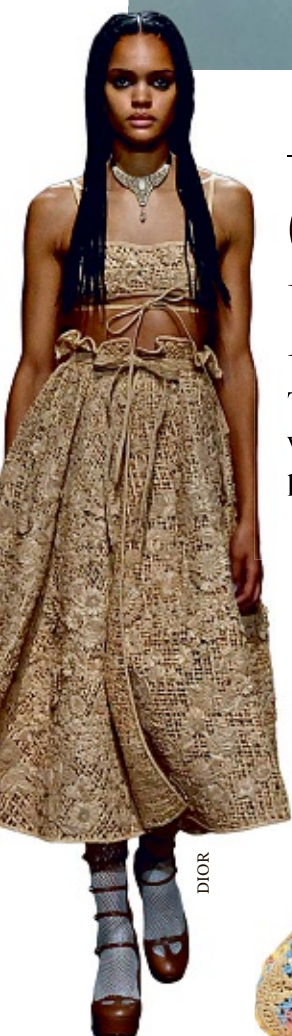
**IF KNITWEAR IS A FLAT CANVAS, CROCHET IS A SCULPTURE**

Ceylin Türkkan Bilge, the Turkish designer behind Siedrés, agrees: she says crochet is “an excellent way to add dimension to clothing”. Based in Istanbul, she comes from a family of textile makers. “We can’t always find what we are looking for [in woven cloth], so making unique motifs from crochet allows us to create the designs we want.” This season, she turned ‘90s-era daisy motifs into barely there tops, with a flower head covering each breast.

Crochet became a modern art form in the 1820s, reportedly evolving from an amalgamation of knitting, embroidery and



Above centre: POLO RALPH LAUREN macramé skirt, £649. Above: AGR crochet hat, POA



DIOR

TREND  
**OFF THE HOOK**

This season’s crochet is woven with history, femininity and purpose, writes *Grace Cook*

Right: MEMORIAL DAY crochet bikini, \$230 for set. Below: WEEKEND MAX MARA cotton Pasticcino bag, £315



Fashion designer Anna October was in Kyiv when president Putin’s Russia invaded Ukraine last February: the city in which she had founded her namesake label in 2010. She fled to Paris and, in July, rented a house in Hydra, Greece, seeking solace and a space for quiet contemplation to “cope with the emotions of the war”.

At a flea market one day, the 32-year-old found some hand-crocheted napkins that motivated her “to do something with my hands”. She put on some music, poured some wine and started to drape the textiles on her friend’s body. “I love the delicacy of crochet; to me it’s very tender and complex,” she says. The material became a metaphor for her own emotions. She spent the next five days turning the doilies into a sleeveless midi-length dress. “The process was very sincere and meditative; a healing moment. This small pleasure helped me to process a great tragedy.”

The prototype became the star piece of an SS23 collection that features a number of off-white, hand-crocheted wares. Each individual napkin design has been crafted by a community of women in Ukraine, and each dress



PROENZA SCHOULER

MARCO RAMBALDI





ULLA JOHNSON

lace-making (the word translates as “hook” in French). Early wares included purses, with the first English handbag pattern published in *The Ladies’ Knitting and Netting Book* in 1837. (Crocheted accessories have an enduring appeal too: this season, Chloé, Alanui and Colville offer myriad intricate bags and totes.) By the mid-1850s, it had spread through Europe and beyond.

“In Ukraine, crochet patterns come from astrology and numerology; in Athens, it’s more structured and less decorative; and in France, it almost look like lace,” says October, who referenced many types of crochet in her collection. This cross-cultural confluence of community is poignant for her. “I like that we’re reinventing pieces, giving them a new life while cherishing the stories and people behind them,” she says.

**MANY OF THESE DESIGNERS** work with women-led cooperatives. Farm Rio operates in Brazil, while Bode’s delicate



SIEDRÉS wool-mix crochet bralette, £300, and viscose maxi dress, £345

button-up shirts, designed for men but worn also by women, are handcrafted by artisans in India. Crochet has always been done “by women in very intimate settings”, says Rachel Scott, founder of New York label Diotima, who employs individual artists in Kingston, as well as a group on Jamaica’s north coast. Some of her dresses are starched: a tradition that Scott likens to “plastic covers on the couches”, protecting from wear and tear.

Türkkan Bilge works with specific groups in Anatolian villages, where “women are unable to receive an education as they are forced to marry at a young age... so they do handcrafts at home”. In Turkey, crochet has long been tied up with money: young girls receive pieces as dowries. “Craft becomes their only source of income,” she says. Supporting, rather than appropriating, has never been more important.

For SS23, these garments are woven with hopeful liberation and strength. It’s a notion felt by October, and also by Gabriela Hearst, who offered Grecian gowns with zany, swirling crochet patterns that riffed on the female reproductive system. The collection was a celebration of women and activists were cast alongside models on her runway, including Cecile Richards, the former president of the American healthcare organisation, and Lauren Wasser, an anti-toxic shock syndrome advocate. For Hearst, crochet – both intimate and intricate – was the perfect source of protest.

It’s a powerful narrative. Diotima’s Scott wants to “shine a light” on the exploitation of Jamaica’s craft industry; Gouw and her mother established their own Memorial Day collective to give women financial independence; Siedrés’ Türkkan Bilge wants to create economic security and opportunity. For these designers, crochet is the ultimate expression of soft power. ■HTSI



GABRIELA HEARST



Above centre: FARM RIO denim jacket, £248. Above: COLVILLE cotton and leather Arrow Cylinder bag, €750

Right: cotton pickers in the Urfa region of Turkey. Below: Powney at Pacomarca, a sustainable alpaca ranch in Peru, from *Fashion Reimagined*



SUSTAINABILITY

## My farm-to-fashion quest

In a new documentary, Mother of Pearl’s Amy Powney takes on the supply chain. *Lauren Hadden* reports

When Amy Powney was announced joint-winner of the BFC/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund in 2017, her response to camera was that she would use the money to create a sustainable collection. Filmmaker Becky Hutner immediately asked if she would be willing to chart the course of this adventure on screen. “I didn’t know what was ahead of me, so I just said, ‘Yeah, sure,’” says Powney, now 38 years old, and owner and creative director of her brand Mother of Pearl.

The documentary *Fashion Reimagined*, which comes to cinemas on 3 March, feels inevitable. Powney was raised by activist parents off-grid in rural England; for years she had felt conflicted about her role in an industry notorious for its carbon footprint. It shows how far the industry has come since filming began – and how far it has to go. Today, a fashion brand making claims for sustainability is no longer unusual: in 2020, retail analytics company Edited reported that over the previous four years the number of clothes described as “sustainable” had quadrupled among online retailers in the US and UK – but this has only also increased doubts as to what “sustainability” means. “[In 2017] we had brands beginning to use terms like ‘radical transparency,’” says Powney. “But all they’d done was look at the factory where they made their garments – what happens before that?”

Powney had in mind a fashion version of farm-to-table cooking – to get back to the farms producing the raw materials and have as few steps (and countries) as possible between them and the end result. Tackling the complex supply chains proved more of a drama than expected. While Powney finally found a farm for wool she was happy with in Uruguay, she could only find hand-spinners in neighbouring Peru – and still no knitters or weavers...

Mother of Pearl now labels every product to show how it satisfies sustainability credentials, and Powney hopes that the film will leverage changes to UK legislation around clothes labelling. She is also still working on the brand’s sourcing and supply chain. Ultimately, the film tracks Powney’s gradual change in thinking. “As a designer you’re trained to draw a garment and then say to a product developer: ‘Right, go make it for me,’” she says. “We flipped the entire thing on its head. We said, these are the fibres and fabrics we’re happy with. Now what can I make with this stuff?”

The result is sumptuous jacquard-weave tailored jackets and smart-casual sweatshirts with her now-signature ruffled sleeves punctured by recycled-plastic beads. It’s almost as if by restricting herself, Powney has amplified her creativity. ■HTSI *Fashion Reimagined* opens in UK and Irish cinemas on 3 March



MOTHER OF PEARL WOOL WREN COAT, £595





ULLA JOHNSON





Fanfan wears NENSI DOJAKA silk dress, POA, and leather Camille shoes, £760, at the brand's north London studio

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTHONY BEHAR/SIPA USA, GARETH CATTERMOLE/BFC/GETTY IMAGES FOR BFC, JEFF KRAVITZ/MTV, VMAS 2020/GETTY IMAGES FOR MTV, MIKE MARSLAND/WIREIMAGE, NEIL MOCKFORD/FILMMAGIC



# Star GAUZE

In just four years, Albanian designer Nensi Dojaka has won a slew of awards and legions of fans. *Sara Semic* meets the 29-year-old redefining sexy for the female gaze

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ADAMA JALLOH**  
STYLING BY **BENJAMIN CANARES**

**H**ad it not been for a prosaic legislative reason, Nensi Dojaka might never have started her namesake fashion brand. The Albanian designer, 29 – who has dressed stars from Zendaya to Sienna Miller in her signature barely there designs – did so to be able to live in London. “I had to get a work visa, which hardly any brands sponsor any more, or do something by myself, so it was out of need,” she says.

Since launching her label in 2019, Dojaka’s cleverly engineered, conceal-and-reveal dresses – a delicate bricolage of organza, georgette and jersey cut-outs that straddle the space between lingerie and ready-to-wear – have made her a fashion-industry darling, and spearheaded today’s revival of sexy dressing, a mantle she modestly dismisses. “I think a lot of brands are doing it at the moment, so I don’t want to take responsibility for bringing back sexy clothing,” she says. “Personally, I don’t see it as revealing. For me it’s normal, and although there is still that ‘male gaze’, I think people are more accepting of it, and of the female body.”

It’s a blisteringly cold day and Dojaka and her design team are diligently working on the upcoming AW23 collection in the brand’s studio overlooking Highbury Fields; the walls are pinned with reference images of faux-fur coats and tailoring. Dojaka is dressed in an oversized white button-down and a pair of red Hunter wellies, her face bare save for a slash of red lipstick; a gentle, self-effacing figure that could seem at odds with her bold, attention-grabbing designs. “I didn’t really have much choice because this was the only thing I knew how to do,” she says of her aesthetic. “Coming from a lingerie background, it was the only way I could translate that into clothes.”

Born in Tirana, Albania, where fashion “doesn’t really exist as an industry”, Dojaka always had an interest in clothes: she would often find herself sketching girls in dresses during her drawing classes, which her parents sent her to from the age of five. She moved to the UK to attend boarding school in Shrewsbury in her teens, followed by a foundation year at Central Saint Martins, where a tutor encouraged her to specialise in lingerie “because I was



always doing very small-scale designs on the mannequins, and it felt very natural”, adds Dojaka. She went on to do a BA in lingerie at London College of Fashion, and an MA in womenswear at Central Saint Martins. “I learned a lot during those two years,” she says. “And then just working on the brand has been... a learning process.”

In 2020, Dojaka was brought into the fold of Fashion East, the talent incubator helmed by Lulu Kennedy that helped launch the careers of Jonathan Anderson and Kim Jones. Her debut runway show – which featured slinky deconstructed minidresses, mesh separates and strappy bras – was a highlight of London Fashion Week.

## “HER DESIGNS FEEL EMPOWERED, DYNAMIC AND FLAWLESS”

A year later she scooped both the British Fashion Council’s Foundation Award for emerging designers and the LVMH Prize, whose endowment enabled her to expand her team and offering, as well as relocate production from the UK to Italy. “The exposure from that was bigger than anything else we had done,” Dojaka says of the prize, which has previously gone to Simon Porte Jacquemus, Marine Serre and Grace Wales Bonner. “Suddenly a lot of people started hearing about the brand, which was then reflected in the sales.”

**DOJAKA’S DESIGNS – A COMBINATION** of pared-back minimalism combined with a highly constructed and precise method of layering and draping fabric on the body – have struck a chord. Sales for her SS23 collection have risen by 127 per cent from last season, while globally her stockist numbers have increased from 59 to 90. “The return of lingerie influences and visible underwear set the stage for Nensi Dojaka’s ascension,” says Marta Indeka, foresight analyst at strategic foresight consultancy The Future Laboratory. “This was cemented by her background and expertise in lingerie design, which allows her to make these complex, layered and cut-out pieces well-engineered, actually wearable and commercially viable.”

