

APRIL 6/7 2019

FT Weekend Magazine

24-page supplement

MILAN DESIGN

The essential guide



RUSSIA'S POWER GAME

How the Kremlin won the bitter battle to control chess
Investigation by Sam Jones



Frivole collection
Between the Finger Ring,
yellow gold and diamonds.

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Haute Joaillerie, place Vendôme since 1906





KWAME BRATHWAITE

'We see a young black generation coming of age, poised and self-confident'

Ekow Eshun on photographer Kwame Brathwaite, p20



'Many of the critical developments have been made at the cost of human lives'

William Atkins on bomb disposal, p28



'Have your nose at the ready to catch the first plumes of steam from the pot'

Honey & Co's rice bowl, p38

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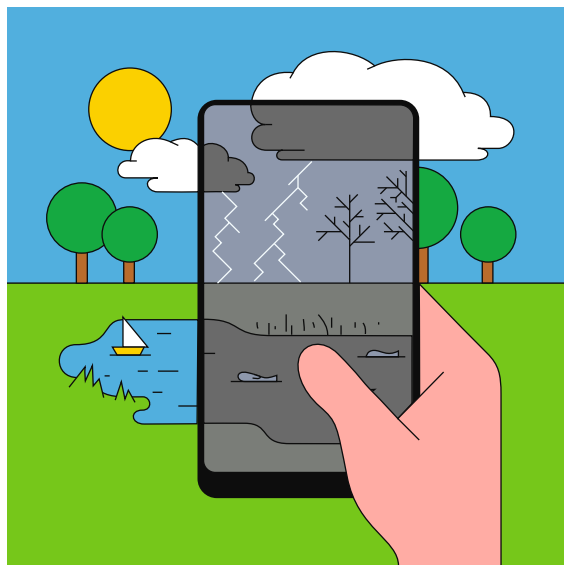

NEPTUNE



SIMON KUPER

OPENING SHOT

Reasons to be cheerful – for the time being



Pick up your phone when you wake up, and it feels as if we're living in terrible times. On social media, everyone from the US president down is shouting at everyone else. Venezuela and the UK are in political meltdown. Scroll through the daily horrors, from Yemen's civil war to child migrants kept in cages, and then shoo your kids to school so they can end up on the right side of inequality.

Yet we may remember this era as a happy parenthesis: the good times before everything did go to pot.

Scholars such as Steven Pinker of Harvard and the late Swedish statistician Hans Rosling have long argued that the median human has never had it so good. Things are terrible, except compared with all of history. For instance:

- Only one person in 10 lived in extreme poverty in 2015 (meaning they consumed less than \$1.90 a day, adjusted for local prices), down from 36 per cent in 1990, says the World Bank.

- The average child born in 2016 could expect to live 72 years. That's a rise of 5.5 years since 2000, while the average African has gained 10.3 years, largely because of improved child survival and more access to treatments for HIV, says the World Health Organization.

- Fewer than 90,000 people died in organised conflicts involving state or non-state actors in 2017, reports the Uppsala Conflict Data Group. That's down from the recent peak in 2014, and far below the 1946-1990 period as a proportion of the world's population. In short, Donald Trump hasn't upset global peace. Admittedly, today's 68.5 million forcibly displaced people (many of them living in dreadful conditions) are an all-time record, but that's partly because wars are becoming less deadly: refugees escape.

- Global inequality has fallen, as Asian countries close the gap with the west. But many western countries have also rebounded from the financial crisis. The US's median household income hit \$61,372 in 2017, about its level of 2007, and has kept rising since. If the country's 10-year economic expansion lasts beyond July, it will become the longest in US history.

- Even as democracy has retreated worldwide since 2005 (according to the Freedom House watchdog), growing numbers are becoming freer to live fulfilled lives. Women, gay people and the disabled are benefiting from the belated recognition that there are no second-class humans. Just since 2013, many western countries have legalised gay marriage; India last year unbanned gay sex; while "antidiscrimination laws are gaining traction worldwide", says the US Council on Foreign Relations. There's still an immense way to go - Brunei this week brought in stoning to death for gay sex - but worldwide, this is probably the best time ever to be gay, female or disabled.

- The worst of climate change has yet to bite.

If things feel awful, it's partly because of the way we now consume news. Before rolling television news, mass atrocities such as the Holocaust, the Ukrainian famine, China's Great Leap Forward and even Rwanda's genocide happened almost in secret. Today we see individual atrocities on our smartphones: New Zealand's mosque shootings, American cops killing black people or a bomb hitting a Syrian house. This is horrendous, but it also prompts action to stop the atrocities: the Trump administration was embarrassed into dropping its policy of separating migrant children from their parents at the Mexican border.

We're still working out how to live with social media. It has put us in intimate contact with racist sociopaths who issue death and rape threats. But it's worth remembering that the internet produces far more virtual than real violence. Indeed, the kinds of people who 25 years ago were out mugging old ladies are now indoors trolling. Many criminologists have linked the arrival of the internet and video games with the long-term decline in violent crime across the west. The US's rate of violent crime fell 74 per cent between 1993 and 2017, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

'Scholars argue that the median human has never had it so good. Things are terrible, except compared with all of history'

So these are relatively good times. But they probably won't last. The eurozone looks on the brink of recession, and the bond market thinks the US is heading that way. This month, Brexit will probably either happen or get delayed, whereupon the UK could get stuck long-term in angry US-style partisanship. Then there's war. The US, China, India, Russia and Brazil now all have nationalist leaders. The "my country first" era may turn out as peaceful as the previous multilateral one, but that's a high bar. North Korea has probably built intercontinental nuclear missiles, while the US and Russia suspended their Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in February.

Pinker says people are always worrying about future threats that never materialise. But when it comes to the big threat, climate change, even his optimism falters. In his latest book *Enlightenment Now*, he concedes: "The effort needed to prevent climate change is immense, and we have no guarantee that the necessary transformations in technology and politics will be in place soon enough to slow down global warming before it causes extensive harm." Humanity may be like the video-game player who fights his way past many levels of dragons but then finally gets taken out. **FT**

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INVENTORY JASON ISAACS, ACTOR

‘Everything important I’ve learnt about life I learnt from my wife’

Jason Isaacs, 55, is known for roles such as Lucius Malfoy in the Harry Potter film series, Hap Percy in The OA and Jackson Brodie in the BBC’s Case Histories series.

What was your childhood or earliest ambition?

To win the football league for Liverpool and the World Cup for Brazil.

Private school or state school?

University or straight into work?

A free, selective, direct-grant school because I was a smart-arse; tuition-fee-less Bristol University to study law because I liked an argument; and then the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, capped at £300 a year by the local education authority, because I’d realised that, while I wasn’t smart enough to argue that well, I’d always had an infinite capacity for being childish. Not one of those options exists now.

Who was or still is your mentor?

Everything important I’ve ever learnt about life I learnt from my wife, Emma.

How physically fit are you?

If I’m chasing a ball or there’s a camera involved, I can run, jump and punch till my lungs are on the outside. If not, I need help doing my flies up.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

Luck. And not being a dick. Luck mostly.

How politically committed are you?

I was Politically committed with a large “P”, campaigning for Labour for decades. Now I despair on a party-political level but am still working for change in small “p” areas. Currently I’m involved with the People’s Vote campaign, which seems like the only possible way to give our hopeless representatives a clear mandate to do something.

What would you like to own that you don’t currently possess?

A six-pack. Four would do.

What’s your biggest extravagance?

Holidays. I’m away from my kids so much that if I’m around in any school holiday, I’m always angling to create mind-blowing memories by getting lost in the desert or falling off a mountain. My kids, of course, just want to stay at home and hang out with their friends.

In what place are you happiest?

Holding hands with Emma or on a tennis court. I’ve never tried the combo.

What ambitions do you still have?

To be in court the day Donald Trump is sentenced. Or the World Cup thing. Whichever comes first.

What drives you on?

A 10-year-old Prius and insomnia.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

Emma and I have been together since October 31 1987 and still find new things to argue about every day. That must count for something. And I passed my driving test at 9am on my 17th birthday, which is probably best not explored in too much detail.

What do you find most irritating in other people?

Where do I start? A vocal uptick – it’s not a question, if you make it sound like one I’m not going to take you seriously and neither will anyone else. A presumption that it’s OK to be misogynist or racist or Islamophobic in front of me. The phrase “not a problem”: of course it’s not – it’s your job. Having seen the *Potter* films but not read the books. I could go on.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would he think?

“I must wear sunscreen.”

Which object that you’ve lost do you wish you still had?

I’m an early adopter of technology and had a very early Bluetooth earpiece that transmitted crystal-clear sound both ways. Nobody I ever spoke to had a clue I was on it. Now I have a panoply of amazingly sophisticated earphones and everyone I talk to asks if I have my head down a toilet.

What is the greatest challenge of our time?

Fighting the apathy that comes from feeling overwhelmed and powerless to effect change – on both a global and personal scale. Marching forward and doing something, whatever it is, is always the best and only answer.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