“It’s obviously very sexy, but it’s also very delicate,” says Tiffany Hsu, Mytheresa’s fashion buying director, who wore Dojaka’s sheer minidresses on holiday before stocking them on-site. “It’s body-hugging but light. The placement of the cut-outs is very interesting too, so you never feel like you’re showing too much flesh.”

Singer Rita Ora attended the most recent BFC Fashion Awards wearing a sheer raspberry-red gown from Dojaka’s SS23 collection. “Her designs make everyone who wears them feel empowered, dynamic and flawless,” adds Ora, who

bonded with the designer over their shared Albanian heritage. “Nensi is one of a kind, and I have so much respect for the woman she is.” For influencer and broadcaster Camille Charrière, “there’s a real poetry and beauty in Nensi’s work; she’s not just doing sexiness to be provocative”. Charrière, who wore one of Dojaka’s see-through emerald-green dresses to the 2021 Fashion Awards, adds: “The way it skims your body, it reveals without trying to shape you.”

Dojaka is now expanding her product offering to include more outerwear (“options that my mum can wear”), as well as new categories such as shoes and, eventually, bags. This month, the designer is launching a 24-piece bridal collection with Mytheresa, inspired by her custom-made red-carpet dresses. “I’m always on the lookout for what would appeal to the more unconventional, fashion bride, or someone looking for a second look for the party, so when we saw the gowns we thought, ‘These are amazing,’” says Hsu. The range includes a version of the sequined corset that model Adut Akech wore to the Fashion Awards, as well as a white-and-pink take on the custom heart-shaped cut-out dress worn by Zendaya.

For all her early success, Dojaka is candid about the pressures and at times insatiable demands from the industry, particularly on young, independent designers. “It feels as though you need to be doing something all the time to remain relevant, and posting it on Instagram, which I don’t enjoy doing, but it’s part of the job,” she laments. “You constantly need to remind people that you’re there because the big houses do so much, and they don’t really leave much space for smaller brands.” The reality of juggling the role of creative director with running a business has also proved challenging. “It’s a lot,” she concedes. “There have been emotional ups and downs. It just takes so much of your time, and it compromises the creative side of things. I can’t remember the last time that I went to bed and wasn’t thinking about [the business].”

Dojaka is both optimistic and level-headed about the next stages for the brand, which is on track to become profitable this year. “If I wanted to be profitable last year it could have been done, but it would have compromised a lot of other things, like producing in Italy, for example. I see it almost as an investment for the future. In this way, the quality of the clothing is getting better every season, so you get to keep those customers. You need to think long-term and suffer a bit at the beginning,” she adds. “That’s what my dad taught me anyway – so I’m trusting him.”

Despite the long hours, seeing people’s reactions to her clothes has made the hard graft worthwhile. “I love it when the show is out, and you get the reward at the end, that unveiling of everything,” she says. “At the last show, I saw some people cry, which made me happy because I felt that it had meant something, no? It’s creating an emotion.” What could be a greater reward than that? ■HTSI



Above left: Nensi Dojaka. Right: NENSI DOJAKA silk-mix heart bra, £570, cotton-mix leggings, £600, and leather Camille shoes, £710. ANDREW BUNNY x NENSI DOJAKA silver and mother-of-pearl Belly Chain, POA. From far left: Adut Akech, Rita Ora, Sienna Miller, Camille Charrière and Bella Hadid, all wearing Nensi Dojaka

Model, Fanfan at Elite. Hair and make-up, Dan Delgado using Charlotte Tilbury





# Strand and DELIVER

Hair loss is a growing concern for women as well as men. Can the new treatments make a difference? *Fiona Golfar* reports

PHOTOGRAPH BY LYDIA GOLDBLATT

**O**ronyx looks more like a gallery than a beauty clinic. Italian stone covers the 8,500sq ft interior; works by British artist Dominic Harris hang on the walls and iPad-wielding staff lead clients down to underground treatment rooms. Where better to tackle the hairy question of female hair loss?

Despite the fact that 50 per cent of women are thought to experience hair loss on at least one occasion in their lifetime, treatments for thinning hair have historically focused on men. This has begun to change, as conversations about hormonal shifts in puberty and during the menopause have broadened our understanding of the condition, and with it a rise in the treatment options available to women. Among the key players are a number of biotech companies: We Are Paradoxx is heralded for its Growth Advanced Scalp Serum – which the results of an independent user trial suggest can improve thickness by as much as 75 per cent and lead to the growth of 47 per cent more new hairs – while clean science brand The Nue Co has launched the Supa\_Thick Topical Scalp Supplement. The latter claims to increase hair health by balancing the scalp's microbiome.

The causes of hair loss are as varied as the treatment options. It could be female pattern hair loss, very often owing to genetics; hormonal changes that occur pre- or post-pregnancy; or skin conditions such as psoriasis. Styling choices can also be a factor: Dr Sharon Wong, a dermatologist who specialises in hair loss, formerly ran a practice in Hackney and saw a huge amount of traction alopecia (caused by heat, braids, weaves, chemicals and pulling at the hair root) in her Afro-Caribbean clients. If stopped early enough, she says, traction alopecia can be reversed, but in more advanced cases it might be helped by anti-inflammatories and topical medicines.

“From an early age my hair was subject to myriad styles, from the ‘protective’, such as cornrows and braiding – which are inherent in my culture – to relaxers and weaves, much of which resulted in trauma to my scalp,” says Judy Koloko, a former fashion agent and black-haircare entrepreneur. “I had to completely rethink the way I cared for my hair and focus on new methods that would treat my scalp.” Her answer is The Steam Bar, a new beauty concept launching in 2023 that will focus on the care of afro and textured hair. “Steaming was and is an integral part of this as it helps to stimulate and nourish the scalp to support healthy hair growth.”

Other developments in hair loss range from the medical procedures to non-invasive “tweakments”, the latest of



Above, from left: VIRTUE Flourish Shampoo For Thinning Hair, £40 for 240ml. KÉRASTASE Specificque Cure Anti-Chute Treatment, £44.95 for 10 applications. BEAUTY PIE Renewed Density Anti Hair-Loss Ampoules, £56 for 14. THE NUE CO Supa\_Thick Topical Scalp Supplement, £35 for 100ml. PHILIP KINGSLEY Density Preserving Scalp Drops, £45 for 85ml. PARADOXX Growth Advanced Scalp Serum, £30 for 50ml. SISLEY Hair Rituel By Sisley Revitalizing Fortifying Serum for the Scalp, £150 for 60ml



which – autologous micrografting technology (AMT) – is now available at Ouronyx. The 45-minute treatment involves taking small skin grafts from the hairline, extracting the follicles’ stem cells and injecting them back into the scalp where the hair is thinning. AMT (£2,850 per session) can’t stimulate growth where there isn’t any, but it can thicken hair by up to 40 per cent. Ouronyx recommends a top-up treatment every 18 months.

The AMT on offer at Ouronyx is just one option available alongside fashionable but faddy procedures such as PRP, the injectable craze known as “the vampire treatment”, where the patient’s own platelets are injected into the scalp. “So much of my identity is connected to my hair,” says Caroline, a venture capitalist in her early 50s. “It was always long and abundant. When I became peri-menopausal, I noticed it was falling out. I started to see my scalp shining through my hair if I was in bright light and noticed that my parting was becoming wider. At first I thought it was because I was using too many products, hair dyes and hot dryers and that my hair could not handle it. I was devastated.” Caroline sought out AMT after finding that thickening shampoos and an endless intake of supplements made no visible difference. Six months after treatment she has seen a vast improvement: “It’s not twice as thick or anything radical, but it is definitely back to its former condition. I will continue with the top-ups.”

**LIKE CAROLINE, MANY WOMEN SUFFER** hair loss after the menopause, where a drop in oestrogen leaves them vulnerable to androgens such as dihydrotestosterone (DHT), high levels of which can cause the hair follicles to shrink. (DHT is also a major cause of male pattern hair loss; the difference is that women tend to experience thinning rather than full balding.) Make-up artist Violette Serrat, who says she lost around 50 per cent of hair during pregnancy and postpartum, swears by Nutrafol hair supplements, which focus on stress, hormones, metabolism, ageing, nutrition and lifestyle.

Dr Sharon Wong, who now has a clinic on London’s Harley Street, believes it is possible to arrest hair loss with prescription strength applications of minoxidil, a topical medicine that helps to increase the size of hair follicles through blood circulation and which you can also buy at a lower strength over the counter in products such as Regaine. Wong recommends using it overnight – and bear in mind it’s a treatment that you need to use long-term. “Apply it directly onto the scalp for at least six months before any benefit will be seen.” Likewise, she warns, “If you stop you will lose the effects that you would have gained.” She also prescribes spironolactone, an anti-androgen traditionally used to treat high blood pressure: “It helps to oppose the testosterone in hair follicles.” (Particularly useful for women suffering hair loss during the menopause.)

If you like your treatments to look and smell like beauty products, mainstream brands are stepping up too: trichological shampoos from Philip Kingsley and Virtue both promise stronger and more abundant locks, as do hair-redensifying treatments such as Beauty Pie’s Renewed Density Anti-Hair Loss Ampoules and Kérastase’s Specificque Cure Anti-Chute Treatment. Those looking for a scalp-based treatment can try Sisley’s Revitalising Fortifying Serum, which can be applied during a head massage.

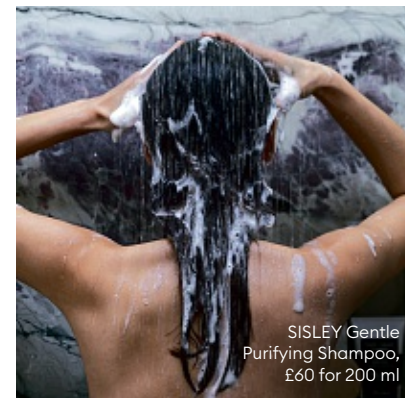
Even with the online treatments out there, results can be hugely varied. “It’s an incredibly emotive subject,” says Wong, who believes that the psychological impact of female hair loss is grossly underestimated. When only surgical intervention is able to restore the hair, Wong sends her clients to Dr Greg Williams at London’s Farjo Hair Institute, who offers transplants to men and women. “The marketing for hair loss is much more aimed at men,” says Wong. “But a good hair transplant can be just as effective for women.”

There are also encouraging new studies for the treatment of alopecia using the arthritis drug baricitinib. The hope is that treatments for hair loss – male or female – become more manageable, effective and akin to the kind of “maintenance” grooming treatments performed in, say, a dermatologist’s office. “The hair loss conversation should be out in the open,” says Judy Koloko. “I’m not the only one seeing a need for premium products with quality ingredients backed by science to care for my crown.” ■HTSI

“SO MUCH OF MY IDENTITY IS CONNECTED TO MY HAIR. WHEN IT STARTED FALLING OUT, I WAS DEVASTATED”

## The thick of it

THE PRODUCTS AND TOOLS THAT PROMISE TO MAKE YOUR HAIR MORE RESILIENT. BY LAUREN HADDEN



SISLEY Gentle Purifying Shampoo, £60 for 200 ml



THIS HAIR OF MINE Scalp Serum, £46 for 50ml



LIVING PROOF Triple Bond Complex, £42 for 45ml



ZUVI Halo Hair Dryer, £329



LA BONNE BROSSSE No 2 The Essential Do-It-All Brush, £120



HAIR BY SAM McKNIGHT Deeper Love Hair Treatment, £48 for 200ml



PIPINO The Pro Brush Set, £145



MONPURE Clarifying Scalp Scrub, £48 for 90g



HERSHESONS The Great Hairdryer, £295

The obsession with improving hair strength is growing. Pre-wash bond builders, aimed at strengthening hair damaged from colour and styling, have become a near staple alongside shampoo and conditioner. Olaplex, which first launched in 2014 and is arguably the most famous in the category, now faces stiff market competition from brands such as K18. More recently, there’s been a major shift in focus to the scalp and protecting the scalp’s microbiome.

Some of this focus can be traced to a returning interest in textured hair. The “Curly Girl method”, where you wash only with conditioner (or “low-poo” sulphate-free shampoo), has seen a surge in popularity. This Hair of Mine Scalp Serum (£46) – with pea peptides to stimulate follicle regeneration and “microbiota friendly” apple stem cells to soothe irritation – is useful for non-curlies too. Scalp-focused brand Monpure’s Clarifying Scalp Scrub (£48) is essentially an exfoliator and uses biodegradable jojoba beads.

Notting Hill-based hairdresser Gustav Fouche’s Fabulosity range of shampoos and conditioners (from £35) also focuses on hair “nutrition”. Fouche has created a five-point system with differing ingredient levels to offer more or less moisture or protein to the hair. Depending on individual requirements, you might need more Cupuaçu butter, to promote moisture retention, or rice aminos to keep hair elastic and prevent breakage.

Some stylists still swear by good old-fashioned brushing. “It stimulates the scalp, makes the hair shine and, if done regularly, prevents breakage,” says LA-based Ric Pipino, who considers it a long-term habit for improving hair strength. He chose to launch his own line with a hairbrush – a dual-bristle paddle brush. To make best use of the Large Pro Brush (\$110), he advises a strong hold and “vigorous brushing” all the way through the hair – “do it at night if you plan to wash the next morning”. Parisian brand La Bonne Brosse has launched four brushes (£120 each) for different hair types at Harrods this November. Founders Flore des Robert and Pauline Laurent argue that the golden rule still holds true: “One hundred strokes a day is the best way to stimulate blood microcirculation in the scalp and remove pollution particles and residue,” says Laurent.

Typically an enemy of long-term hair health, the hairdryer has been reconstructed. When the Zuvi Halo (£329) launched last year, it was trailed as “the Tesla of hairdryers” – but isn’t every hairdryer electric?! It has won plaudits for its use of infrared light, to minimise damage to hair (it dries the hair’s surface but avoids dehydrating the hair cortex) and to limit energy use. Hershesons’ The Great Hairdryer (£295) also has hair-protection technology that emits oxygen for softer, shinier results.

Sam McKnight has expanded his range to incorporate the “care” part of haircare too. His Deeper Love Hair Treatment (£48 for 200ml) aims “to make hair more resilient” and to that end contains proprietary ingredients Rep’Hair, for strengthening, and Crodbond, which should seal 50 per cent of split ends from first use.

And the latest innovation in the bond builder category comes from cult brand Living Proof. Its Triple Bond Complex (£42 for 45ml) can, instead of the usual pre-wash requirement, be quickly combed through after showering. Think of it as one more crucial step to the old commandment: wash, strengthen – and go. ■HTSI



ASK ADEELA

# How can I treat my PIGMENTATION?

Beauty columnist *Adeela Crown's* top tips on preventing and curing dark spots

**P**igmentation patches are to the skin what Japanese knotweed is to soil: persistent, irritating and nigh on impossible to see the back of. It is one of the most common and stubborn skin issues I treat as a facialist, and a widespread increase in cases – partly due to the boom in cheap air travel and beach holidays, coupled with the stresses of modern lifestyles – mean that the global pigmentation-disorders market is projected to surpass \$8.9bn by 2028.

Dark spots primarily occur due to the overproduction of melanin, the pigment responsible for skin colour. When skin is exposed to the sun, it produces melanin, which helps to block UV radiation from damaging the DNA and skin. But excessive melanin can spill between skin cells, resulting in dark spots.

A range of other triggers, such as acne, ageing, nutritional deficiencies, heat or friction trauma, can also cause hormonal melasma or post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation. Environmental stressors like free radicals (unstable molecules seeking their missing electron)

generated by UVA and pollution can also set off pigmentation through oxidative stress. There's also blue light or high-energy visible light (HEV), emitted from electronic screens and smartphones, which penetrates deeper into the dermal layer than UVB rays. (One day of overexposure can undo months of treatment.)

In my experience, pigmentation sufferers have to keep protecting against these triggers – even when it's under control – to prevent flare-ups. As the Dutch philosopher Erasmus said, prevention is better than cure.

Sunscreen should always be your first line of defence: applied daily, and reapplied every two to four hours. A high-quality sunscreen should have antioxidants alongside filters like titanium dioxide and iron oxide, which scatter light. As I have olive/bronze skin, I have tried countless SPF50+ in the hope of finding one that doesn't leave a greasy white cast. Shiseido Expert Sun Protector Face Cream SPF50+ glides weightlessly, without leaving a residue, and becomes more effective when exposed to water and heat. It is my regular go-to.

Free-radical damage can be prevented with antioxidants such as vitamins A, C and E; ferulic, tranexamic and kojic acids; and niacinamide. A daily dose of a potent formula such as SkinCeuticals Discoloration Defense Serum with its multiphase delivery of tranexamic acid, niacinamide and sulfonic acid is a good daytime protection.

For a one-two punch to amplify results during the day, I recommend layering this serum with a vitamin C-rich cream. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that inhibits tyrosinase, an enzyme involved in the production of melanin, and thus makes hyperpigmentation development more difficult. Natura Bissé C+C Vitamin Cream is formulated with three formats of vitamin C to create a protective umbrella for sun-damaged skin.

While you sleep, the skin doesn't. It's regenerating, making night-time the best time to introduce exfoliating and lightening alpha-hydroxy acids (AHAs). To correct dark spots, I suggest an overnight treatment such as Allies of Skin Mandelic Pigmentation Corrector Night Serum to inhibit the production of melanin.

Using a topical retinoid product that treats and fades hyperpigmentation is another good night-time corrective measure. The real results come from high-strength prescribed retinoids, though over-the-counter (OTC) retinols are obviously easier to obtain. Brands such as Dermatica make getting a prescription less daunting. The online process involves submitting image referencing and forms, and analysis by a medical and dermatology team, after which the prescription is delivered to your door. Clear instructions and gradual dose increases mean a smart, affordable and successful approach to treating pigmentation.

Retinol can also be found in single multitasking liquid exfoliants with active ingredients, which I hail as true wonder workers. U Beauty Resurfacing Compound is a blend of a stable form of vitamin C, retinol and AHAs, a combination that streamlines daily skincare and prevents the build-up of dark spots.

Vintner's Daughter Active Treatment Essence is another multitasker. I discovered its full resurfacing power on a flight, when it leaked into my cosmetic bag and wiped the labels off other products. This fermented enzyme-rich nutrient broth is packed with micro-exfoliating plant acids, stem cells and more than 30 botanicals – use it as a daily pigmentation fighter by spritzing it before applying serums and moisturisers. ■HTSI

## ASKADEELA

Do you need advice on spot solutions, sunscreen or any other skin emergency? Send your questions to [askadeela@ft.com](mailto:askadeela@ft.com) and she will address your concerns in an upcoming column

## Case study

### THREE MONTH IN-CLINIC TREATMENT FOR PREGNANCY-INDUCED MELASMA

Melasma is a specific diagnosis, and it is particularly challenging to treat because it is related to everything from sun damage to post-acne inflammation, heat, hormones, menstrual cycle fluctuations, pregnancy, birth-control medication and stress. Its pathogenesis may also be influenced by psychological or oxidative stress. One common manifestation is during pregnancy. One of my clients had developed pregnancy-induced patches on her forehead and cheeks. There is a difference in the morphology of melasma when compared to dark spots: it appears patchy with ill-defined edges. I treated her over the course of three months.

Pigmentation always requires a series of treatments, from the simple to the complex. In my Mayfair practice, I used peels to exfoliate and resurface, and microneedling, bipolar radiofrequency and topical tranexamic, ferulic and kojic acid serums to remove epidermal melanin build-up. I also prescribed Pigmanorm, a topical skin-lightening cream containing tretinoin, hydroquinone and hydrocortisone, for 10-12 weeks of home care to prevent pigmentation developing.

People tend to be more laissez-faire about sunscreen use when they have an indoor job, but for pigmentation sufferers, reapplication is crucial, particularly if you sit next to or near a window. I instructed my client to be vigilant with sun care.

With the help of these measures, my client's melasma is now under control and her skin is brighter and more even-toned.



VINTNER'S DAUGHTER Active Treatment Essence, \$225 for 50ml



U BEAUTY Resurfacing Compound, £85 for 15ml



SHISEIDO Expert Sun Protector Face Cream SPF50+, £32 for 50ml



SKINCEUTICALS Discoloration Defense Serum, £90 for 30ml



ALLIES OF SKIN Mandelic Pigmentation Corrector Night Serum, £95 for 30ml



DERMATICA Prescription Pigmentation Treatments, £19.99 a month



NATURA BISSÉ C+C Vitamin Cream, £113 for 75ml



“EMFACE IS THE ONLY  
DEVICE ABLE TO TARGET  
THE LIFTING MUSCLES”

the skin's structure and ensures there are no adhesions that may affect the prospect of future treatment success.”

Dr Papageorgiou at The Wellness Clinic, who oversees my treatment, says Emface is a breakthrough for those looking to halt soft-tissue descent. And who isn't, I might ask? By stimulating the zygomaticus and risorius muscles, the treatment promises to help counteract mid-face descent and, most pertinently, lift the droop from nose to mouth known as the nasolabial fold. “Emface is a game changer as it is the only device able to target and strengthen the lifting muscles of the face,” he explains. “These devices can target multiple anatomical elements – the deeper dermis, the facial ligaments, layers that a decade ago were addressed only via a surgical procedure. In years to come we should expect more technologies that would ultimately make surgery obsolete.”

**NOW, I DON'T BELIEVE IN MIRACLES.** But, like any woman in her late 40s I do indulge the misery of hope. That Emface might prop up the frontalis muscle on my fast-collapsing forehead – and give me a mini eye lift – is too irresistible to refuse.

At the clinic, I am affixed with a “grounding” pad, a large cold patch that is stuck across my kidneys before smaller pads (one on my forehead, two running ear-to-mouth) are attached carefully to my face. Every treatment requires a new set of single-use adhesives; not the most sustainable of treatments, which perhaps explains the treatment's price – the total cost for four sessions is £3,600. Once switched on, the radiofrequency temperature quickly reaches 40-42C. The heat is then accompanied by the first tingles of high-intensity focused muscle stimulation, rising to 250 energy impulses per second, to induce a fairly jolting buzz.

It's not painful but neither is it pleasant: I can also feel it in my gum line, where it manifests in an odd metallic-tasting twinge. Meanwhile, my face feels pulled in all directions: my forehead dragged up into my hairline, my mouth stretched into a Joker's grin. Yet when I observe it in a mirror, I'm surprised that each stimulation only jerks a minor smirk. Rosie, the doctor's assistant, is most amused by my grimace: my face is more elastic than on some of the other clients she has seen. (Incidentally, for those wondering, Dr Papageorgiou assures me that, because Emface doesn't target the muscles that are injected, most Botoxed patients will still be responsive to the device). Afterwards my skin feels warm and rosy, like I've just been to the gym. And my cheek muscles are achey – as though I've been chewing a big wad of gum. Although there is no downtime, I am advised not to work out or have a hot bath for 12 hours.

For the first two treatments I don't really notice any major changes. A heavy month of festive carousing doesn't exactly benefit my skin. After the third session, however, I begin to see a distinct improvement in my skin tone. My daughter says I look less “dull”. Dr Papageorgiou says it will take up to 90 days after the final treatment to see the full effect. He recommends patients do Emface yearly in conjunction with other treatments for pigmentation, age spots and other conditions that one must combat in one's anti-ageing war. I do look more alert than I have done (is that the eye lift?) and there's a distinct softening in my forehead lines. I may not have knocked years off but I look fresher and less grey.

Would I pay for another set of treatments? I'd like to revisit in six months. The thing with preventative treatments is that you'll never know what might have been. I'm in week two of the final revelation, and so far my skin looks and feels pretty good. If nothing else, Emface has been as much a filip to my confidence as it may literally have lifted my skin. ■HTSI

## My date with EMFACE

A “revolutionary” anti-ageing  
device has landed in the UK.  
*Jo Ellison* is the first to trial it

ILLUSTRATION BY SOFEA AZNIDI

**E**mface is a radical non-invasive anti-ageing treatment that combines, for the first time, radiofrequency with facial electromagnetic stimulation (HIFES) – and claims to achieve a 36.8 per cent reduction in wrinkles and an increase in muscle density. The treatment is painless, requires no downtime and is delivered in 20-minute sessions. And I have signed up to trial it on its UK debut quicker than it has taken you to read this paragraph.