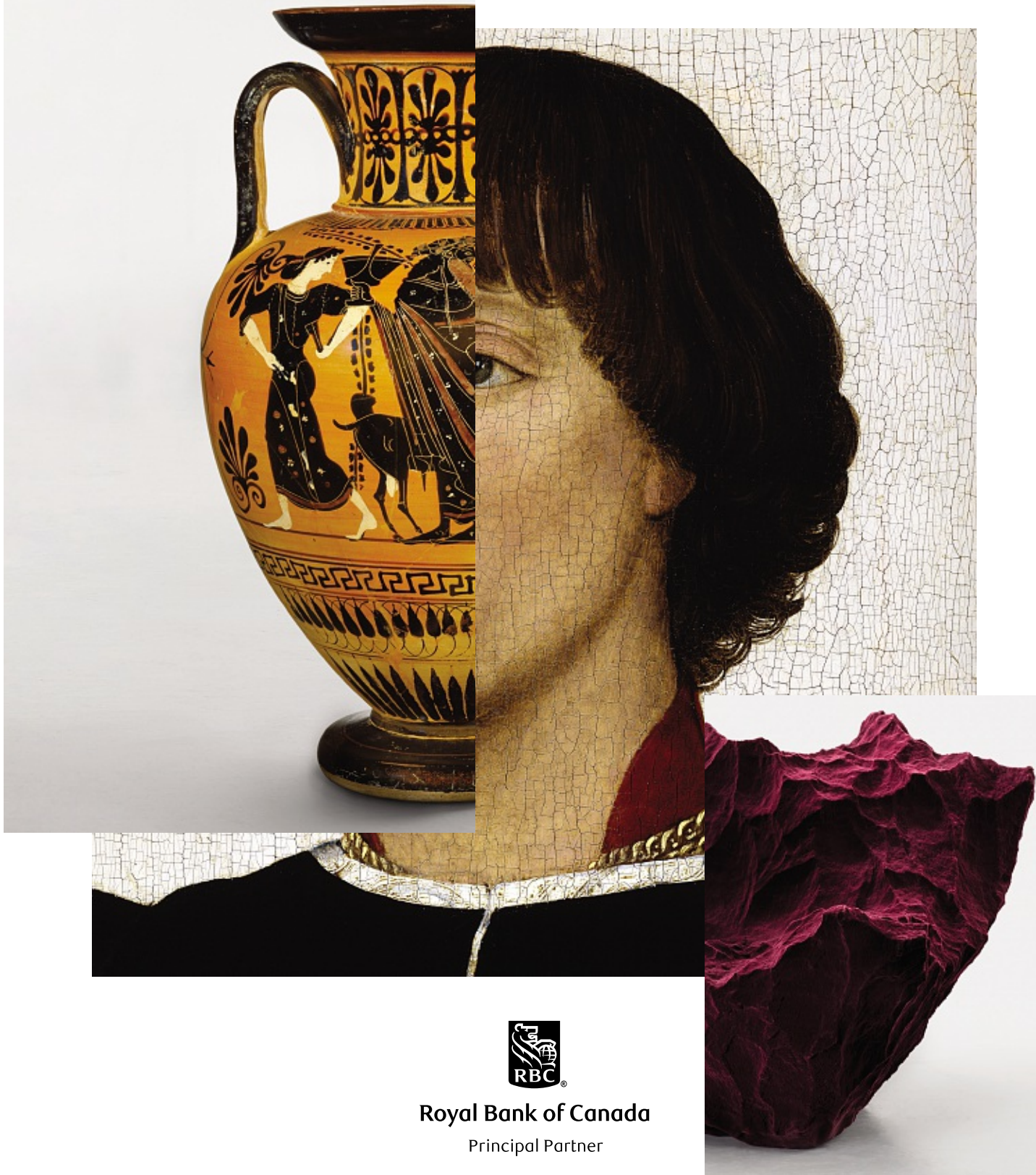
What are the hours?

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

That way madness lies. I try to be grateful every day and never to compare myself to what I imagine it’s like being someone else or to what my life could or should have been. I fail, mostly, but that’s the game, isn’t it? **FT**

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Interview by Hester Lacey. “The OA” Part II is available on Netflix now

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Left: Black-Figure Neck Amphora (Detail), about 510 B.C. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program. Centre: Portrait of Francesco d'Este (Detail), c. 1460, by Rogier van der Weyden. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala. Right: Armchair, Spetsis II (Detail), 2015, by Fredrikson Stallard, courtesy of David Gill.

TECH WORLD NOTES FROM A DIGITAL BUNKER

BY ELAINE MOORE IN SAN FRANCISCO



ILLUSTRATION BY PÂTE

What tech hasn't learnt from sci-fi

Palmer Luckey, co-founder of virtual-reality company Oculus and a man who sounds like the protagonist in a sci-fi fantasy, likes to say that the novel *Ready Player One* is required reading for his new employees.

Set in the year 2044, Ernest Cline's VR-themed debut turns out to be a good way to understand how Silicon Valley sees itself. Unlike the murky backdrop of novels like William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, *Ready Player One* is a tech adventure written by an optimist. Yes, it's set in a dystopia in which a game has distracted everyone from life in a shanty town, but neither the game nor tech itself is shown as intrinsically bad.

There is a myth that Silicon Valley is stuffed full of nerds who have never picked up a book in their lives. Like a lot of tales about the Valley, it is not true. The tech industry is acutely aware of the value of storytelling. How else would it convince the world to hand over billions of dollars for products that don't yet exist?

Whenever a tech founder is asked about their favourite novel it is usually worth paying attention. Uber founder Travis Kalanick's admiration of Ayn Rand's architect creator, standing alone against the whole world in *The Fountainhead*, made increasing sense once it emerged how far Uber was willing to push the limits of the law. Jeff Bezos's interest in the quiet despair of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* is jarring given the scale of his ambitions, but Elizabeth Holmes' attachment to *Moby-Dick*

is almost too on the nose for the disgraced founder of Theranos.

It's true that reading lists on the West Coast tend to skew towards science fiction. In his year-long reading challenge in 2015, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg listed only three fiction books - and they were all sci-fi. For Silicon Valley, the genre seems to offer both inspiration and validation. Maybe it is easier to work on flying cars, artificial intelligence and settlement on Mars once you can see those ideas thought through on the page.

But the connection between tech companies and sci-fi novels runs deeper. To make their futuristic projects reality, some seek the help of the authors themselves. Two years after *Ready Player One* was published, Oculus invited Cline to test out its headsets and see how they compared to his fictional version. Augmented-

reality headset maker Magic Leap is so enamoured of Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel *Snow Crash* that it has appointed Stephenson "chief futurist". He now works in a Magic Leap office in Seattle, with a remit to push the limits on the things that creators can build in virtual reality.

Snow Crash is often name-checked for its weirdly prescient creation of virtual-reality headsets, smartphones and digital currency before they existed in the real world. Less is made of its focus on the downside of humanity interacting with a virtual world.

The affection tech founders feel for sci-fi often seems to lack this dimension. One friend who met Elon Musk to talk about SpaceX and his plans for Mars travel says they spent some time discussing Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy, which imagines centuries of settlement on the planet. Yet Stanley Robinson himself has said

For Silicon Valley, science fiction seems to offer both inspiration and validation

that such a plan should never be put in the hands of just one person.

If founders are not paying too much attention to cautionary sci-fi themes, at least some people are. Amazon Go shops can feel like a vision of the future as you pick up milk and walk away, without scanning anything. But cities such as San Francisco have begun to wonder whether cashless shops will end up marginalising the country's poorest citizens, who do not have access to online bank accounts. Some are considering a ban on the shops.

The question I cannot find a good answer to is whether any sci-fi novel offers a way to think about Silicon Valley's present, as well as its future. The singularity and inter-planetary travel are well covered in literature. But if there is a book out there that addresses privacy scandals, electric scooters and \$100bn IPOs, I've yet to find it. **FT**

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Elaine Moore is deputy editor of the FT's Lex column



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ROBERT SHRIMSLEY THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Actors in politics? You couldn't make it up

The hilarious news that the voters of Ukraine are one step away from electing a comedian who played a fictional TV president as their actual leader is perhaps taking the notion of satire a touch too far. In real life, Volodymyr Zelensky plays a teacher who accidentally becomes president. Voters in the first round at least clearly found his portrayal rather convincing. He now goes into a run-off against the sitting leader, who currently stands some way behind him.

It would be easy to laugh at the news were it not for the fact that comedy leaders are becoming a little too prevalent in western politics. There is no reason why an actor or comedian should be any less qualified to run for office than, say, a teacher, a lawyer or that curiously modern aberration, the professional politician. Of course, Ukraine has issues peculiar to itself, but this is not an absolute first. In Italy, the comedian Beppe Grillo founded the Five Star movement, which now shares government. Given the farce of Brexit, is it so hard to imagine something similar happening in the UK or elsewhere?

Still, you can't laugh too much, especially if the reason voters backed Zelensky was that they had seen him being president on TV. I can think of no other profession where people might be minded to put their trust in someone simply because they saw them do the job in a TV drama.

I cannot imagine, for example, submitting to the medical skills of George Clooney just because he was once in *ER* - although I gather others may be more susceptible. Some female friends tell me they feel differently, though even here I suspect there are boundaries. They might let him make them an espresso or tolerate some muscle manipulation, but once you get beyond local anaesthetic I'm



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS VARELA

sure they would prefer someone whose medical qualifications did not come from drama school.

My admiration for Lenny Henry knows few limits but his presence as headmaster would not immediately recommend a school for the spawn. Nor would I trust my legal affairs to Calista Flockhart just because she was once Ally McBeal. Apparently, Alan Sugar is a real businessman, so I suppose he could run my company, but I certainly would not make him head of human resources.

Of course actors can enter politics, but there is no other career in which playing the part on TV is considered adequate preparation for going in at the top.

Yet somehow, even though it is increasingly dominated by a permanent political class, governing is still seen as an amateur profession, one for which no meaningful skills are required. The failures of politicians ahead of the financial crisis did not help. In truth, too often the primary qualification for high office seems to be a sense that what your country really needs is a large dose of you. On that basis, a TV star might well be qualified for high office.

Some might blame the celebrity culture, but it is an indictment of modern politicians that too many

voters see in them no particular ability that cannot be replicated by an actor. Too many leading figures and the media that report them have created the impression that they see politics as a game where winning is more important than governing well. My own experience is that this is not true; that most people enter politics for the right reasons. Unfortunately, in the desire to win an argument and build support, they have too easily succumbed to cynicism, political games and playing to the gallery.

But as the tortuous Brexit debates have shown, politics is not easy. The decisions facing ministers are often complex or agonising. Delivering and arguing for complicated and nuanced policy in a time of great unpredictability and an era of 24-hour news and social media is a talent that - as we can see - far too few leaders possess.

If actors make politics look easy, it is because in their world everyone sticks to the script. On the other hand, they do manage to sort out big issues in an hour - sometimes 30 minutes. **FT**

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Robert Shrimmsley will appear at *FT On Stage in London* on April 9. To find out more, visit ft.com/onstage



Reply

A good balanced piece ("How Facebook grew too big to handle", March 30/31). I struggle to understand its appeal and think Microsoft's achievement of reaching a billion users in 26 years is far more impressive. When that company started, there was hardly a PC and to become a user you had to spend hard cash. With Facebook, it takes just a few clicks to be a user.
Michael Broom Smith via *FT.com*

[@CharlieBeckett](https://twitter.com/CharlieBeckett) March 28
Superb history of how Facebook's "growth" team drove it towards the problems it is now causing with its attention business model and how the same team is now responsible for the "integrity" policy that is supposed to fix the damage

What's frustrating is that Facebook contributes so little social value yet consumes so much angst on how to overcome the malevolent aspects of how it is used. In other industries when cost externalities outweigh any benefits, we regulate heavily.
Okay via *FT.com*

I enjoyed the article but I sense the feeling is that there is no responsibility on the user to choose right from wrong and good from bad. Fundamentally, individuals need to make better decisions for themselves and others.

Qwerty via *FT.com*

Re Simon Kuper's "Life after climate change" (March 30/31). I live in Cape Town. We shower in a large tub and use the water collected for the toilets. Toilet flushing is by far the most wasteful use of clean water in most western households. We are very conscious of not wasting a drop - it becomes habit.

Mayhem via *FT.com*

Re "The race to be the world's best wine waiter" (March 30/31). An unlikely spectator sport but an interesting read. The blind tasting selection sounds cruel indeed.

In Passing via *FT.com*

To contribute

Please email magazineletters@ft.com. Include a daytime telephone number and full address (not for publication). Letters may be edited.