Launched last September by BTL, the Czech company behind Emsculpt and Emtone, the device is currently offered at a few clinics in London including the Rita Rakus clinic, Dr Costas Papageorgiou at The Wellness Clinic, Harrods, as well as via Professor Ali Ghanem at his clinic on Upper Wimpole Street. A plastic surgeon, Professor Ghanem sees Emface as a breakthrough for those who want to stave off the knife. “Most heat-based devices create scarring under the skin, known as fibrosis and adhesions,” he tells me when I ask why he would adopt a device that might one day put him out of work. “This remarkable new technology respects

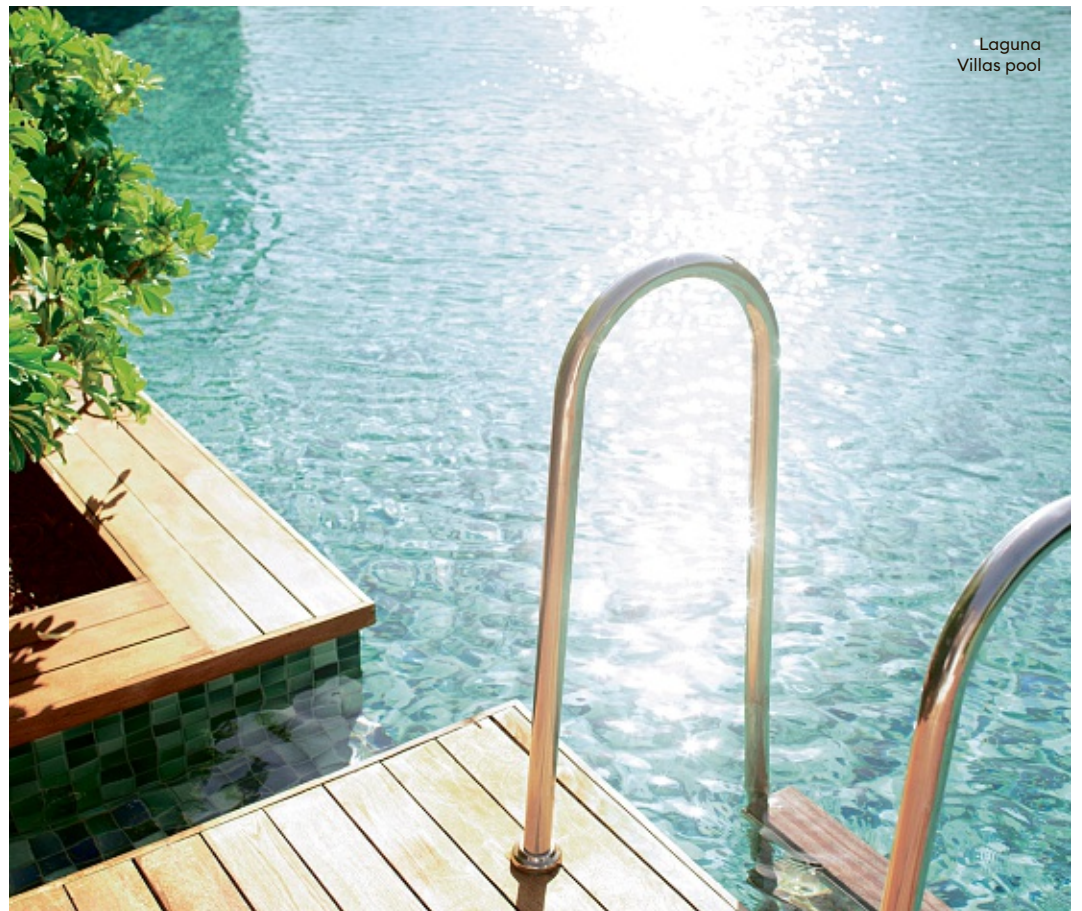




# How all-inclusive became exclusive

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**IF A HOLIDAY IS THE TIME TO ABSOLVE** oneself of all day-to-day responsibilities, then the stress of planning one – never mind the endless decision-making when you’re actually there – seems almost counterintuitive. It’s no surprise, then, that a recent hotel study has shown that 77 per cent of travellers now believe that booking an all-inclusive trip is the least stressful way to vacation. More and more luxury hotel brands have emerged with all-inclusive offerings – but not as you might know them. Instead they have been elevated into something far more upscale, where everything is managed from the get-go.

Gone are competitive races to poolside daybeds and depressing buffets; instead guests come to expect personalised service, world-class culinary experiences by Michelin-starred chefs and Las Vegas-level entertainment. The emergence of new, high-end experiences has seen the demographic shift to more aspirational audiences.

Another property attracting a new audience is the Maxx Royal Kemer, located on Turkey’s southern coast on the lower slopes of the Taurus Mountains. The spectacular views of this 2,000km chain of mountains provide the distinct visual identity of the region, also known for its beautiful beaches, light turquoise waters and bright white sands. The surrounding hills are home to fragrant pine forests, and dunes are frequented by occasionally inquisitive mountain goats. It is a place truly to unwind, far from the hum of tourists in nearby Antalya.

The rise of luxury all-inclusives has brought new expectations of bespoke service amongst guests. Typically the experience will begin from the moment you

make your booking, with a personal assistant assigned to you to help you plan every stage of your trip – including your departure from the airport – while butlers and personal chef services are also popular additional requests upon arrival.

Maxx Royal Kemer itself sits between two secluded bays. The architecture – the work of Baraka Architects – is inspired by the surrounding nature, literally mirroring it thanks to the use of reflective surfaces throughout. Wooden canopies and stone walls sink into the hillside, often enveloped in heavy flora. Privacy was paramount in the conceptual design.

Travellers with more specific interests can also see their needs taken care of, from adventure to health. As many seek to escape the stresses of post-pandemic life, the wellness travel trend continues its ascent and inclusive resorts have catered accordingly. (A YouGov poll reveals that 45 per cent of global consumers are looking for space for relaxation and well-being in their next travel destination.) Maxx Royal Kemer is home to a luxurious wellness centre and Turkish baths with therapies that draw on local rituals and ingredients, available in conjunction with ultra modern treatments. While not included in the cost, everything is in the immediate vicinity. Rhassoul mud therapies, for example, have been used for thousands of years for healing and cleansing, relying on the mineral properties of mud applied after a steam. Leaning into yoga philosophy, Pranayama Breathing Techniques aim to control your breathing, keeping your nervous system balanced and even boosting your metabolism.



Dining at Maxx  
Royal Kemer Resort

Much of the joy of travel is about eating and drinking. Alfredo Russo, who was named L’Espresso Guide Italy’s Best Young Chef early in his career, heads up an exclusive menu at Maxx Royal Kemer. Known for his unique approach to modern Italian cuisine, Russo also creates authentic Turkish cuisine and fresh seafood at the hotel’s numerous restaurants and bars.

Of course, what the term “all inclusive” ultimately means for any traveller is no surprising costs, and in today’s economic climate that peace of mind makes for a far more relaxing trip. With luxury resorts constantly raising the bar, it’s no surprise the world is ready to embrace a more convenient way to travel.

Learn more and book your stay at [maxxroyal.com](https://maxxroyal.com) and [book@maxxroyal.com](mailto:book@maxxroyal.com)



# SPRING THEORY

Supermodel Amber Valletta keeps it simple in the season's chicest styles. By *Louis Wise*

Photography by *Nathaniel Goldberg*  
Styling by *Isabelle Kountoure*



This page: Amber Valletta wears HERMÈS silk jacquard knit bodysuit with cutout, £2,000, and jersey high-waisted Milano trousers, £2,350. TIFFANY & CO white-gold and diamond earring, £4,175 for pair

Opposite page: FENDI silk jacket, £2,750









TOD'S cotton gilet, £840, and matching trousers, £900. BASERANGE bamboo Lyocell soft bra, £50. PRADA leather shoes, £990





BOTTEGA VENETA leather jacket, matching trousers,  
and double-cotton tank tops, all POA



When Amber Valletta was 15 years old, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, her mother entered her for modelling classes. The result was the teenage Valletta standing on a box in her local shopping mall,

practising the deathless art of mannequin-modelling. “I did that,” nods Valletta a little ruefully, sitting in a large caramel-coloured sweatshirt in the study of her LA home. “Lord knows, people saw me popping and locking...”

We can at least say that it worked. Nearly 35 years later, Valletta is one of the greatest supermodels. Her sculptural beauty, offset by piercing grey-green eyes, has made her the face of countless campaigns, from Calvin Klein, Prada and Versace in the '90s to Saint Laurent, Mugler and Stella McCartney today. As an actress, she has starred in films like *Hitch* and the TV series *Revenge*, while she was one of the first in her industry to speak up about climate change – in 2021 she became sustainability ambassador for the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She is also about to launch a third clothing collaboration with the label Karl Lagerfeld, consulting on both environmental impact and design. “I am certainly not someone who likes to sit in the same thing,” says Valletta, who turned 49 this week. “I believe change is good.”

Smart, serious and poised, Valletta isn't one to get lost in fashion-speak effusions. Beneath the façade, though, you sense the fun. It's in the faces she pulls – a kind of “oh boy” nod, or shake of the head, accompanied by a vast grin – which she cracks when she's asked if it was her idea to enrol her for those modelling classes (no); whether she has ever been typecast as a model (yes – “It drives me crazy! I don't like being pigeonholed”); and whether she's relieved to have broken out before the age of social media. The models of her generation – friends such as Kate Moss and Shalom Harlow – “would have had millions and millions of followers”, had it existed back then, “because we were on every cover, every campaign internationally”. She is still doing pretty well on Instagram, with more than 700,000 followers, but she's clearly not sad not to have more.

“I think social media should come with a warning label, like cigarettes, to be honest, and it should be limited to people above the age of 18 or 21,” she says. Twitter is “obnoxious”, Instagram “super-boring” and “I'm not even on TikTok – I don't even know what to do on TikTok!”

Having got her first *Vogue* cover aged 18, she has developed a more reasoned attitude to celebrity. “I think that when you have fame quite young, or maybe at any age, you have to determine what it means to you,” she says. “I've always felt that it was a powerful sword, so to speak, and I had to wield it with grace and responsibility. I didn't really come from a lot, so I knew that I was really

STELLA  
McCARTNEY  
RWS-wool  
double-breasted  
jacket, £1,250,  
matching trousers,  
£590, and  
bronze-plated-  
metal draped  
chain top, £5,300

“I AM NOT SOMEONE  
WHO LIKES TO SIT  
IN THE SAME THING  
– CHANGE IS GOOD”













“A LITTLE CLASSIC.  
A LITTLE BOYISH,  
A LITTLE SEXY –  
THAT’S MY VIBE”

This page: LOUIS VUITTON  
viscose-mix fitted dress, £12,250

Opposite page: PRADA satin dress,  
£2,500. TIFFANY & CO white-gold and  
diamond earring, £4,175 for pair

blessed to have this opportunity.” (Fame can be quite fraught also; Valletta has been sober since 1999 and released a video about her battle with addiction in 2014 to help others struggling with those issues.)

Valletta has a son, Auden, 22, with former husband Chip McCaw, but is now in a relationship with French hairstylist Teddy Charles. She is, unsurprisingly, quite private, but happy to dwell on domestic details. A sports fan, she was pleased France made it to the World Cup final, mostly for Charles’s sake: “He’s kind of sociopathic about it, you know?” she beams. She looks positively concerned when asked if the athleisure she has on is her favourite clothing. “No,” she answers. “I’m gonna go to the gym, that’s why I’m in sweats!” Her personal style is more a blazer and a pair of Levi’s; she wears a lot of vintage. “A little classic. A little rock ‘n’ roll, a little boyish, a little sexy at times – that’s kind of, maybe, my vibe.”

Her current focus, the environment, is hardly a new concern. When she was a child, her mother fought for five years to stop a nuclear power plant being built on Native American land; later, in her early 20s, Valletta studied environmental politics. “That was before we were talking about any connection to the fashion industry or even mass industry,” she recalls. “There was talk about the ozone, and that was about it.”

Fast-forward to now, and the topic is on everybody’s lips, but has enough actually been done? “No,” she replies. “People aren’t really open about what they are doing

because they’re afraid they’re not doing enough. And so they make these funny reports and you’re like, ‘Huh? *What* did you just say?’ You don’t really feel the clear-cut truth of what is going on.”

Recent work has seen her doing less acting. “I want to be free to work on all my other projects,” she tells me, “*but* – Scorsese, I’m here! Pedro [Almodóvar], I’m here!” As for modelling, she walked for Stella McCartney last season, and she still enjoys it – “certain jobs, I get the buzz”.