Nish Kumar on Brexit and the best goodbyes. Griselda Murray Brown talks to *The Mash Report* host about comedy, the role of the political satirist and the painfully endless Brexit farewell; ft.com/everything-else

Quiz answers The link was mythical kings and queens 1. Dido 2. Ulysses - by James Joyce 3. Arthur 4. Lady Penelope (Thunderbirds) 5. Helen Titchener (née Archer) 6. Cole (surnames of Cheryl) 7. The man with the Midas touch 8. Pygmalion - by George Bernard Shaw 9. Edward Lear ("The Owl and the Pussy-cat") 10. Wenceslas Square **Picture quiz** Will Gompertz + Grace Kelly = Will and Grace



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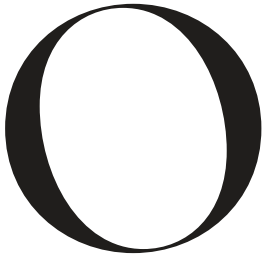
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MORE THAN A GAME

When the world chess president was forced to stand down for 'assisting' Syria's regime, the leadership of the game was thrown wide open. In the bitter, bizarre contest that followed, Russia was determined not to lose – but what is its endgame? *Sam Jones* reports. Photograph by *Richard Foster*



n July 11 last year, Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel, flew to Moscow to meet Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. The Israeli press disagreed over whether the impromptu trip was for a high-level discussion of the security situation in Syria and Iran, as had been officially briefed, or merely an excuse to attend that evening's football World Cup semi-final.

Regardless, when the two leaders sat down together in the Kremlin that afternoon, before Netanyahu and his entourage headed to the VIP stand of the Luzhniki stadium, another matter came up for discussion. Amid the talk of the House of Assad and Hezbollah, Putin canvassed Netanyahu for Israel's support in an upcoming election: the presidency of the World Chess Federation (Fide). "Imagine," says Malcolm Pein, an international chess master and British chess commentator, "if right at the crucial moment of the discussions about producing a deal with the EU, Theresa May had turned to [France's president] Macron and said, 'Right, enough of this Brexit stuff. I want to talk to you about supporting our British candidate for chess.' Because that is basically what that was."

For two decades, Fide has been a peculiar lens through which to view the shifting geopolitical currents of the post-cold war order: the previous president, oligarch Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, was forced out last year after he was sanctioned by the US government for abetting the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, the latest in a line of diplomatic dalliances for which Fide had been the smokescreen.

It's an organisation whose activities have, with faint absurdity, enfolded a world of earnest sports-hall tournaments and state-level competition for political influence; a world populated by small-time oligarchs as well as some of the most singular thinkers on the planet. It is also an organisation that has been riven by a bitter, bitchy factionalism that can only be explained by the particular frailties of game-playing men: of big minds turned to trivial things.

Russia had held dominion of sorts over this world since 1995. But Ilyumzhinov's departure threw the presidency of Fide wide open. Putin's preferred candidate to succeed him was Arkady Dvorkovich - then deputy prime minister of Russia, who had recently chaired the football World Cup organising committee. Moscow's efforts to ensure he won Fide's presidency did not begin and end with the Netanyahu meeting.

Documents seen by the Financial Times and extensive interviews with more than a dozen senior figures in the chess world show a co-ordinated global effort by the Russian state, through ambassadors and representatives of its banks and biggest companies, to win votes with promises of money and political pressure. The Kremlin says that while senior members of the Russian government raised the candidacy of Dvorkovich in meetings with foreign officials, they did not seek to solicit votes in doing so. For a Russian state fixated on an all-encompassing political, cultural and informational struggle with the west, the need to reassert its right to rule in chess at a time when Moscow's sporting reputation was in tatters was nevertheless a tactical opportunity that could not be passed over.

Yet this is not, as such, merely a tale of Russian meddling; the urbane, technocratic Dvorkovich stood on a credible platform of reform and openness that resonated because it promised to restore, rather than undermine, Fide's international standing. Fide documents reveal years of unsound financial practices, raising red flags about the flow of money to and from Fide officials and third-party companies and trusts run by them.

In one of the most bizarre elections in sporting history, the two other candidates were Georgios Makropoulos, Fide's deputy chief of 23 years, whose message of reform, however genuine, failed to offset his status as a career-long Fide insider, tainted by allegations of financial wrongdoing; and the British grandmaster Nigel Short, whose tendency to win arguments and lose friends cast him firmly in the role of outsider.

In the end, Putin's man won. No side in the tale comes out cleanly. As the Soviet chess player Boris Spassky said with courtly weariness in Reykjavik in 1972, after receiving the latest puerile philippic from his American nemesis Bobby Fischer: "This is about everything but chess."



**'Russia cares about chess...
But there is a world
beyond that, which so
many people involved in
chess politics do not see'**

Malcolm Pein, English Chess Federation delegate



Clockwise from left: former Fide chief Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Col Gaddafi in 2011; ex-president Florencio Campomanes with Soviet chess champion Anatoly Karpov (left) in 1978; current head Arkady Dvorkovich with his backer Vladimir Putin



Chess has been a lodestone of Russian political life since Soviet times. Lenin and Trotsky honed their skills in Europe's salons during their exiles



Clockwise from above: Russian champion Alexander Alekhine (second left) in 1914; Lenin (left) playing chess at Maxim Gorky's house in 1908; Russia's Boris Spassky shaking hands with American Bobby Fischer at the 1972 world championship

Fide's role as the sole arbiter of chess emerged from a crisis. Ever since the great Emanuel Lasker claimed pre-eminence over Wilhelm Steinitz in 1894, the garland of world champion had been passed on by a simple process of challenge: whoever beat the incumbent champion took his crown. Then, in 1946, reigning world champion - and Soviet defector - Alexander Alekhine died in mysterious circumstances in Estoril. Unbeaten at his death, it was unclear to whom Alekhine's title should pass. The Fédération Internationale des Échecs, one of several ruling bodies at the time, stepped into the vacuum.

Today Fide is the governing body of world chess in much the same way as Fifa is for football. It organises world championships and the biennial Chess Olympiad - a huge, team-based tournament to decide which country is the global leader in chess. It also sets the rules of the game and awards the titles of grandmaster, international master and master to players worldwide, as well as calculating a global ranking for all players. Every four years, at a special congress, it elects a president.

Chess has been a lodestone of Russian political life since Soviet times. Lenin and Trotsky honed their skills in Europe's salons during their long exiles ("Mr Bronstein from the chess room!" exclaimed the head waiter of the Café Central in Vienna when he saw coverage of Trotsky's role in the Russian revolution in the newspaper); in 1924, Nikolai Krylenko, head of the Red Army, declared the game an exemplar for the new *homo sovieticus*. During the cold war, chess became the perfect proxy for Russian political muscle, reaching its apotheosis in the Fischer-Spassky showdown, dubbed the "game of the century".

Victory for the crass Fischer, who also happened to be a player of raw and daring genius, raised the stakes for Russia's chekists, challenging notions of natural Soviet supremacy at the board. The game became a battleground and Fide was a target for KGB penetration. The Filipino Florencio Campomanes was the first president to become an asset of Soviet intelligence, according to the former KGB lieutenant colonel Vladimir Popov; Campomanes repaid the Lubyanka's help in securing his

election when he controversially intervened to force abandonment of the 1984-85 match between Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov, thus preserving the Soviet favourite Karpov's status as world champion.

The eccentric Ilyumzhinov stepped into Campomanes's shoes in 1995. A cirrhotic Boris Yeltsin, recuperating in the presidential solitude of the Barvikha sanatorium, gave his official seal of approval by telephone and Ilyumzhinov later recounted he had been told to "put the Russian flag on top of it".

Initially, Ilyumzhinov had a shaky relationship with Moscow. As the president of the semi-autonomous Republic of Kalmykia in southern Russia, he led an abortive attempt to break away from the motherland. But with the rise of Putinism, the room for Russia's regional chiefs, oligarchs and officials to pursue their own interests narrowed. Ilyumzhinov's tireless global travel for Fide began to take on a more sinister hue.

The day after US president George W Bush issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq in March 2003, Ilyumzhinov was in Baghdad, playing chess with the dictator's son Uday. His jet was one of the last charter aircraft out of Saddam International Airport before the military operation by US and coalition forces began. As Nato bombing began to turn the tide of the civil war against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, Ilyumzhinov was there too, playing chess with the ailing dictator. But it was the Russian's trips to Syria that led to his downfall. On November 25 2015, the US Treasury put him on its official sanctions list for "materially assisting" the Assad regime.

Ilyumzhinov, who declined to speak to the FT for this article, has always firmly denied the allegations against him. According to senior western diplomats, wiretaps revealed Ilyumzhinov had set up a bank in Russia to process payments on behalf of Syrian intermediaries working for the Assad family. Given his background, those officials said, it was inconceivable that such activities were not conducted with a degree of co-ordination, if not outright direction, by Russian security services. Ilyumzhinov's previous trips bore the same taint, they said: he had perhaps been acting as a back-channel to Gaddafi and the Husseins on ►



Portrait by Salvatore Vitale

‘We are just starting from a ruined environment but we can improve [things] very quickly’

Arkady Dvorkovich, Fide president

◀ behalf of Russian intelligence - to short-circuit western-led attempts at regime change by spiriting problematic dictators to retirements in secluded dachas outside Moscow.

By February 2018, with US sanctions against him, Ilyumzhinov’s position in Fide was untenable: the federation’s Swiss bankers, fearing the long arm of US financial retribution, simply closed Fide’s accounts. Its board voted to ban Ilyumzhinov from standing in the looming presidential election.

In late 2017, Fide’s deputy president Georgios Makropoulos was summoned to the Kremlin. His phone was taken from him and locked in a Faraday cage - standard security practice for most people meeting with as important a figure in the Russian presidential hierarchy as Dmitry Peskov. A diplomat and Turkologist by background, Peskov is typically referred to in the west as Putin’s press spokesperson. His role as deputy chief of staff of the presidential administration also makes him one of the most powerful wielders of executive authority in Russia.

Just as former members of the Soviet politburo were given special areas of interest to “co-ordinate”, figures in Putin’s administration wield sometimes hidden influence over areas not necessarily within their formal remit. Peskov, among his many interests, keeps a watchful eye on chess. To count the members of the Russian Chess Federation’s trustee board, which he chairs, is to understand the cachet the game has in Russian political life. Those sitting on it include the billionaire Gennady Timchenko, Putin’s former judo partner and one of the president’s oldest and most loyal confidants; Sergei Shoigu, the minister of defence; Alexander Dyukov, chairman and chief executive of Gazprom Neft, a subsidiary of the state energy giant; Konstantin Ernst, chief of Russia’s main state TV station Channel One; and, finally, Sergei Sobyannin, mayor of Moscow.