“I’ve known and worked with Amber for a very long time,” says McCartney. “What I admire about her is that we are so aligned in our values and outlook, which is why I have always loved working with her since day one – she is a true change agent.” Hun Kim, design director of Karl Lagerfeld, agrees. “She really brings life into the clothes,” he says. “Karl always thought highly of her, not only as a model but as a person.”

There has been much talk in the past decade of how Valletta’s generation has kept working, gaining big campaigns in their 40s and beyond. Asked if this was what she ever expected, though, she gives a decidedly “meh” shrug. “When you’re young, you don’t actually see things ending, right? So, for me, it’s always been, do I want to continue to work? And in what capacity?” Ultimately, she says, “I feel like when you’re really good at your job, it transcends time. And that’s not about modelling – I mean any job.” And, with that, she’s off to the gym to do arms, and core, she smiles. “Always core.” ■HTSI





KARL LAGERFELD x AMBER VALLETTA organic- and recycled-cotton denim jacket, £219, and matching trousers, £169. STELLA McCARTNEY cotton ribbed-knit tank, £550. PARIS TEXAS square-toe Roxy boots, stylist's own





FERRAGAMO suede open-back dress, £4,140. TIFFANY & CO white-gold and diamond earring, £4,175 for pair

Model, Amber Valletta at IMG. Casting, Ben Grimes at Drive Represents. Hair, Teddy Charles at the Wall Group. Make-up, Tom Pecheux at Safe MGMT. Manicure, Julie Villanova at Artist. Photographer's assistants, Corinne Mutrelle and Aurélien Nobécourt. Digital operator, Sarah Reimann at Imagin. Stylist's assistants, Aylin Bayhan and Elsa Durosseau. Production, Michaël Lacomblez at Louis2





Left and below: SACAI wool jumper, €640. LOUIS VUITTON velvet trousers, £2,800, and leather clutch, £2,750. BOTTER cotton cap, €175. MANOLO BLAHNIK patent-leather shoes, €725. DINH VAN gold necklace, €9,200, gold bracelets (worn as necklace), €5,950 each, and white-gold and diamond ring, POA. Yoga mat, photographer's own. Water bottle, stylist's own



# IN THE WILD

Hit the urban jungle in the most vibrant animal prints

Photography by *Priscillia Saada* Styling by *Emmanuelle Ramos* Model *Maryel Uchida*





BOTTEGA VENETA wool jacket  
and wool jacquard dress, both  
POA. 032C cotton cap, €85.  
DENTRO leather, cord  
and thread Savvas bag, €775.  
DINH VAN gold earring,  
€3,600 for pair, and white-gold  
and diamond ring, POA





陳

Sac réutilisable.  
Ne pas jeter dans la nature.





Left: CHANEL velvet iridescent skirt, £5,395. CHARVET lisle yarn short socks, €45. 13 09 SR technical-fabric trainers, €590. COPERNI leather Ring Swipe bag, €395. JUSTINE CLENQUET brass-dipped palladium Donnie earring, €90 for pair. Vintage T-shirt, stylist's own

Right: ROWEN ROSE wool jacket, €1,500. DOLCE & GABBANA structured elastic bustier top, £825, and elastic trousers, £1,350. LOUIS VUITTON patent-leather Shake slingback shoes, £875. DIESEL leather IDR bag, £265. HUGO KREIT aluminium Barbie Pink Safety earrings, €350. Umbrella, set designer's own

Opposite page: 16ARLINGTON leather Piper coat, £2,950. LANVIN silk-mix minidress, £1,315. THOMASINE vintage cotton jersey gloves, €200. SUNNEI acetate Prototipo 5 sunglasses (held in hand), €270. SAFSAFU brass-plated palladium, enamel and Swarovski crystal earrings, €265. DINH VAN white-gold and diamond ring, POA







Right: GUCCI sequin-embroidered tulle dress with detachable resin pearl fringe brooch, £13,580. Mango acrylic Fresa knit pullover (worn around shoulders), €45.99. CAREL leather shoes, €380. HERMÈS leather Haut à Courroies Casaque bag, £17,000



Left: SUNNEI cotton Tubo top, €1,250. TOD'S leather skirt with python-effect embossing, £4,250. ANNK faux-fur shoes, €200. DINH VAN white-gold and diamond ring, POA. LOEWE acetate sunglasses (on ground), €340. 13 09 SR technical-fabric trainers (on ground), €590. Keychain, stylist's own

Model, Maryel Uchida at W360. Casting, Shawn Dezan at Home. Hair, Chiao Chenet at Bryant. Make-up, Lauren Bos at Artist. Set design, Mathilde Vallantin Dulac at 8 Represent. Photographer's assistant, Maëlle Joigne. Stylist's assistants, Amélie Richart and Jules Allegret. Production, Vidhya Rassou and Jonathan Nzaou at Kitten. Thanks to Bandit, Youssef and Greg Saada





MARCIANO BY GUESS cotton  
Suédine trench coat, €300.  
COURRÈGES cotton dress  
(just seen), €850. BY FAR  
leather belt, €425. LOEWE  
acetate sunglasses, €340.  
COPERNI faux-leather Mini  
UFO bag, €690



# “It’s about being more exposed”



Since the death of her son Kip, fashion designer Luella Bartley has channelled her emotions into artworks that are powerfully raw. As she tells *Victoria Woodcock*, it’s all part of a desperate longing to be honest about who we are

Photography by *Julian Broad*

the window, a bright-white sculpture reveals a contorted mass of limbs, pleasing chunky feet poking up from the plaster-wrapped clay. “Right now, I want to plough into this,” she says of the art practice she has been developing over the past couple of years. “I still love fashion. I can see that friends of mine are doing beautiful, creative things within it. It’s just not where I want to express myself at the moment,” she adds, dressed for the day’s inclement weather in a navy cashmere crewneck and light-blue jeans. Her blonde hair is characteristically messy. Her earrings are subtly mismatched, and she’s wearing a simple gold chain, belonging to her late son Kip, which she plays with while we chat.

“I cannot remember the last time I bought a piece of clothing – if it wasn’t at Uniqlo,” she says with a laugh that is warm and a touch raucous. “I just don’t have the motivation to dress up any more. Is that age?” she asks herself, adding that she will turn 50 next year. “I don’t know. But it’s just gone.” She looks down at her tan suede-clad feet. “Apart from my addiction to Hermès loafers, but they’re really old now. And they’ve got paint on them.”

She refers to the shift from fashion to art as a “progression”. “I can look at stuff I’ve done in fashion and it definitely has a direct link to what I’m doing now,” she says, citing Hillier Bartley, which she founded with accessories designer Hillier, her long-term collaborator, in 2015. “That was when I started to draw. It was a very creative, more experimental pursuit – not a very business one,” she adds with a quiet chuckle. But it wasn’t until she stepped away from fashion entirely in 2019 that drawing took on a new importance. “I had to take a lot of time out,” she says by way of broaching the subject of Kip, her eldest son, who was diagnosed with leukaemia while studying for his GCSEs. “For about two-and-a-half years, we spent a lot of time together, just the two of us, and we would draw a lot. He was an amazing artist. It became a very therapeutic exercise for me.” After Kip died aged 18, in 2021, the practice continued. “This was a crying room,” she says. “I still cry in here all the time. It’s either crying or drawing.”

Last year Bartley showed her work for the first time at Kristin Hjellegjerde’s London gallery, alongside her friend Sara Berman – a painter who also has a background in fashion design. “Sara told me about her upcoming show, and was like, ‘Maybe you could put something in it?’” Bartley recalls. “It was very soon after Kip had passed, and I didn’t know where I was at that point, but it

gave me something to do, a focus. I literally thought I was just going to show a couple of sculptures, and then these big drawings came from nowhere.”

The exhibition, *Armoured*, became a double billing, sparking a visual conversation between Berman’s soft-focus self-portraits and Bartley’s starkly linear naked forms. In Bartley’s energetic and often overlapping drawings, faceless bodies contort and cradle themselves, hands grasping feet. And while some of her sculptures present the figure outstretched, others are almost tied up in knots (such as *Wrestling with Oneself*, 2022). “It’s all quite exaggerated, all slightly ugly,” she says of the work. “It’s about being more exposed. I feel that, for me, going into fashion was about creating an image, a mask, that I could hide behind. But both Sara and I were desperate to be honest about who we are, the age we are. We’re both grappling with being women, with sexuality.”

For Berman, “there’s something very free about how Luella deals with the body – she’s got an incredible line, which she moves fast across the page. But at the same time there’s a tautness, a tension.” While creating work for the show, the two friends would take long walks together on Hampstead Heath, in north London, and their conversations “around the female body, and our own bodies” ultimately led to an over-arching feeling of intimacy in the gallery space.

Bartley admits having been “terrified” on the day of the opening. When she posted about the show on Instagram, she wrote: “Kip told me to get out there and do something, so this one’s for you, kipper.”

“His exact words were, ‘Mum, you’ve got to get a job,’” she expounds. “But I think that what he meant was, ‘Live. Do something.’ He was a very inspiring young man; he led by example and didn’t let anything stop him. So I have to take something from that. I have to do something.” Even though he was only a teenager, Kip, like his mother, had already made an impression on fashion. He worked for Kim Jones and styled a cover shoot for Italian *Vogue*. His younger sister Stevie, 17, is on the books at Kate Moss Agency as a model and is planning to study fine art after her A-levels. “She’s a great painter,” says Bartley, adding that her youngest, Ned, 15, is also “into fashion and doing bits with Kim”. The world of fashion is still writ large in the family’s DNA. It has also been a huge support network for her during this new period of artistic expression. The response to Bartley’s “something” was instantly positive:

**O**n a snowy day, Luella Bartley is making cups of tea in the kitchen of her Bloomsbury townhouse. As she adds oat milk to wibbly-wobbly Feldspar mugs, she’s shadowed by her two dogs – Guido the dachshund and a lurcher called Prince. It’s a cosy scene, yet the unfussy, Dickensian-made-modern interiors are as cool as you would expect from a fashion designer who injected noughties British fashion with a rock-chick edge. Who launched her own label, Luella, in 1999, with the tongue-in-cheek, artisto-chic collection titled *Daddy, I Want A Pony*. Who was flatmates with *Elastica* frontwoman Justine Frischmann and Mathangi Arulpragasam (aka rapper M.I.A.), but later moved to Cornwall with her fashion photographer husband David Sims and raised three children. Whose CV includes roles at Marc by Marc Jacobs and Calvin Klein, not to mention the eponymous venture Hillier Bartley, with friend and former colleague Katie Hillier.

Beyond her elegant stairwell – all bare walls and hefty stone-slab steps – a garden-facing first-floor studio space reveals her new creative chapter. “I’ve always wanted to do art,” says Bartley, surrounded by a series of her striking, strident line drawings, all of the female nude. In





Luella Bartley in her studio in her north London home. Her painting *Hidden*, 2022, is on the wall behind her. Far left: *Opposing Selves 2*, 2022



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## “I COULD NEVER HAVE DONE THIS ANY YOUNGER; IT JUST WASN’T IN ME”

“People loved Luella’s work; they were clamouring to buy it,” says Hjellegjerde. “She has a lot of support; people really adore her.” Including Jones, who says, “I love Luella’s energy, her gently kind heart and thoughtfulness. She has a unique perspective on the world.”

**I**n June, Hjellegjerde will host Bartley’s first solo show in her London Bridge gallery. Of the new work in progress, Bartley says: “It sounds so crap, but it is more about the journey than the end product – more about the process of getting the darkness out.” Writing is also an important part of the process. “I wake up and write for an hour before I do anything,” she says, harking back to her first career in fashion journalism – including a time as fashion editor of British *Vogue* – and her approach to designing the Luella collections. “I would always write a narrative. Luella was quite biographical, maybe slightly autobiographical – always more about a story than, say, the visceral feel of the fabric.”

“Luella’s really great at coming up with a concept that has huge commercial potential; I was always in awe of that,” says Hillier, the veteran fashion consultant who is now the creative director of J&M Davidson. She was introduced to Bartley by fashion stylist Katie Grand – “the three of us are all only children, so we’re like sisters” – and they started working together in the early days. “We brought different things to the pie – I think maybe I was the crust and she was the filling – and by the time we got into doing Hillier Bartley, it was really something special.” Of their Savile Row-inspired line of womenswear, Hillier adds: “It’s not dead. It’s on a pause.”