Sport is a vital part of Russia’s soft power armoury. Yet as Makropoulos arrived in Moscow, it was mired in crisis. Following revelations of systematic state-sponsored doping, Russian athletes were banned from competing under their own flag. The country’s place in the chess world was doing little to assuage this picture of decline. Of the 36 biennial chess Olympiads held since 1950, the USSR and Russia won 24. But the last time Moscow took the top prize was 2002. China are the reigning champions.

“In the current mode in which geopolitical competition has been shifted away from the battlefield and on to every other realm, from economics to culture to sport, then wherever there’s a competition going, particularly one in which Russia feels it might have a chance, it wants to be there and it wants to be winning,” says Mark Galeotti, a leading expert on Russian power-politics and senior associate fellow at the UK’s Royal United Services Institute, a defence and security think-tank.

Against this backdrop, losing control of Fide was simply not an option. But if the government had already formed a plan, Peskov did not let on to Makropoulos that day. Indeed, the Greek was already working on his own scheme. He hoped to persuade Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa al-Nahyan, a member of the UAE’s ruling royal family and president of the Asian Chess Federation, to run. The Emirati prince would bring millions in sponsorship, steer clear of entangling Fide in shady diplomatic affairs and allow Makropoulos in effect to continue running the organisation day-to-day as its number two.

His scheme unravelled almost as quickly as it had come together. In February last year, Makropoulos and two dozen other Fide officials and federation heads met in the Gulf to announce Sheikh Sultan’s candidacy in a declaration intended to scotch the hopes of other putative candidates. But with hours to go, Sheikh Sultan told Makropoulos he would not be running after all.

A month earlier, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov had got wind of the plan and flown to Abu Dhabi to ask the UAE’s minister of sport, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al-Nahyan, to reconsider the emirate’s candidacy. According to members of Makropoulos’s team and current Fide officials, Ilyumzhinov also lobbied via a second, more unusual channel: the Chechen Republic’s Kalashnikov-toting, kitten-stroking ruler Ramzan Kadyrov, who happens to be a hunting buddy of the UAE’s effective ruler, crown prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan.

Without the al-Nahyans, Makropoulos decided the only way to maintain his own influence in Fide, a course he believed to be best for the organisation, was to run for the presidency himself.

Two months after the election, I meet Makropoulos in his office at the Greek Chess Federation, just off one of Athens' unlovelier thoroughfares. Winding up our introductory small talk, he stubs out his second cigarette and takes a seat opposite me. Nobody has been closer to the inner workings of Fide than Makropoulos, a seven-time national chess champion of Greece, who began his career at the federation in 1986. For his supporters, he's the man who has kept the show on the road.

Corruption had been everywhere at Fide, he admits, but he always kept his own hands clean. I ask if that is why he lost. "No. This is, of course, one of the reasons. Because if one of the candidates can spend unlimited money during elections then..." he shrugs. "The second reason [is] that we decided not to use political pressure to press federations and delegates."

In the election for the Fide presidency, each national federation gets one delegate and one vote - a system that creates a level playing field but, say critics, also leads to some strange distortions: tiny federations, some no bigger than a village club, have the same weight as those with huge memberships and budgets, such as the US and Russia. Of Fide's 189 federations, Makropoulos says, "more than 120 federations got pressure, either direct, by Russian embassies, or through their ministers of sport, or even ministers of foreign affairs."

The FT has been able to substantiate some of these claims. For example: a stamped letter sent from the Russian embassy in Brasilia was passed, via the Brazilian foreign office, to the Brazilian Chess Federation on August 2 2018. "Russia is internationally recognised as a country with a great tradition of chess," the note reads. "Russia believes that the experience and professionalism of Arkady Dvorkovich, as well as his extensive network of contacts, will be a valuable contribution to the future of Fide," it continues, holding out the prospect of a significant funding boost. Similar notes were sent by Russian embassies elsewhere in the world. The embassies were also active in directly calling chess federations and their delegates.

According to Makropoulos, "dozens" of federations were also swayed by gifts and incentives. As head of the Fifa World Cup organising committee in Russia that summer, Dvorkovich was able to arrange for potential supporters to go and watch their own national teams compete. Several Fide delegates confirmed their tickets to matches.

There were also overt offers of financial assistance. In the run-up to the election in Batumi, Georgia, some federations received a WhatsApp message from Berik Balgabaev, a former assistant to Ilyumzhinov now working for Dvorkovich. The message contained a template letter, to be sent to a specified address at Gazprombank, to obtain money. It read: "Dear Colleagues, Chess Federation of (Insert country name) asks you for the sponsorship. They ask for (insert sum), which will be spent on (choose "chess conference" or "chess tournament" or "chess in school program" etc). Here are the requisites of the federation: (insert bank/account/number/etc). Thank you for your generous support!"

One incident came close to derailing the Dvorkovich campaign. On August 1 2018, the Russian embassy in Belgrade organised a meeting between the president of the Serbian Chess Federation and two officials from the Dvorkovich bid. The Serbian ministry of sport was also invited but did not attend.

According to a first-hand account of the meeting, the Russian embassy offered €220,000 to the federation - an unheard-of sum - to be paid by Russian banks. When the board of the Serbian Chess Federation rejected the offer over legal concerns, their president returned to them with a mysteriously similar second offer: his company, a small Serbian educational institute, would sponsor the Serbian Chess Federation for exactly the same amount, but only if he was sent to the election congress in Batumi in place of the existing selected delegate. They accepted. Scandalised, Serbia's ousted delegate brought a dossier of evidence to Fide's ethics commission. The panel found the Serbian president guilty of having sold his vote - but they declined to take any action against Dvorkovich since there was no evidence of his direct personal complicity.

It wasn't just money that the Russian camp offered. A crucial clutch of votes in the election ended up coming from an unexpected source: one of the Kremlin's most vociferous and ardent critics, former world chess champion Garry Kasparov. Makropoulos alleges that Kasparov lent his support to the Dvorkovich campaign - via that of Nigel Short, who he believed ran as a stalking horse - on the expectation that potentially lucrative commercial sponsorship rights for the World Chess Championship would be transferred to a new venture Kasparov planned to set up. ►

'More than 120 federations got pressure, either direct, by Russian embassies, or through their ministers of sport'

*Georgios Makropoulos,
former Fide deputy president*



Portrait by Antonis Theodoridis

◀ Makropoulos told the FT that Kasparov first made him the same offer - via his intermediary, Michael Khodarkovsky, director of the Kasparov Foundation and the US Chess Federation's delegate to the Fide congress. Other Fide figures confirmed the approach had been made. One European federation delegate shared an email sent by Khodarkovsky in May 2018 to Jorge Vega, president of the Continental Federation of Chess for Americas. It reads: "Makro must understand and respect our position as well. He needs to accept the whole package and we will be one team all the way." A spokesperson for Kasparov said: "Garry Kasparov and the Kasparov Chess Foundation have no involvement with Fide politics or comment on them. Garry personally voiced his support for Nigel Short's candidacy."

Three months after his victory, the Dvorkovich administration voided its long-term sponsorship arrangement with World Chess, the current organiser of the world championship cycle.

Short, for his part, vehemently denies having struck any deal with Kasparov. "I wanted to clean up and reform chess," says Short. "[Garry] was far more interested in some business deals which had nothing to do with me." Indeed, for Short, the morality of the whole contest has been clear from the outset. Any candidate, he believed, would be better than Makropoulos. Supporting Dvorkovich, Short says, was a better option than simply "losing heroically". "There was absolutely no way I was ever going to deal with Makropoulos."

Fide's 89th Congress opened on September 27 2018 in the Black Sea resort of Batumi. Federation delegates took rooms in the Sheraton Hotel, a faintly Stalinesque wedding cake of a tower rising amid palms and parkland on the wide, flat shore front of the Georgian city.

The celebratory air of the biennial chess Olympiad, inaugurated a few days earlier with a lavish opening ceremony attended by Georgia's president, had given way to a tauter atmosphere of forced smiles and earnest huddles. The three candidates jockeyed and jostled with their teams - Dvorkovich surrounded by security men and Russian bankers, Makropoulos with his loyalists - in the lobbies and bars to secure last-minute allegiances. "It was like being in Rick's Café in *Casablanca* - all the main characters in the same place, plotting" says Tim Wall, a British chess master there to advise the English delegation.

As soon became evident, the Russian team were pulling out all the stops. Gianni Infantino, president of Fifa, sent a video message thanking Dvorkovich for his help in organising the "best ever" World Cup that summer in Russia. The night before the vote, team Dvorkovich hired an entire beach-side venue and invited every delegate to a "crazy party", where Russian women dressed as mermaids with sequinned emerald tails splashed in the illuminated water, before mingling over drinks.

At the hustings themselves, an unnerved Makropoulos, confident of victory only days earlier, thanks to his deep and long-standing relationships across Fide's federations, railed against Russian corruption. Dvorkovich spoke first, aided by a slick PowerPoint presentation. Short followed - and, with a flourish, declared he was dropping out of the race and endorsing Dvorkovich instead. Makropoulos's speech fell flat. He lost the race by 78 votes to 103.

Short's switch had been anticipated for some time. His entire campaign was built on accusations of corruption and mismanagement in Fide, a state of affairs he wryly dubbed "Makroconomics" in his broadsides against his Greek competitor. In early September, Short posted a snap of himself shaking hands with Dvorkovich at Simpson's in the Strand - the 200-year-old London restaurant that has been one of the world's chess shrines for the past century. He captioned the image: "What's the Greek word for checkmate?"

Few in Fide believe Short's small clutch of votes ultimately swung the election. But his campaign certainly framed the debate. He was able to do so because much of what he accused Fide of rang true. Dozens of documents seen by the FT from three well-placed Fide sources reveal years of unsound financial practices at the organisation, which are sufficient to raise serious ethical red flags.

One document, for example, details arrears in subscription payments from Fide's 189 member federations. Dozens are in significant debt - many owe Fide three years of payments. According to Fide's audited accounts - signed off by EY - the amount owed stood at €839,000 at the end of 2017. The figure arrived at by Fide's own internal officials, however, is significantly higher. "The ones who vote the right way don't have to worry about paying their fees any time soon," explained a former member of Fide's presidential board.

Documents also raise questions about payments to opaque, off-balance-sheet entities controlled by select senior Fide officials. Global Chess, a company registered in the Arab emirate of Ras Al Khaimah and run by Maltese businessman Geoffrey Borg, has received dozens of payments in consultancy fees connected to chess tournaments. Borg was previously described as Fide's "chief executive" on its website. No such position exists in Fide statutes. Borg's consultancy services were invaluable, said several officials from Fide's old administration.

But the scale of some payments to Global Chess is surprising. The company collected a €384,000 fee from the organisers of the Batumi Olympiad, for example. Global Chess's fees for other individual events in the preceding two-year period ranged from €5,000 to €40,000. Borg did not respond to requests for comment.

The Batumi Olympiad saw another sum paid into an opaque offshore entity. A one-off payment of €1.2m was made by Georgian authorities as a "travel fund" to Henninghall Ltd, also set up in Ras Al Khaimah. Current Fide officials said the money was not drawn down to pay for travel. According to Nigel Freeman, a former Fide treasurer contacted by the FT, Henninghall was set up as a contingency vehicle to hold Fide assets because of sanctions against Ilyumzhinov. All of Fide's other assets and financial affairs, however, had already been transferred to a Hong Kong-based entity by the time Henninghall was wired money from Georgia.

Another controversy raised questions about Makropoulos's use of money while he served as deputy president under Ilyumzhinov. In 2014, he received \$100,000 from Fide to cover "medical expenses". Makropoulos, who was being treated for cancer, says any accusations of misuse are a "huge lie". Ilyumzhinov personally donated the money, via Fide's account, to be used for his treatment, Makropoulos claims, citing a document signed by Ilyumzhinov at the time. Ilyumzhinov disputes that.

Nigel Short dropped out of the race at the last minute and endorsed the Russian candidate instead

Garry Kasparov playing against Nigel Short in London in 1993



Sport, a vital part of Russia's soft power armoury, was mired in crisis amid revelations of systematic state-sponsored doping

Anatoly Karpov (left) and Garry Kasparov at the 1984 world championship in Moscow



According to Makropoulos, the accusations against him are an effort to “create smoke” by encouraging journalists to treat both sides as equally at fault. “There is nothing more dangerous and populist than everyone being presented as the same,” he wrote in an email to the FT this week.

Some unlikely allies agree that questions over Fide’s historic financial affairs are a distraction. One key federation did not endorse Short’s crusade against “Makroconomics” - England. Malcolm Pein, the English Chess Federation’s delegate, even stood as Makropoulos’s running mate. For Pein, bigger issues were at stake.

“The way I would characterise it is that we’ve gone from Russian-led incompetence to Russian led-competence,” he says. “A lot of people are very happy with that. Russia respects chess. Russia cares about chess... But there is a world beyond chess which so many people involved in chess politics do not see. They do not see the mountain behind them.”

Chess is in Arkady Dvorkovich’s blood. His father was a prominent Soviet arbiter - the equivalent of a referee. In 1993, the two flew to London to watch the world championship showdown between Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short, which the Russian won convincingly.

Throughout his political career, Dvorkovich maintained his connection to the Russian chess world. He has also seen to it that the Russian state’s interests are forcefully represented. In 2010, he was appointed chairman of the Russian Chess Federation’s supervisory board, where he quelled an uprising by its committee members against Fide president Ilyumzhinov. Using his authority as deputy prime minister, Dvorkovich sent a private security firm to raid the RCF’s offices, citing “major financial irregularities”. The RCF’s rebel majority got the message and backed down.

Following Dvorkovich’s victory as Fide president, few could doubt his commitment to his election promises. Fide’s development fund, used to allocate money to promote chess around the world, has swollen from €500,000 to €3m. That money will now come with strings attached: no cent of Fide funds will go unaccounted for, says Dvorkovich. Where money is spent, Fide will measure how effectively it is put to work.

When I meet him in Lausanne in January, Dvorkovich has come straight from Davos, where as both Fide’s new president and co-chairman of the Skolkovo Foundation, a Moscow tech incubator touted as Russia’s answer to Silicon Valley, he has been pressing the flesh. Several large European and Asian companies are poised to sponsor Fide as a result, he tells me. “I’m not in a position to accuse anyone of corruption or other crimes,” Dvorkovich says of his predecessors at Fide. “But certainly it was [a case] of big financial mismanagement, big operational mismanagement. We are just starting from a ruined environment but we are quick-witted and we can improve [things] very quickly.”

He shrugs off much of the criticism of his own campaign. The idea that the Russian government was co-ordinating his candidacy is “completely wrong and [there was] lots of fake news about it”, he says. “Politics was not involved... it doesn’t mean that my colleagues both in the government and embassies didn’t inform partners all around the world; they did, and that’s the right thing to do with elections.”

In the marble salon of the belle époque Royal Savoy Hotel, in the Swiss city that is home to the International Olympic Committee, the Court for Arbitration in Sport and at least 25 other global sporting organisations, the signal from Dvorkovich is clear: Fide is being brought back into the mainstream of the sporting world. “We’re talking about a huge international federation that has 189 members,” he says. “Fide was invisible for a period of time due to lack of proper management... [but] with my experience I can achieve those goals... for me, it’s a challenge.”

For the first time in decades, the interests of Fide’s new leadership, Russia and the world of chess itself may now be in close alignment.

At 47, Dvorkovich still has political heights to scale: Fifa or the IOC would not be out of the question. A Russian who cleaned up an international sport would, in turn, be a more than useful boost for the Kremlin. And Fide, after decades of squabbling and corruption, would also benefit from an ambitious leadership raising its standing in the sporting fraternity.

For Russia, this would be a pleasingly elegant victory. But who is the opponent? Putin’s conception of international power is a totalising one: every facet of politics and culture is a potential field of conflict with the west. For Mark Galeotti, the west has a tendency to pay too much attention to the battles that Russia chooses to fight. The Russians’ great trick, he says, “has always been to move the battlefield to where they have strengths from where they have weaknesses”. If a country with an economy roughly the size of Spain’s wants to waste time and effort co-opting a board game to its cause, he concludes, the west can afford to let it. Putin does not even play chess. His instincts are tactical, not strategic - those of the judoka rather than the grandmaster. Russia seizes opportunities much more than it lays down complex webs of intrigue.

Yet something about chess makes it more than just a game. Its cultural importance - the meaning invested in it - endures. And it has always been curiously political. This is one message to take from sets such as the exquisite 12th-century Lewis Chessmen, carved in walrus tusk and found in Camas Uig in the Hebrides in 1831. Probably made in Trondheim, here was a collection of objects that signalled the Norse lord of Lewis’s engagement with a world greater than his own remote demesne. A symbol, to his island peers and to visitors, of his international status.

Nine centuries after the craftsmen of Trondheim depicted rooks as wide-eyed berserkers to unnerve enemies, Soviet parapsychologists would sit, unblinking, in a hall in Reykjavik attempting to transfix Bobby Fischer with menacing stares. In Putin’s Russia, the need to find symbols of its prowess, and to signal its place in the world, is greater than ever.

“The problems [chess] poses are at the same time very deep and utterly trivial,” wrote George Steiner in 1972 for *The New Yorker*, musing on the huge political circus the Fischer-Spassky showdown had become. We have no philosophical rubric to quite grasp this “strange amalgam”, he noted. The same still holds today - a tension perhaps true of all the games humanity plays, politics included. Chess is, concluded Steiner, “ultimately insignificant - enormously meaningful”. **FT**

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Sam Jones is an FT investigations correspondent

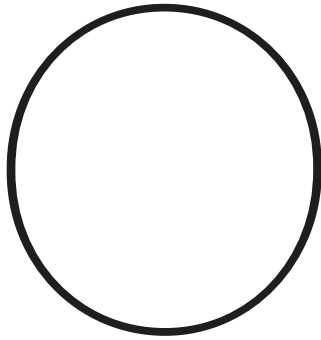
CHESSE SET COURTESY OF CHESSE AND BRIDGE, LONDON, BRIDGESHOP.COM; SYGMA/GETTY IMAGES; TASS/ALAMY; AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY; WREN AGENCY



Black is beautiful

In the early 1960s, a new generation of African-Americans affirmed their culture with renewed self-confidence. The moment was vividly captured – and shaped – by photographer Kwame Brathwaite, whose 60-year career is celebrated in a forthcoming monograph and retrospective. By *Ekow Eshun*

Grandassa models at the Garvey Day Parade in Harlem, New York, 1965; the modelling troupe was launched by Kwame Brathwaite and a group of his friends for the *Naturally '62* fashion show to reinforce the 'Black Is Beautiful' message



n the evening of January 28 1962, a huge crowd gathered outside a nightclub in Harlem, jostling for entrance to a fashion show whose resonant slogan, “Black is Beautiful”, would change the course of American life. The show, *Naturally '62*, was intended as a celebration of style inspired by African rather than western ideals

of beauty. Models eschewed wigs or straightened hair for Afros. They wore large hoop earrings and chunky bracelets, and sashayed down a catwalk in vividly patterned dresses that mirrored fashions in Lagos, Accra and Nairobi. This was style as empowerment, a determined corrective to the idea of Africa, and people of African origin, as backward or primitive. As the event’s unwieldy subtitle put it, the show was an “Original African Coiffure and Fashion Extravaganza Designed to Restore our Racial Pride and Standards”.

Naturally '62 was the brainchild of a group of young African-Americans including Kwame Brathwaite, a 24-year-old photographer. The son of Barbadian immigrants, Brathwaite grew up in Brooklyn in an artistically inclined and politically active family, his creativity nurtured by a father who owned dry-cleaning stores and a tailoring business but was a talented painter in his spare time.

An unspoken but inviolable colour bar operated in the 1950s New York of Brathwaite’s youth. African-Americans faced discrimination in schooling and medical provision, in where they could eat, live and shop, even in which local beaches they could visit.

As a high-school student, Brathwaite had developed a passion for jazz. But seeing the era’s most exciting artists, such as Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk and Max Roach, meant venturing downtown to bars and clubs often hostile to African-American customers. In response, Brathwaite and a group of friends, all of whom had graduated from high school together, set up the African Jazz-Art Society & Studios in 1956. The group staged concerts and events in Harlem and the Bronx. Brathwaite was AJASS’s self-taught, in-house photographer and his pictures capture a mood of elegance and easy sophistication. Dizzy Gillespie and Art Blakey are snapped ▶

Kwame Brathwaite, a self-portrait, c1964



Top: Grandassa model Ethel Parks, photographed in Harlem, c1969

Above: jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (centre) talking to drummer Art Blakey (left) at the Randall’s Island Jazz Festival, c1958

Models eschewed wigs or straightened hair for Afros. They wore hoop earrings and chunky bracelets. This was style as empowerment – a corrective to the idea of Africa as backward or primitive

Below: model with an Afro hairstyle, Harlem, c1970





After opening a design studio in Harlem, Brathwaite and his brother Elombe Brath, a graphic artist, were commissioned to create album covers by the jazz label Blue Note using Grandassa models; examples include (clockwise from top left) Nomsa Brath on the cover of Lou Donaldson's *The Natural Soul* (1962), Clara Lewis Buggs on Freddie Roach's *Brown Sugar* (1964) and Brenda Deaver on Big John Patton's *Oh Baby!* (1965)

Below: Nomsa Brath modelling Congolese fabrics at Stern's department store in New York, c1963



◀ between performances, smoking a cigarette and perhaps sharing a joke. Miles Davis blows his trumpet, intense and focused, beneath a spotlight. And the young men of AJASS are pictured too, dapper and well-groomed in sharp suits.