“I don’t feel like I have much to offer Hillier Bartley at the moment,” says Bartley, “but I love Katie, and to have a pathway open to create together is really important.” She’s definitely not ruling out future fashion projects. And she’s currently working on something in fashion, although not in a design capacity. “I’m

setting up a charity – The Kip Fund,” she says of an initiative that will provide routes into fashion jobs for young adults who wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunities and financial means to do so. “The directive for this came from Kip. He felt very privileged to have been able to work for Kim, and wanted others to have the same opportunities.”

Right now, though, Bartley is immersed in painting – a new addition to her practice. “My favourite artists

Right: paintings and reference images of Bartley’s model in her studio. Left: sculptures in progress. Below right: Bartley in her studio with her lurcher Prince; on the wall is her painting *Opposing Selves 2*, 2022

are painters,” she says, citing Alice Neel, Chantal Joffe, Lucian Freud and Marlene Dumas. There’s an Egon Schiele book on her mantelpiece, and her execution of feet and hands recalls the work of Paula Rego. “I’ve been painting, painting, painting – slowly trying to find that strength of mark that I’ve found for sure in drawing and sculpture. I like that kind of sure-footed, clear statement, even though what’s behind it is very unclear, trying to figure out what the fuck is going on in my head,” she muses.

She suggests that she’s working through her issues in a linear fashion. “I haven’t even touched on loss yet. I have no idea how to even start on that one. Right now I’m dealing with all the shit of my young self: the uncomfortable feelings around womanhood and femininity.” Whether or not to draw herself directly is an issue of internal debate. “My God, three incredible children came out of my body,” she exclaims. “We should be so proud of our bodies and I hate the fact that I’m not. I have a lot of embarrassment and shame around my body. So [using it in my work] would be a very bold move. It’s a bravery that I don’t take lightly. But it needs to be done.”

Sitting with her knees crunched up to her chest, she displays the same combination of fragility and strength that is present in her artwork. She talks about being somewhat “introverted” and recent feelings of imposter syndrome. But at the same time, she sees her life experience as a strong point, “because I’m so much better as an older woman than I was as a younger one”. She laughs. “I could never have done this any younger; it just wasn’t in me. Everything I’ve been through up to this age – relationships, children, seeing them grow up – it’s vast, and it needs dismantling. It needs paying attention to, and this,” she points to her work, “is just chipping away at it. There’s a lot more that I want to say.” ■HTSI

*Bartley is showing at Kristin Hjellegjerde, 2 Melior Place, London SE1 (kristinhjellegjerde.com), 30 June to 22 July*

### Luella’s life in fashion



1996  
Bartley at London Fashion Week



2005  
Luella Bartley AW05, New York



2007  
Bartley opens in Mayfair



2014  
Marc by Marc Jacobs AW14



2016  
With Katie Hillier (left) at Coach AW16



2022  
Stevie Sims models for Hillier Bartley









Right: a bedroom terrace in Christian Louboutin's Vermelho hotel in Melides, Portugal. Left: the hotel's bar lounge. The bar itself is made of green stone and hammered metal by traditional Sevillian copper workers



Photography by *Stefan Gifthaler*

# LOUBOUTIN'S NEXT STEP

The shoe designer has opened a hotel in Portugal. *Maria Shollenbarger* gets the first foot in Vermelho





Say the name Louboutin and people think shoes. They might also think *Sex and the City*, the show that helped catapult the designer into fame's mesospheric levels – or maybe, given his predilection for stiletto shapes, vertiginous heights and ultra-feminine (occasionally leaning to bondage) details, just plain sex. But play this fashion word-association game with anyone who has followed the wider arc of Louboutin's career and you'll get quite a different set of responses: artisanship; artists' collaborations; cosmetics; clever, provocative exhibitions. And, maybe most enthusiastically, interiors.

Louboutin's talent for crafting a supremely tasteful room isn't a secret. Given how many of his homes have been published in glossy design magazines, those who admire his skill as an interior designer are clearly pretty numerous. They also likely know about his penchant for seeking out the craftspeople who keep old traditions alive around the world, and for collecting decorative arts of both haute and humble provenance – a huge, heterogeneous catalogue of pieces that mix wittily and joyously in the various residences he keeps, from Paris to Luxor.

To them, it may not come as a surprise that the man who made the scarlet sole a universal semaphore for va-va-voom has decided to turn his hand to hospitality – and done it in a place he considers one of his homes. This is how I find myself sitting at the bar of Vermelho, Louboutin's 13-room hotel in the coastal Portuguese village of Melides, which soft opens this month, and fully on 1 April. Louboutin himself is unable to be there when I visit (a series of delays have resulted in a few reschedulings), but there is no mistaking his presence in every one of its ebullient spaces. The hotel's three levels, forming a loose angle around a garden created by landscape designer Louis Benech, a friend of Louboutin's, are full of handpainted murals and richly inlaid wood floors, north African and European antiques, extravagant fabrics and workaday Portuguese stone. And everywhere, custom-designed tiles and ceramics from across the Iberian peninsula.

No two rooms are identical and each showcases at least one singular delight, whether a baldachin bed worthy of a Farnese cardinal or a whimsical rattan table in the shape of a capering monkey. The colours are fearless – a palette to swoon over, with judicious but unmissable deployments of vermilion, that signature Louboutin hue (*vermelho* means red in Portuguese).

Half-French, half-Egyptian, wholly nomadic by dint of his career and that endless curiosity about the world's aesthetic cultures, Louboutin first came to Comporta, Melides's more frequented neighbour to the north, in the late '80s. He bought a house there a couple of years later. "Back then it was a sort of heaven," he says. "No people, no [artificial] lights, the sun all day." But around 15 years ago, "I could feel it was going to become what it basically has, which is an overdeveloped, not as beautiful place. I found I was less happy there." He discovered Melides by

literal accident: driving back from a visit to a local A&E, mesmerised by the beauty of its lagoon, he ran his car into the road's sand shoulder, where it got stuck – just outside the village, which he instantly fell for. "Melides was like what Comporta was at the beginning," he says – quiet, authentic, untrammelled, though not without its own small society of worldly denizens. He made a few local calls: if anyone heard of anything property-wise, they were to let him know. Two days later, a modest house on the lagoon unexpectedly went on the market; it became his first residence here and, later, his atelier (he now lives in a larger compound next door).

In 2019, he purchased another small house on a largeish plot in the

Above: Christian Louboutin in the Vermelho. Below left: the Xtian restaurant, with architectural ceramic features by Giuseppe Ducrot. Below: a bathroom sink. Far right: a bedroom with a fresco by Greek artist Konstantin Kakanias













centre of the village, with the idea to open a restaurant. The town's mayor suggested he might think a bit bigger, pointing out that there was enough land to consider creating a hotel. Vermelho's reception area now sits on that house's old footprint. "Owning a hotel is a very specific fantasy, no?" he says. "A lot of people want to have one. It's your place, but the guests probably don't know that, so you can be anonymous. I like that idea; I like to feel responsible for something beautiful, but in a distanced way."

Beyond this, however, Louboutin faced the project with "no preconceived ideas and no clue". Though he had already flirted with the notion of doing hospitality, "I'd obviously never designed a hotel. I'm fortunate to have a lot of friends I stay with in a lot of different places, so my aesthetic doesn't come from a hotel world. And I only know designing homes." But he had a good start, in the form of a *magasin's* worth of antiques, *objets* and curiosities amassed over his decades of wanderings – many of which, he says, effortlessly found their niche somewhere in the hotel.

**H**is other secret weapons have been his friends. Vermelho's architect, Madalena Caiado, is the sister of Louboutin's Portuguese lawyer; Louboutin has known her since she was a child and she restored his house in Lisbon. "She had given me a beautiful book about old Portuguese buildings, and I thought, 'Whoever knows I would like this book is the exact architect I'm looking for.'"

Carolina Irving, the *Elle Decor* and *Vogue Living* editor, and textiles designer (a Melides neighbour of Louboutin's for years), lent her vast knowledge of historic fabric designs and contemporary collections. Patricia Medina, a Seville-based former antiques dealer, restorer of historic palaces and design consultant, connected Louboutin to some of Spain's top artisan woodcarvers, metalsmiths and ceramics producers. The stunning doors to each room – two-inch-thick American ash, hand-worked into geometric Baroque-inspired patterns – came from Seville, as did the heavy pewter handles, inlaid with delicate enamel motifs in white and (naturally) vermilion. The Jasper-effect tiles in my suite, their splatterings of teal radiating a nacreous glow, are the result of extensive experimentation. Each suite has its own unique tile design, incorporated into parquet floors, covering walls, or adorning the shallow alcoves behind headboards. The rooms at garden level are decorated with antique ones, sourced from across Spain and Portugal.

"From the very beginning, we've done every single piece to custom specifications," Medina tells me, whether metal, wood or ceramic. "I didn't realise until last month, when I actually sat down to review all the work of 18 months, what an enormous breadth it was." The apotheosis of this has to be the bar, a monolith that combines a base of green Indian Giada marble with ornate hammered-silver panelling in the style of baroque church altars, made by fifth-generation ecclesiastical



Left: one of the first-floor bedrooms, with traditional Portuguese ceiling, flooring and *azulejo* tilework. Below: the *azulejo*-tiled bathroom in a garden-level bedroom. Bottom left: a traditional Melides fisherman's house by the lagoon. Far left: a first-floor corridor with limewash *trompe l'oeil* details



a reflection both of Portuguese tradition and of Louboutin's own taste. "I was always saying to Madalena, 'More chimneys!' And she said, 'We don't need them!' But they're beautiful. They're not connected to any purpose, they're just pretty."

The kitchen in the restaurant, Xtian, was only fully installed the day before my arrival, but

## "IT NEEDED TO BE AN EXTENSION IN SOME WAY OF HOW I LIVE IN PORTUGAL"

metalsmiths in Seville (Medina recalls with a laugh their initial bemusement as she and Louboutin described the very non-ecclesiastical venue in which it would feature).

Elsewhere, Vermelho pays homage to Louboutin's Egyptian heritage: in the massage suite, the walls are covered in alabaster from Luxor, backlit to cast a soft caramel glow. Greece and Paris both get a look-in on the top floor, where a one-bedroom apartment and double room can be connected to create a private residence: one of the floors reproduces one found in the Hôtel de la Marine, on Place de la Concorde, while artist Konstantin Kakaniyas, another regular collaborator, has painted the walls in undulating fronds and decorative motifs. The bedroom's coffered ceiling features dense repeats of the five-pointed star that represents the night sky in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. And the exquisite *trompe-l'oeil* shell "mirrors" and decorative frescoes in the main hotel corridor are the work of François Roux, who restored the ceilings in Louboutin's Lisbon house.

The blending of styles, references and eras speaks to this extraordinarily nuanced collective eye. "We all connect with a certain language" is how Louboutin explains the group effort's success. "I need that when I work with people. You share references; it's really like a language, and makes things much more fluid." Also: Louboutin, Irving and Medina are not Portuguese. "If you're not from the country, you have a different perspective. You see and discover things that people from that country take for granted or maybe miss in their details." He notes that not all of Vermelho's chimneys, for instance, are functional –

already the food is exceptional: tender octopus salad, braised sardines, grouper in a traditional razor-clam sauce, lamb chops with migas chimichurri. Just as impressively, everyone hit their marks on what was effectively a rehearsal night. "Yes, it's very agreeable," Louboutin says. "That comes to a degree from the Portuguese way of life; people are friendly and easy-going, the pace is slower. But it's also the professionalism of Arnaud and Marugal," he adds, meaning Arnaud Laporte Weywada, co-CEO of Marugal, the hotel-management company he chose to operate Vermelho. Marugal's properties in Spain and France – among them Mallorca's Cap Rocat, Urso in Madrid and Relais de Chambord in Loir-et-Cher – are known for the same easeful but polished service. "I really didn't want it to feel different to when I'm in my house," Louboutin continues. "It needed to be an extension in some way of how my friends and I live in Portugal. So if that ambience [works], it's also because I understood that Marugal would make it the way it needed to be."

There are plans for two more Vermelho hotels nearby. One, a repurposed two-star property Louboutin has bought that overlooks the lagoon, will feature the interior designs of Olivia Putman, daughter of legendary French decorator Andrée; it's slated to open in 2024. The other, on a piece of land Louboutin recently acquired in the pine woods, is yet to be built.