Through his photographs we see a young black generation coming of age, poised and self-confident, visibly proud of both their colour and their culture. As Brathwaite, now 81, says in a monograph of his work published next month, the goal was to show “the greatness of our people”. With AJASS, and their description of themselves as “African” at a time when most people were still using “coloured” or “negro”, Brathwaite and his friends were anticipating a pivotal shift in how black people sought to determine their place in America. Here, in infancy, was the cultural wave that spurred the civil rights struggle, the black power movement and songs such as James Brown’s “Say It Loud - I’m Black and I’m Proud”.

Brathwaite’s affirmatory visual approach was influenced by his adherence to the teachings of Marcus Garvey, the early-20th-century political activist who preached a pan-Africanist philosophy of black liberation through economic self-reliance. Garvey called on African-Americans to “think black”, a notion that stretched beyond political consciousness to encompass how you dressed and carried yourself. Supporters were encouraged to slough off their western names, to don dashikis, wear their hair naturally and make a connection between their battle for civil rights in America and the battle of African states across the Atlantic to free themselves from colonial rule. It was this mix of radical politics and style-as-empowerment that led to the birth of the “Black is Beautiful” movement. The term was coined by followers of Garvey, but it was Brathwaite who popularised it through his photographs.

For the *Naturally '62* fashion show, AJASS launched Grandassa Models, a troupe of young Harlem women intended to personify a new vision of blackness. The show was hosted by the jazz artists Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln and drew such an eager crowd that a repeat performance had to be held the same night. Public enthusiasm propelled *Naturally* into an annual show, with the models also touring to Detroit and Chicago.

Brathwaite’s photos strove to capture both the glamour and the political intent behind the event. His pictures presented the proud assertion of black beauty as an integral part of the liberation struggle. Models were depicted posing beside African sculptures. They walked the catwalk to a backdrop of posters celebrating black nationalist icons such as Garvey and Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese freedom fighter and the country’s first post-independence president. In one image, Brathwaite’s wife, Sikolo, is wearing a headpiece by Carolee Prince, the designer of some of Nina Simone’s most striking looks, and the result is a majestic evocation of grace and self-sufficiency.

“Black Is Beautiful” was my directive,” says Brathwaite in his monograph. “It was a time when people were protesting injustices related to race, class and human rights around the globe. I focused my craft so that I could use my gift to inspire thought, relay ideas and tell stories of our struggle, our work, our liberation.”

Buoyed by success, Brathwaite and his older brother Elombe Brath, a fellow AJASS member and an accomplished graphic artist, opened an office-cum-studio on 125th Street in Harlem, near the Apollo Theatre. With their connections in the music world, they scored a string of commissions from Blue Note, the legendary jazz label. Brathwaite’s photographs of Grandassa models adorned the covers of albums by musicians such as Lou Donaldson, Freddie Roach and Big John Patton. The results were consistently arresting, if not always for the right reasons. On the sleeve of his record “Good Gracious!”, Donaldson casts a lascivious eye at the rear end of a woman in a tight black dress - empowerment teetering close to objectification.

But it’s hard to deny the force of Brathwaite’s work for Freddie Roach’s *Brown Sugar* album, which features the ▶



Above: at the Marcus Garvey Day Parade in Harlem, c1967; Brathwaite was influenced by Garvey, an early-20th-century political activist and pan-Africanist

'People were protesting injustices related to race, class and human rights around the globe. I focused my craft so that I could use my gift to inspire thought, relay ideas and tell stories of our struggle, our work, our liberation'



Top: Grandassa models and members of the African Jazz-Art Society & Studios (AJASS) posing for a *Naturally '67* poster outside the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, c1967; AJASS was set up by Brathwaite and friends to stage concerts and club nights in African-American areas of New York such as Harlem and the Bronx

Above: Abbey Lincoln singing at an AJASS event, Harlem, c1964



Black Rose on the cover of Lou Donaldson's 1963 album *Good Gracious!* – 'empowerment teetering close to objectification'

◀ full-lipped, dark-skinned model Clara Lewis Buggs staring alluringly at the camera – an image all the more compelling for its rejection of conventional 1960s notions of beauty. “Until that point,” says Kwame Brathwaite Jr, the photographer’s son, “there was no way for African-Americans to see visual representations of African standards of beauty. So these women who became part of the Grandassa Models, their role wasn’t simply to be a beauty object. They were there because they believed in the liberation of African people at home and abroad. The pictures were meant to convey that message.”

In the 1970s, Brathwaite became a photographer of choice for the era’s black megastars. He took pictures of Muhammad Ali training for the Rumble in the Jungle in Zaire, followed the Jackson 5 to Senegal on their first trip to Africa, and hung out with Bob Marley, talking politics and spirituality at the singer’s home in Kingston, Jamaica.

Brathwaite’s photos of celebrities and musicians eventually came to overshadow his earlier work. His images from the 1950s and 1960s gathered dust, and his singular role in popularising the “Black is Beautiful” movement faded from popular memory. Only in recent years has Kwame Jr begun working with his father to digitally archive his old photographs and bring them to a wider public. The result, he says, is a revelation: “I’m quite amazed by the quality of the images we’re discovering, it’s like treasure hunting.” In the wake of their efforts, Brathwaite is being rediscovered as a significant force in photography and popular culture. Museums and galleries are showing his images and the publication of his monograph next month marks the first book of his 60-year career.

Brathwaite’s work may have been overlooked in the past decades, says his son, but his influence on modern America is undeniable. From Beyoncé to Barack Obama, it’s hard to think of a black figure who does not owe their prominence, in some measure, to the ethos of “Black is Beautiful”. “For me, the way that you have these incredibly powerful women and men today is a direct link to what they did back then,” says Kwame of his father’s legacy with AJASS and Grandassa Models. “He helped people embrace and be proud of who they are and not feel they had to change and fit into someone else’s mould. From a visual representation perspective, people are realising now how important he was.” **FT**

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Ekow Eshun is a writer and curator; @EkowEshun.

“Black Is Beautiful: The Photography of Kwame Brathwaite” is at the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, April 11-September 1. The book about Kwame Brathwaite’s work, “Black Is Beautiful”, is published by Aperture on May 1

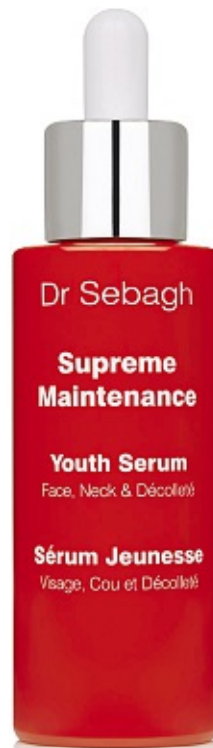
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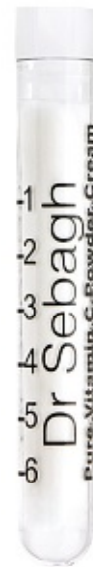
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A fuze and bomb from the second world war being used for training purposes at a military facility in Oxfordshire. The bomb is similar to the one that killed Staff Sergeant James Atkins

DEATH ON THE MARSHES

William Atkins knew just one thing about his grandfather: that he'd been blown up defusing a bomb during the Blitz. With the help of modern bomb-disposal experts, he tries to discover what happened on that day in May 1941. Photographs by *Robin Friend*

W

hen I visit Belvedere Marshes in south-east London on a blowy afternoon in February, I pass a succession of diffident-looking blokes brandishing telephoto lenses. One finally catches my eye: “Well?” he says conspiratorially. “Any joy?” It turns out a rare penduline tit has been spotted near the lagoon; birders from across the country are flocking here.

It’s partly this landscape’s wetness that has protected it from development and attracted the tit and its admirers. Belvedere Marshes is one of the few patches of ancient Thames grazing marsh that has never been built on – just 30 hectares or so, mostly given over to Thames Water’s Crossness Nature Reserve.

The marshes’ emptiness, and their proximity to Woolwich Arsenal, also accounts for their long association with explosives. In 1864, a gunpowder depot located here exploded, killing at least 10. “Although the scene of the catastrophe is distant about 15 miles from Charing Cross,” read a newspaper report, “the shock was felt more or less throughout the whole metropolis.” Seventy-six years later, during the Blitz, the site was used as a “bomb cemetery”, where unexploded German ordnance was brought to be rendered safe.

James Atkins – Jim, Jimmy – was 28 when he was killed here in 1941. At home in Colchester, some 45 miles away, his wife Kathleen was looking after my father and my aunt, aged one and two respectively. The telegram she received from Jim’s commanding officer on May 12 afforded little room for kindness: “Very much regret to inform you that your husband 1868390 Staff Sergeant J Atkins was killed by enemy action this afternoon letter giving full particulars following.”

There are those whose lives are overshadowed by their death. All my life, I knew only one thing about Jim

– that he’d been “blown up” while attempting to defuse a bomb during the second world war. That solitary fact imbued him with the faint, mythic dignity that attaches to even the most undignified war death.

It wasn’t until I spent a morning at the National Archives in Kew that I began to learn about the circumstances that led to the events of that day, and about one of the seven people who died at my grandfather’s side, an individual better known as “Mad Jack”. Since then I have gradually filled in the details. But what exactly happened remains elusive.

Two days before the incident, on May 10, London experienced the last major raid of the Blitz, and the most devastating. That night, 550 bombers dropped about 700 tonnes of bombs on the city, killing some 1,500 civilians and taking the death toll to about 43,000 since the Blitz began eight months earlier. In 1959, the journalist and historian Richard Collier published a book about that night, *The City That Wouldn’t Die*. Among its images of horror, one stays with me: an air-raid shelter in Elephant and Castle that had taken a direct hit. On one wall were the outlines of those killed, as cleanly defined as shadow puppets.

As the threat from unexploded German bombs intensified, a department of the Ministry of Supply known as the Directorate of Scientific Research established an experimental unit to advise the Royal Engineers’ new bomb-disposal corps. The unit’s most notorious operative, and its head of field research, was Charles Henry George Howard, the 20th Earl of Suffolk and 13th Earl of Berkshire. Mad Jack, as he was known.

The earl, who was 35 when he died, was a flamboyant figure with a buccaneering reputation. A civilian employee of the Ministry of Supply, he had been sent to Paris in 1939 as a scientific liaison officer. As Germany advanced on Paris, he returned to England with a party of nuclear scientists under his protection, Europe’s last stocks of heavy water (which could be used in developing nuclear weapons) and, according to some accounts, a briefcase containing millions of pounds’ worth of French diamonds for safekeeping.

His role with the experimental unit, which he joined that summer, was not to defuse bombs but to attempt to recover fuzes for analysis and develop new methods for bomb disposal. Howard was a conspicuous figure among the uniformed rank and file: he smoked scented



‘VERY MUCH REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR HUSBAND 1868390 STAFF SERGEANT J ATKINS WAS KILLED BY ENEMY ACTION THIS AFTERNOON’

cigarettes from a holder (two at a time, according to one report), was often seen in a white kid-skin flying helmet and, famously, wore twin armpit holsters containing .45 revolvers he named “Oscar” and “Genevieve”. At his side, invariably, were two fellow civilians: his secretary, 29-year-old Eileen Morden; and his assistant and driver, Fred Hards, who was 36.

Among the earl’s remains was a cigarette case engraved with the signatures of the Royal Engineers who assisted him. But not everybody deemed him trustworthy. “We were all very thankful to have him off our chests,” said one senior officer after his death, “but we were very sorry that he took a lot of our chaps with him. He was an amateur.”

Most of those who were directly involved in bomb disposal during the second world war are dead now, and if not they are too frail to be badgered into casting back their minds. But the work itself continues.

“We know rather a lot about your grandfather’s incident,” Flight Sergeant Bod Yates tells me, weighing a number-50 fuze in one hand.

I’ve come to the headquarters of the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal Munitions and Search (DEMS) Training Regiment, an 80-hectare military training facility outside Bicester, Oxfordshire. I want to get an idea of what might have happened that afternoon in 1941, and try to understand

something of the psychology of bomb disposal.

Even on his business card, Yates, whose given name is Neil, is Bod. (When he arrived at his first unit 30 years ago, he tells me, “an ‘old sweat’ hairy-arsed corporal said I looked like the cartoon character. I didn’t.”) With us is Warrant Officer 2 Simon Hannaford, 40, a Royal Engineers bomb-disposal officer who has done three tours of Afghanistan.

With a Ministry of Defence media officer, we pass through a converted hangar – “Helmand Hall” – where a group of young recruits is standing in a sandpit the size of a five-a-side pitch. Scattered around them, half-buried, is an assortment of bombs as big as toddlers. Lining a corridor nearby, meanwhile, is a reminder

Left: Belvedere Marshes, a nature reserve in south-east London, was used as a ‘bomb cemetery’, where unexploded German ordnance was brought to be made safe during the Blitz. Jim Atkins, the author’s grandfather, was attempting to defuse a bomb there when it went off, killing him instantly

Right, from top: Flight Sergeant Bod Yates at the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal Munitions and Search (DEMS) Training Regiment, Bicester, Oxfordshire; fuzes and bombs at the indoor training area





Above: Jim Atkins, c1930s. Below: Charles Henry George Howard, the 20th Earl of Suffolk (c1920s), who was head of a military scientific unit. Both men were trying to defuse a 250kg bomb when it went off. Facing page: cluster bomblets



◀ In a training hall that at first glance resembles a well-appointed provincial military museum is an array of hundreds of neutralised bombs from around the world, each lying on a steel pedestal: an orange-and-white-striped Chinese Silkworm surface-to-surface missile; a glossy black British Tigerfish submarine-launched torpedo; an Iraqi anti-shiping mine from the Gulfwar.

“You can photograph everything apart from *this*,” Hannaford says, slapping a laser-guided bomb as if it were a prize stud. In one corner is a mocked-up excavation with steel shoring fixed to the walls and a rusted bomb lying beneath in a pit of soil. The bomb is a German “SC”, or *Sprengbombe cylindrisch*, like the one that killed my grandfather, albeit, at only 50kg, one-fifth the size. Attached to its side with black luting – “the world’s stickiest Blu Tack”, as Yates puts it – is a plastic tube leading to a handheld suction pump, a device known as an S-set. “If a bomb like this was found today,” says Yates, “some of the techniques that were used in 1941 would be used pretty much unchanged.”

Following an air raid, unexploded bombs had their fuzes deactivated where possible, and were transferred to an isolated place to be safely destroyed – a place such as Belvedere Marshes. Because of complaints about noise from nearby residents, an order had been given six days before the accident for the remaining cache to be either blown up or transferred to another “bomb cemetery” at Richmond Park. One of them, however, was not to be touched, on the orders of the Earl of Suffolk – perhaps because he wanted to extract its fuzes for analysis: an SC 250kg, which, having lain there since the previous October, had been painted with the words “Old Faithful”.

After the dust and smoke of the city, arriving at open country must have come as a relief to Jim and the others. When I visit, two men in camouflage are stationed at one of the nature reserve’s hide screens, watching for the penduline tit. “He’s showing well,” says one breathlessly.

If you look at aerial photographs of the marshes from 1941, there’s virtually nothing human to be seen for 200 hectares. Where a modern incinerator now stands beside the river, you can make out the spoil heaps of the Borax Consolidated chemical works. Early on the afternoon of May 12, a stranger knocked on the office door, wanting to use the phone. Years later, Ken Tinker, the office boy at the time, remembered a tall, softly-spoken gentleman in knee-length rubber boots and a sheepskin coat. Perhaps “Oscar” and “Genevieve” were nestled underneath (Howard had been known to shoot recalcitrant fuzes to deactivate them).

Waiting on the marshes were several Royal Engineers sappers attached to the earl’s scientific field unit, along with Morden and Hards. According to the Royal Engineers’ witness statements in the National Archives, Howard rang 25th Company HQ, 10km away in Eltham, and ordered an Mk2 “clockstopper” – an electromagnet that could immobilise fuzes – and an electronic stethoscope to be brought to the marshes immediately. He had been to inspect “Old Faithful” and found that a fuze was ticking. It may be that, having jammed when it first landed, or subsequently been deactivated by bomb-disposal engineers using an S-set, it had been restarted by the reverberations from the controlled explosion of other bombs as the marshes were cleared. The man who brought both items, 45 minutes later, was Staff Sergeant James Atkins.

On the bomb’s flank, Jim placed both the stethoscope and the clockstopper (a steel collar powered by six heavy batteries, which were kept in Howard’s field-research van). While the earl removed the bomb’s base to extract the explosive powder, Jim put on the stethoscope headphones to ascertain whether the clockstopper had worked. Howard, meanwhile, had sent two sappers to a nearby ditch to collect water for a portable boiler, which he would use to “steam out” the main explosive charge, emulsifying the powder so that it could be extracted and safely burned.

While they were at the ditch, the bomb went off. Such was the power of the blast the windows were blown out in the Ford factory across the river in Dagenham, and a crowbar was sent crashing through the roof of the Borax works nearly a kilometre away. In a diagram made the following day, the wreck of Howard’s van is shown, along with an acetylene cylinder, a coil of hose, a switchbox and a crater six metres wide.

In the Bicester training hall, Yates hands me two items the size and shape of deodorant cans. “The fuzes your grandad was working on were not designed to function on impact. They were very insidious.” Such bombs were designed to sit where they landed, causing maximum disruption. The one that killed Jim had two “pockets”, Yates explains, cylindrical cavities cut into the side, each fitted with a fuze. The number-17 was a time-delay fuze, which could activate at any time between 30 minutes and 72 hours after the bomb hit the ground; it was this that would have produced the ticking Howard heard. The number-50 was an anti-disturbance device: “It has a trembler switch in it, to stop me moving the bomb, or even driving an excavator near to it,” Yates says.

Any bomb that landed in a built-up area, as most did, had to be left alone, and the surrounding area evacuated, until its 17 fuze was sure to have wound down. Only after 80 hours could an attempt be made to neutralise the 50 fuze, though exceptions were made when the bomb was close to strategically critical railways or factories.

The S-set allowed a salt solution to be injected into a hole drilled in the fuze, causing its mechanism to jam as the solution crystallised. Another method used a clockstopper to dislocate the timer’s parts, although this only continued to work while the magnet was switched on. Until September 1940, however, even when the 17 fuze had wound down and any



'IT IS AT THE BACK OF YOUR MIND: AM I GOING TO DIE; OR, WORSE, AM I ABOUT TO LOSE MY LEGS, OR MY REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS?'

other fuze had been neutralised, it was found that bombs were exploding without warning.

"And then some guy got really lucky," says Yates. "He pulled out a fuze and *this* was stuck on the end" - he hands me a sectioned aluminium cylinder the size of an eggcup - "and he probably said: 'What the f*** is *that*?' Pulled his thumb out and there was a plum on the end!"

The "plum" was a mechanical "anti-withdrawal" device, a so-called Zus-40, which would set off the bomb if any attempt was made to extract the 50 fuze. "Of course," says Yates, "the first five or six poor sods who encountered this, the bomb functioned. It just blew up. They were turned into pink mist - " He cuts himself off: "Sorry for being graphic, but that's literally what happened, they were never seen again, they were completely vaporised."

Pink mist: I've heard the term before, and wonder when it was coined. According to the local-authority reports of the 1941

incident, a few of the earl's body parts were recovered, along with the engraved cigarette case and fragments of his "orange spotted scarf". Of Staff Sergeant Atkins, Fred Hards and two other Royal Engineers: "no trace found". (Two sappers attached to the earl's unit were also killed. The earl's secretary, Eileen Morden, died on the way to hospital, the only woman to lose her life in bomb disposal during the second world war.)

"What has changed is acceptance of risk," Yates continues. "We adopt a one-person-risk philosophy now, so should the worst happen, you're looking at one casualty and not eight." But even in 1941, questions were asked as to why so many had been so close to the bomb when it went off.

"Men like your grandfather - balls of steel," Hannaford says. I'm reminded of what Jim's commanding officer said in his letter to my grandmother: "At a time such as this words are of little help, but I should like you to know that your husband,

besides being a man of great ability in the technical branch of the Army in which he worked, was also a man completely without fear."

But nobody is without fear, and part of me feels that to have done this work in 1941 - and even in 2019 - meant giving yourself over to a kind of madness.

"I've done bomb disposal all around the world," Yates tells me. "I have never feared for my life as a result of the bomb. For me the fear is cocking up, letting your mates down."

Hannaford agrees. "But it is at the back of your mind: am I going to die; or, worse, am I about to lose my legs, or my reproductive organs? Am I going to be degloved -?" Seeing my expression, he adds: "The skin stripped back from the fingertips to the elbow."

"It may be of a little consolation for you to know," Jim's commanding officer concluded in his letter to my grandmother, "that his death was painless and instantaneous."

It's impossible to know what happened on that May day. The number-50 anti-disturbance fuze would have lost its charge long before, and the Zus-40 booby-trap was known about by then. Besides, there's no reason to believe Howard would have been attempting to extract the fuzes before the main explosive charge - unless, as one rumour had it, he had been demonstrating to his team a method for removing the number-50 without triggering the Zus-40. Perhaps the clockstopper's batteries failed, as sometimes happened. Perhaps the growl of the van's engine obscured the ticking in Jim's headphones. Perhaps Howard had started scooping out the explosive, while waiting for the steamer, and disturbed one of the fuzes.