And as to whether Melides will retain the unaffected charm that Louboutin fell for? In truth, it's no secret either. The cognoscenti have been forsaking Comporta for Melides's shaggier, less look-at-me environs for some time. Developers are prospecting, and new-build, high-end villas slowly but inexorably appearing in the pines. For now, however, it's still a sweet spot, in both senses of the term – albeit one with a red-hot new place to stay. ■HTSI [vermelhohotel.com](http://vermelhohotel.com); double rooms from €380



# GO TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE KNOW

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THE AUTHOR'S 1984-85 VIVIENNE WESTWOOD CLINT EASTWOOD JACKET



When I think of the late Vivienne Westwood, the self-taught iconoclast who threw a Molotov cocktail into the London fashion scene in the '70s and went on to become the most influential British female fashion designer in the world, I think of the 1984-85 Clint Eastwood collection. I bought a navy flight jacket with elongated knitted sleeves and body – a design she reworked constantly. It came from her iconic World's End shop in London's Chelsea, purchased with money my parents had allocated for a school winter coat. My father shook with fury when I returned home, confirming that I had made the right choice. I continued to buy a few pieces of Vivienne Westwood each season, from platform biker boots to denim jackets printed with cupids from an 18th-century painting by Fragonard. I still wear the Clint Eastwood jacket today; other owners have listed theirs on eBay for \$6,000.

Above right: c1999-2000 Vivienne Westwood "Conduit Street" corset, £6,500, 1stdibs.com. Above: a top from the 1982 Savage collection. Below: Kate Moss on the Vivienne Westwood AW93 runway. Bottom: Westwood at her AW16 catwalk show in London



No one just "collects Vivienne Westwood". There are distinct chapters – from the subversive punk classics detonated with partner Malcolm McLaren in the '70s to the red-carpet luxury created in recent years with her husband Andreas Kronthaler. Real obsessives – myself included – forged their relationship with the clothes through Westwood's shaping of subculture, from the mid-'70s to the end of her "Pagan" era, in 1993. The early SEX and Seditious labels, from 1974 to 1980, are often collected by retired punks and artists in their 60s and older. T-shirts from the collection go for between £900 and £4,500 on Vestiaire Collective (though *caveat emptor* for Sex Pistols fans: the market is flooded with fakes, including pieces so convincing they allegedly made it into the Met's 2013 punk exhibition). The New Romantic and hip-hop-inflected pieces, created before McLaren left the partnership in 1983, are catnip for those in their late 40s and 50s. Some of the most collectable work is from the early '80s, when it had broken through to the style press, which



Centre left: Vivienne Westwood in 1977. Left: Pamela Rooke (aka Jordan) in 1977. Below: Naomi Campbell on the AW94 runway. Bottom: collector Maur Valance wearing a squiggle-print World's End top, 1987



FASHION  
**Vivienne Westwood**

The OG punk designer's pieces are increasingly precious

WORDS BY MARK C O'FLAHERTY

shaped a cult around it. Those sharp-shouldered, deeply weird and wonderful Witches jackets from 1983 can go for more than £15,000. There are rarely gently priced vintage pieces from pre-mid-'90s. In 1993, Westwood differentiated her labels between Red (for a younger customer, produced until 2016) and Gold (a finer line). Anglomania, essentially a diffusion label, launched in 1998. Of these, Gold is usually the most sought after on the secondary market – a floral skirt suit is currently available on 1stDibs for \$9,500.

"Collecting Westwood is about collective memory," says Steven Philip, co-founder of vintage store Rellik, who has a vast fashion archive at his studio in Brighton, including more than 300 early and one-off runway Westwood pieces. I spoke to Philip for my book *Narrative Thread: Conversations on Fashion Collections* (publishing this autumn), about the garments cherished by notable designers, performers and costumiers; Westwood haunts numerous other chapters, including those with milliner Stephen Jones and Carla Sozzani of Milanese store 10 Corso Como.

The value of vintage Westwood often varies according to both scarcity and provenance. When the late Pamela Rooke, aka Jordan – Westwood and McLaren's '70s shop girl and star of Derek Jarman's punk fantasia *Jubilee* – sold much of her archive in 2015 at Kerry Taylor Auctions, a McLaren-era "Anarchist" print shirt went for £13,000, and a 1975 hand-studded "Venus" T-shirt including a badge with a poodle hit £22,000.

Paul Gorman – Malcolm McLaren's biographer and expert auction authenticator for McLaren and Westwood pieces – predicts prices have the potential to increase, but flags that there are many factors to take into account: "Where authenticity can be proven, the work she and Malcolm created between 1971 and their World's End collection in 1984 will jump at least 20 to 40 per cent." He is more circumspect about later collections: "Westwood and her business were so prolific over several decades, and the quality threshold inevitably dropped with the sale of everything from tacky jewellery to plastic shoes. This means it will also take time to gain a proper perspective on her oeuvre."

Sought-after designs for collectors currently include pieces featuring Keith Haring (who McLaren commissioned for the Witches collection in 1983), and the giant, ragamuffin shearling coats from the year before. Corsets are also high-ticket items. "We have a lot of serious collectors who come to us for those," says Brandon Giordano, co-founder of James Veloria vintage store in New York's Chinatown,

**"EACH OF WESTWOOD'S PIECES WAS A SIGNIFIER"**

which is a great place to find Westwood bargains. Collectable motifs include the squiggle print (inspired by a print by Jean-Charles de Castelbajac and used by McLaren for the 1981 Pirate collection) and the giant stars and spots on denim from the 1985 Mini-Crini collection. "The first thing I wanted was something with a squiggle," says property investor Maur Valance, who created a haute-drag persona in the late '80s and was omnipresent in London's most fashionable clubs. He owns about 200 early Westwood items. "I bought what are now incredibly rare pieces in 1983, printed on brown lace. I don't wear any as they are worth so much now, but I'll never sell anything. Each was a signifier, showing who you were to the right people in discos, who knew what it meant. It was about having found my tribe." Still is, if you ask me. ■HTSI

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD LEATHER PLATFORMS, £20,590, VESTIAIRECOLLECTIVE.COM



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**WHAT TO READ**  
Vivienne Westwood by Claire Wilcox  
Vivienne Westwood: An Unfashionable Life by Jane Mulvagh  
Vivienne Westwood Catwalk: The Complete Collections by Alexander Fury



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Right: The Square Berlin co-founder Emmanuel de Bayser, with (behind him) Pierre Augustin Rose Helios Marble mirror, €24,000, Minitore armchairs, €8,800 each, and Galet occasional table, €2,900. Far right and below: the store's interiors



WORDS BY SARA SEMIC

It's really a new kind of shopping experience," says Emmanuel de Bayser of The Square, the Berlin-based fashion, art and lifestyle store he opened with his partner Josef Voelk in autumn last year. "It's not like a department store where you want to leave because of all the merchandise. It's not too in-your-face."

Housed in a reconstructed 19th-century corner-building on Gendarmenmarkt square, a stone's throw from the famous boulevard Unter den Linden, the concept store (which has a sister outpost in west Berlin) is a revamp of the couple's cult fashion boutique The Corner, which opened in 2008 and drew celebrities from Beyoncé and Jay-Z to Karl Lagerfeld ("He was so curious and always asking questions," recalls de Bayser). "We thought it was the right time to offer something different to our customers," he says of the rebrand. "We wanted to create a rounded and sensual feeling in a space that was quite cold."

De Bayser worked with Paris-based studio Pierre Augustin Rose on a space that feels like a cross between a gallery, a shop

BOTTEGA VENETA COTTON POLO, €500



## The Square Berlin

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cross-category," he adds. "It's more practical for us and I think it's more fun."

For its design offering, a bronze figurative sculpture by Thomas Junghans (€11,000) sits alongside sinuous brown bouclé sofas by Pierre Augustin Rose. Cylindrical ivory-toned tables and glass vitrines are piled with coffee-table books, marijuana- and liquorice-scented candles by Loewe (from €78) and fragrances by new French perfume house Matière Première (€145 for 50ml). Upstairs, a lacquered oval dining table is laid with handpainted porcelain tableware by Ann Demeulemeester (plates from €13) and red linens (€35) by Venetian fabric designer Chiarastella Cattana. "We've created an atmosphere in which you can imagine yourself living,"

JACQUEMUS JERSEY DRESS, €565

"I'VE ALWAYS LIKED TO BE CHALLENGED VISUALLY"

says de Bayser. "A lot of new people arrive in Berlin who have to start fresh with a new apartment, so the idea was to have

a complete lifestyle offering so they could do up their whole apartment – and buy some clothes and accessories too."

For de Bayser, who comes from a long line of artists, collectors and art historians (his grandfather was a gallery owner in Paris, while his great-grandfather was the painter George Desvallières), curating homeware and interiors was a natural fit. "I was always surrounded by aesthetic [things]," he says. "I've always liked putting them together and trying to be challenged visually." The result is a shopping destination worthy of Berlin's coolest customers. ■HTSI



and an ultra-luxe apartment. Spread over three levels, the store invites customers to dwell. Clothing rails have been cleverly fitted into the curved walls, carrying high-end pieces by brands including Loro Piana, Celine and Bottega Veneta, as well as those by younger labels such as Coperni.

"We are not a niche shop for one type of customer," says de Bayser. "We have Jil Sander for the gallery owner and Jacquemus for the younger customer; Gucci for the woman who wants to stand out and Dior for the woman who wants to be more ladylike." It's an assortment that reveals de Bayser's "sharp eye", says German entrepreneur and influencer Caro Daur. "His selection of fashion and lifestyle brands can't be found anywhere else."

"I try to concentrate on pieces that people can wear from one season to the next," de Bayser continues. "That's really the philosophy of the store." Clothes are displayed on genderless mannequins where possible. "In the past few years we've been seeing more and more people shopping







Left: the queue outside Le Relais de Venise in Paris. Bottom: the signature steak frites

EATING

## High steaks

What is it about Le Relais de Venise L'Entrecôte that makes people queue?

Ajesh Patalay reports

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX CRÉTEY SYSTEMANS

**W**ould you ever queue for dinner? If so, for how long?

Normally my answer would be “not if I can help it” and “20 minutes max (with a Martini)”. But tonight I’ve abandoned those rules and joined the queue snaking round the block outside Le Relais de Venise L’Entrecôte in London’s Marylebone. I want to find out why this Parisian steakhouse is worth the wait.

The chain is known for its queues. When this first branch outside Paris opened in 2005, there were lines from the start. There are queues outside branches in the City of London, New York and Mexico City. No doubt more will queue for the new Monte Carlo branch due to open in September.

The concept behind the restaurants hasn’t changed since the original was opened in Paris by winemaker Paul Gineste de Saurs in 1959. Everyone is served the same: a green salad with walnuts followed by rib-eye steak cut into slices with frites and the famous house sauce (all for £28). You can choose from 20 or so heavily ice-cream-based desserts (from £4.75). The waitresses wear black with white aprons. And the tables are packed so close, you’re practically swimming in your neighbour’s lap.

According to director Pauline Godillot, one of the founder’s granddaughters who oversees the Paris, London, New York and Mexico branches, the restaurant serves 600-700 customers a day and receives no more than a couple of complaints a week. “Usually about there not being enough space to sit. Or the service being too fast,” she says. Tables are typically turned in less than an hour. “But we never push people out.”

Sometimes the complaints turn out to be about “copycat” restaurants. And confusingly, the extended family operate restaurants under similar names. Alongside Le Relais de Venise L’Entrecôte, there is L’Entrecôte (run by Godillot’s cousins with branches in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Montpellier, Lyon and Barcelona) and Le Relais de l’Entrecôte (run by Godillot’s other cousins with three locations in Paris, one in Geneva and one in Zurich).



I definitely smell marijuana too. We end up queuing for an hour. But the time flies amid the fug of camaraderie.

Once inside, I pop downstairs. When I return, the salads are already on the table and Tim has been cajoled into ordering our steaks. “Rare” is his guess for how I want mine. Actually, I prefer medium (blue and well-done are also options) but it proves too hasslesome to change. Unfortunately, the salads are limp and look like they’ve been waiting as long as we have. But the dressing is a winner – a simple vinaigrette with the right amount of bite. And we’re starving by this time.

### TIME FLIES AMID THE FUG OF CAMARADERIE

Then the steak frites arrive, slaked in the signature sauce. The recipe is a family secret. A paste is apparently mixed up in a laboratory in Provence and sent to each restaurant to be diluted with “kilos and kilos of butter”. *Le Monde* speculated chicken liver, thyme and mustard. Others have mooted green peppercorn. The result is weirdly addictive. “Like Pringles,” confirms Godillot.

I’ve tasted better steak. But there’s pleasure to be found in it, particularly washed down with the most expensive wine on the menu, a Château Queyron Saint-Émilion Grand Cru (only £46). When the waitress returns to heap an extra round of steak and fries on my plate, I have to marvel. What other restaurant gets such performative mileage out of seconds?

The desserts are disappointing: stiff wedges of ice cream and lacklustre chocolate in the Le Vacherin du Relais (a meringue ice cream tower) and profiteroles. But overall, it’s been kind of fun. A throwback to my leaner years when meals were less precious and more affordable and clocking up experiences was all that mattered. Isn’t that still worth queuing for? ■HTSI

@ajesh34



LENNY KRAVITZ, A PARTNER IN NOCHELUNA SOTOL

Sotol is not an agave but it produces a spirit with botanical, mineral and earthy notes reminiscent of mezcal. It was these characteristics that first attracted Lenny Kravitz to what would become Nocheluna (below, \$74.99), a brand he’s launched with Pernod Ricard and Casa Lumbre. “The first time I tasted sotol was in the Dominican Republic while shooting *Shotgun Wedding* with Jennifer Lopez,” says Kravitz. “I was immediately inspired by its elegant smokiness. Whether it’s food, incense, fragrances or a spirit, I love the element of smoke. I then visited Chihuahua to become educated and went to the desert where the dasyliion plant is grown and then to the distillery. The taste, the complexity and also learning so much about a topic I didn’t know about excited me.” Nocheluna is intense and clean, with notes of hot tarmac, leather and wet slate. There’s parched vetiver, sweet mint and a peppery tingle on the finish.



“Many exported sotols tend to be vegetal with some sweetness of fresh-cut grass and tropical fruits,” says Ivy Mix, owner of Leyenda, a bar with one of the best Mexican spirit lists in NYC. “But you can also get walloped with the funk of mushrooms and warm notes of wet terracotta. With sotol more than any other spirit, I can really taste the soil.” A favourite is Sotoleros Mario y Cesar (\$99, fiascobk.com). “It has that classic eucalyptus and menthol flavour but also fresh-cut wood, birch beer and barnyard.” She also singles out La Remilgosa Sotol Texanum Ancestral (\$82, fiascobk.com) from Durango for its “creamy consistency and earthiness of forest floor, cooked root vegetables and baked nuts”.

Matthias Ingelmann of Kol Mezcaleria in London recommends Flor del Desierto Sierra (£78.90) – “fresh, green, lots of minerality” – and the softly smoky Sotol Ono (£34.32, both casa-agave.com), which has bright spearmint notes. Some producers, he says, make blends of agave and sotol. Sin Gusano’s subscription club showcases some of these.

Headline act or underground hit, this is the year to get sotol on your playlist. ■HTSI

@alicelascelles

DRINKING

## A sotol difference

There’s a new force to reckon with in Mexican spirits, says *Alice Lascelles*

Sales of tequila and mezcal have soared. By the end of 2023, IWSR predicts, tequila will be the most valuable spirits category in the US. But the flip-side is that the industry is now facing an agave shortage and increased production costs. It’s prompted some to go in search of other spirits that fit the mould. And this has led to greater interest in sotol, distilled from *Dasyliion wheeleri*, or “desert spoon”, a shrub that thrives in Chihuahua, northern Mexico.



FRUITS AND  
VEGETABLES  
FOR THE DINNER

HOW TO HOST IT

## A cracking fashion party

Laila Gohar invites her friends to get their hands dirty with salt-baked char

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIANNA GLAVIANO

I love large-scale entertaining. Professionally, I am known for six-foot-tall shrimp towers, chocolate fountains and life-size cake chairs. I have somehow figured out how to make a living doing what every child dreams of doing, and what every parent tells their children not to do: playing with my food.

This surrealist, Willy Wonka-esque world that I've created has allowed me to collaborate with many other artists, designers and fashion houses. Sometimes it feels as though I am living in a dream, one in which I get to have my cake and eat it too. The thing I enjoy most about these over-the-top creations is that they disarm people – like instant ice-breakers – specifically in spaces that tend to be a bit stuffy. Take fashion parties, for instance. There can be a too-cool-for-school attitude in the air. People walk, scan the room, see if they can spot a friend... When you bring, say, a tower made of marshmallows into the equation, it is an instant leveller. Everyone is equally amused, confused, delighted. Guards come down and people open up.

I have a similar philosophy when it comes to domestic dinner parties. While the food doesn't need to be as labour-intensive as some of the projects I take on professionally, I am always thinking of amusing ways to get people involved and show them something they may not have seen before. People love to get their hands dirty. Cooking together creates an air of conviviality and a sense of ease in the room.

On a recent Friday night I decided to invite some industry friends over and make a salt-baked fish. I love that salt-baked fish appears fancy and complicated while being

deceptively simple – you need very few ingredients and very little can go wrong. The premise is straightforward. You take a whole fish (skin and bones on), cover it in salt and bake it in the oven. The salt forms a crust, seals in the moisture and acts like a little oven around the fish.

You can salt-bake many different varieties. One of my favourites is Arctic char. Char is a rich, orange-fleshed fish that is similar to trout or salmon. It is a beautiful, fatty fish, so it won't dry out. It is also a more sustainable option than salmon as it is easier, less polluting and more affordable to farm. If you're going to make this for just a couple of

people, smaller trout or cod are great options too. Count on about 1lb/550g of total weight per person. Once the fish has been baked, the salt hardens and needs to be gently cracked and removed. This is where my friends got very involved. One friend in particular really got

### SALT-BAKED FISH APPEARS FANCY BUT IS DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE

his hands dirty, and to my delight replicated the recipe just a few days later and sent me photos of his own salt-baked masterpiece. Few things make me happier and more proud than teaching someone a skill that is there for a lifetime. I love putting together menus that are simple yet abundant and generous. The menu that night really hit the nail on the head: blanc de blancs champagne, chablis, salt-baked Arctic char, aioli, boiled potatoes, sautéed rapini, big bowls of lychee, cherry and pomegranate.

Few pleasures in life come as close to being greeted with an ice-cold glass of champagne, then sitting down for a mouthful of perfectly cooked fish with a bite of potato and a little tangle of bitter greens. Dessert feels almost extraneous, but just to end things with a little burst of sweetness, I served lychee, cherry and pomegranate on ice. ■ HTSI

### Salt-baked fish

Two whole, gutted, skin- and bone-on Arctic char, each about 5lb/2.2kg  
10 egg whites  
10lb/4.5kg kosher salt  
Handful of bay leaves

- Preheat the oven to 450°F/230°C/gas mark 8.
- Make the crust. Whisk the eggs until frothy. Add the salt.
- Add a cup of water at a time till you have a thick, sludgy, cement-like consistency that is sticky but not too wet.
- Place a thin layer of salt on a baking sheet, like a bed for the fish. Place the fish on top and put a bay leaf in the fish cavity.
- Cover the fish with more salt, packing it tightly. Bury a few more bay leaves in the salt. Make sure it's all covered. Repeat on another baking dish with the second fish.
- Place the fish in the oven for 15 minutes. Remove and rest for another 10 minutes.
- After the fish has rested, gently crack the crust. Do this at the table for added drama. It should come off in large chunks. Discard the salt and brush the fish off to remove any remaining bits of salt. Move to a clean platter, peel back the skin using a fork, and serve.

Above:  
removing the  
salt crust.  
Right: Gohar's  
industry friends



Top: preparing the char.  
Above: the cooked fish  
arrives at the table. Below:  
cherries and lychees





# HOW TO SPEND IT IN...



Left: Anine Bing at Lucky's. Top: linguine with clams at SY Kitchen. Above right: Bing walking to (above) Butterfly Beach



## MONTECITO

Danish fashion designer Anine Bing on life beside the California beach

INTERVIEW BY **CHRISTINA OHLY EVANS**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JULIAN BERMAN**

**I**moved to Los Angeles from Copenhagen 20 years ago, and we moved north to Montecito when we realised we'd no longer have to be in the office five days a week. It's a tiny, warm community, and a place I never expected to be so international – there are transplants from LA, New York and San Francisco, but also the UK and Europe. I think it used to have an older feel, but now it's full of young families and feels more vibrant than ever. In challenging times, as we've seen with the recent storms, the bond of this community is even stronger.

When we were looking for a home, we stayed with our kids at the Rosewood Miramar Beach, which is right on the beach in nearby Santa Barbara, and also at the Hotel Californian, which is in a neighbourhood that is perfect for exploring on foot or by bike. The whole Central Coast of California – and particularly Montecito – has a very Mediterranean vibe; from the beautiful weather, to the flowers that are in bloom all year round, to the white Spanish colonial-style architecture.

There's a real focus on the outdoors here. Butterfly Beach in Montecito is where I like to take my kids to walk and talk. Padaro Beach, which is nearer to Carpinteria and Summerland, is another of my favourites, and a great spot to watch the dolphins and seals frolic. The beach in Santa Barbara is much busier and more commercial, but it is also a hit with kids who like action, and you can go on a whale-

Below: the cactus garden at Lotusland. Bottom: the fashion designer on Butterfly Beach



IT'S A GREAT SPOT TO WATCH THE DOLPHINS AND SEALS FROLIC



watching excursion from the main harbour here, which is a good way to experience the coast and islands. Beyond the beaches there is Lotusland – the stunning 37-acre estate that was once owned by Madame Ganna Walska, and is considered one of the 10 most spectacular gardens in the world.

Hiking is another big draw. I always recommend the Hot Springs Canyon trail because it works for people of all fitness levels. You can walk up to the hot springs and slather yourself with mud, which is thought to heal and detoxify – or you can just go for a magnificent brunch under the lemon trees at the nearby San Ysidro Ranch. The historic property was damaged by a fire in 2017 and then by mudslides in 2018, but it has been faithfully rebuilt and both the setting and the food are pure California. One thing I will say on the hiking: there are bears, rattlesnakes and mountain lions here, so don't ever head out alone!

Fresh food is central to everything in Montecito, and with so many surrounding farms growing artichokes and amazing avocados, it's no surprise. You'll find fresh-pressed juices almost everywhere, including at the Santa Barbara Farmers Market on Saturday mornings. I love

Oliver's for vegan food, with cocktails that incorporate cucumber and mint. Los Arroyos is another favourite; it's not fancy, but the make-your-own fajitas and fantastic margaritas are a must once a week. For a date night or a special dinner with the kids I love Lucky's; it's an institution that feels old Hollywood, with food that's very American. My order is a great steak and a Mr Lucky, which is a combination of tequila, St Germain and lime juice, with a touch of salt. They're super-potent, so be careful...

Montecito is more about eating than shopping, but for a mix of cooler fashion brands – and the flowy, casual pieces that work well here – there is Diani in Santa Barbara. My favourite shop is always Field + Fort in nearby Summerland. You'll find everything here from backgammon sets to antiques and garden furniture, and I also highly recommend eating lunch outside at their café, Feast.

We'll often take day trips to Santa Ynez – a little town just over the hill – for lunch at SY Kitchen, or to Los Olivos, which is known for its wineries and tasting rooms. Stay for lunch at nearby Bell's, which is a sort of Californian French bistro that's completely relaxed but

holds a Michelin star. In general, people are just happy to be here in this beautiful part of the world, and so that makes everyone a bit more kind. ■HTSI

### CAFÉS & RESTAURANTS

**Bell's** bellsrestaurant.com  
**Los Arroyos** losarroyos.net  
**Lucky's** lucky-s-steakhouse.com  
**Oliver's** oliversofmontecito.com  
**SY Kitchen** sykitchen.com

### SHOPS

**Diani** dianiboutique.com  
**Field + Fort** fieldandfort.com  
**Santa Barbara Farmers Market** sbfarmersmarket.org

### HOTELS

**Hotel Californian** hotelcalifornian.com  
**Rosewood Miramar Beach** rosewoodhotels.com  
**San Ysidro Ranch** sanysidoranch.com

### TODO

**Butterfly Beach** santabarbaraca.com  
**Hot Springs Canyon** sblandtrust.org  
**Lotusland** lotusland.org  
**Padaro Beach** californiabeaches.com



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