The earl, awarded a posthumous George Cross for "conspicuous bravery", has always struck me as one of those whose success is born of self-assurance as much as technical flair. This isn't to say he wasn't admirable or brave, but to wonder if it wasn't chiefly his "madness" that made "Mad Jack" so effective. His achievements were not negligible. In a letter commending him for the Cross, Herbert Gough, head of the Directorate of Scientific Research, noted that his work had led to several major advances in bomb disposal. He had saved lives. "The work was of an extremely hazardous nature, even using every available scientific and technical aid," he wrote.

There is no reason to think Jim had met the earl until that day, though he would have known him by reputation. A handful of letters to my grandmother from the months before his death remain. In one of them, written from Eltham six days before he died, Jim tells her, "I am almost sure to see you this weekend, dear. I shall hug all the breath out of you." I hope he got to make that visit.

At Belvedere Marshes, a skirl of cormorants eddies towards the sewage treatment works. The coordinates of the explosion were not recorded and the crater was not so deep that it would be conspicuous in this soft ground today. It's not as if I can stand at the place where he vanished. Yet somehow this enduring blank on the map feels more meaningful than his gravestone at Brookwood Military Cemetery or the memorial wall in Bicester. The birders have gone home now. The sun bouncing off the lagoon is so bright I have to shield my eyes. **FT**

William Atkins is the author of *"The Immeasurable World: Journeys in Desert Places"* (Faber & Faber, £20)



Going the distance

In her late forties, after rejecting yoga, swimming and CrossFit, *Susan Bright* reluctantly returned to running in order to achieve her fitness goals. How did she go from hating every second of it to completing the Jersey Marathon?

In an interview in 2008, the artist Martin

Creed talked about his new commission for Tate Britain. “Work No. 850” consisted of a series of runners sprinting through the Duveen Galleries, weaving between surprised visitors. In the interview, Creed alluded to running being the opposite of death. If death is stillness, he mused, then running fast is the epitome of life. As a runner who is also a wild swimmer, I would have to say that plunging your body into the freezing North Sea is by far the greater affirmation of life lived - perhaps because you feel very close to death at times. Running, I would argue, offers subtler verifications of being.

I took up running in January last year. Lying in bed recovering from a small operation, I decided to run the Jersey Marathon in the Channel Islands on my birthday that coming October. I had been talking about running a marathon for about a decade, to the point that nobody believed I ever would. But after being incapacitated in that hospital bed, I wanted to feel physically the complete opposite, and I imagined that training for a marathon would make me the fittest I could be.

I chose Jersey as I knew it was a smaller meet than most, with fewer than 500 runners. It was somewhere I knew, because my in-laws live there. And the thought of all that island air made it more appealing than slogging through a polluted city. At that point, I had 10 months to train, so, naturally, I did nothing for about four. Then, in a panic, I found a training schedule that seemed doable and vowed to follow it religiously.

I’d had some experience of running. At school, I took part in cross-country races all over Sussex until, at 16, it seemed ridiculous to be out in public in little more than an Aertex shirt and gym knickers. A few years earlier I’d bragged that I would win the inter-school competition. I came in fourth, beaten by a tiny girl who had reprimanded me for my boastful

ways and who, ever since, has been a reminder never to judge people by their shape.

As an adult, I ran periodically, in between other sports that came and went. I picked it up again in my early forties, when I lived near Central Park in New York and could measure my progress against the circumference of a large reservoir. While in NYC, I had adopted a rather maniacal fitness regime that consisted of a boot camp at 5.30 am in all weathers to lose the weight I had gained in pregnancy and to make me feel strong again. I did this for three weeks in a month and then took a week off. It was in the week off that I would run a couple of times around the park. This continued for about three years but then it stopped. So the decision to run a marathon in Jersey in my late forties was not only a test of my physical ability but also a mental challenge: a decision finally to put my money where my mouth was.

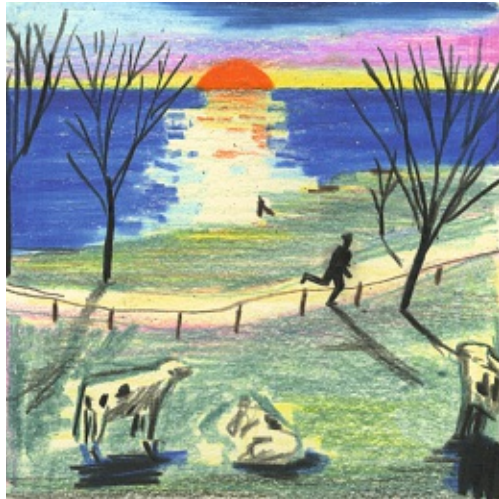
By then, running, I felt, was the only option open to me. I now live in Paris, where the attitude to fitness could not be more different from NYC. It seemed like I’d tried every yoga studio in the city only to be disappointed; swimming in chlorinated pools doesn’t do it for me; and the CrossFit was nowhere near the level of intensity I craved. In addition, I have no desire to be sociable when I exercise, and although the *bise* - the customary cheek-peck - with the instructor at the start of a CrossFit session was endearing, I found it annoying. Ditto the high-fiving. I do not go to the gym to make friends; it’s purely to work out.

My training schedule demanded that I run

three times a week and cross-train twice. Cross-training can be anything from weights to swimming to yoga - just something that uses different sets of muscles. I was incredibly unfit when I started. In fact, I had googled “marathon training for very unfit people” and found a programme that started with very short runs ►



Illustrations by Yann Kebbi



‘My schedule began to haunt me. It was always there, like homework that never got done... it made me question why I was doing it when I seemed to hate it so much’

◀ of about three miles. I genuinely hated every second of it in the beginning. I had no stamina and always had to walk some of the distance. I couldn't decide whether to listen to music or not; I couldn't get the gear right. Over the months, though, I slowly built up the miles, while getting to know my way around Paris in the early hours of the morning, when the pollution is not too bad.

My schedule began to haunt me. It was always there, like homework that never got done. The problem with this sort of commitment is that it's almost impossible to stick to. Life happens - you get sick, you have to travel or you simply don't feel like it. Stuck up above my desk, the schedule made me question why I was doing it when I seemed to hate it so much.

What's more, running created too much washing, it was too hot and I resented getting up early. But mostly I hated it because I was rubbish at it and didn't seem to be losing weight or getting better legs. And these, if I am being honest, were two of the reasons for starting training in the first place.

In the spirit of honesty, they remain fairly solid goals but, over the past year and a half, running has come to mean so much more. Though I realise this is probably a commonplace epiphany for runners, it has taught me so much about myself, my physical capabilities and how to shift my thinking from negative to positive. A small example is the "I have to run" pressure I felt at the start of my training, which I purposely switched to "I get to run". With that mental shift, and with my increasing fitness, I genuinely became excited at the opportunity to run rather than dreading it. Naturally an introvert, I like to run alone. This one is just for me - away from my family, my work and any other obligations. I can be selfish. I don't have to concern myself with anyone else's business. It's my time, my space and it mirrors my life completely. It is my life, but faster.

Sometimes it sucks. You fall, you stumble, there are others that you measure yourself against and come up short. But sometimes it's perfect. You can inspire others and be part of a community. You progress, you get through tough patches and overcome, and, every time you finish a run, you have succeeded, even if it doesn't really feel like it at the time.

I wasn't prepared for any of these revelations. Nor was I prepared for "the zone". This is when you lose your thoughts, are unaware of your body and are just in the moment. This, I have been assured, is also the point of meditation. Having never managed to find this mythical place by sitting, I felt relieved and privileged to find it while moving. This doesn't happen on every run, but when it does, I feel as if I have a secret so great that it's a miracle to have it in my grasp. I feel invincible, fluid, perfect and calm. This is motivation enough to keep me at it.

I have also learnt that every run is different. Like yoga or meditation, you never master it. And, contrary to the popular understanding of the sport, you don't ever win or finish. I thought the marathon would be it and then I would stop, content in my achievement. But it didn't pan out like that at all. There is always another start line and it's all a process towards "a better me" (a phrase that makes me cringe).

I have always thought of myself as a goal-oriented person. I like projects that have distinct start and end points, which, as a writer and curator, means books and exhibitions. But it seems I am also good at the stuff that demands a slow drip-feed of commitment and hard work with no apparent reward. This includes a 25-year marriage, parenting, learning a new language as an adult, a PhD and a consistent and successful freelance career. It would seem running satisfies both sides of my contradictory character - that of box-ticking but also my aptitude for repetitive slog.

I think my age is relevant to the whole thing. As one approaches 50, a certain panic sets in and so a marathon fulfilled the “midlife crisis” cliché of proving that one is still capable of the things that affirm youth. But having the marathon as a goal also allowed me to get through a rather wobbly year with more grace and ease than if I had not been running. Running shakes my crazies out. I often start a run with my thoughts all clambering on top of each other. By the end, everything seems doable, calmer and achievable.

Although I followed the marathon schedule, I didn’t cross-train enough and I should have been fitter when October rolled around. But I was sure I could run the 26.2 miles. In the end, the power and emotion of the whole experience surprised me. What I hadn’t expected was how exciting it would be. I was pumped up throughout the whole journey there - so much so that I found eating tricky, although I knew it was incredibly important to “carb up” beforehand. I was staying with my elderly mother-in-law and cooking for us both calmed me down; the quietness of the place and the hum of the TV were just what I needed to keep my emotions under control.

The most important rule of race day is: nothing different. So no new trainers and no new food for breakfast. I followed this and arrived at “marathon village”, my stomach churning with nerves, to find a wonderful, jovial atmosphere. There were no timed stalls for starting: you just shuffled to where the race would start and found a spot among people who looked like you in terms of fitness. The very athletic made their way to the front and the people in fancy dress to the back. It was all very collegial and chatty.

I hadn’t looked at the route beforehand. I just wanted to run. People came out to cheer us on and the relay runners - who were splitting the distance in teams - sped past with words of encouragement. Groups of elderly people

gathered outside the churches with banners.

I found myself wiping away tears, amazed at the community spirit. I had not been expecting this at all and I found it incredibly touching.

I run slowly, so it seemed that the whole crowd seemed to pass me early on, but I didn’t care. It was all going well until I entered the parish of Saint Brélade. I knew then that we still had about another six miles to go and I was really beginning to feel tired. I have no idea if I’d hit the fabled “wall” that runners talk about but those last miles were incredibly challenging and painful. I did, however, run all the way to the finish (albeit very slowly at the end), and smiling.

Yes, it was hard, but not that hard, and yes, I hurt, but I have been in more pain during my life. Disgusting things happened to my body that runners will be familiar with - I lost, for example, three toenails - but the next day, after a bracing sea swim and a massage, I was confident in the knowledge that I had achieved something that nobody could take away from me.

Cockily, I went on a recovery run a few days later and fell, cutting my face, hands and knees. This shook me and I stopped running for a month. I only got going again once I had signed up for this year’s Paris Marathon, which takes place next weekend. This time there will be more than 40,000 runners, and the whole atmosphere will be entirely different from the rather “homespun” one of Jersey. I have always been inclined towards an all-or-nothing approach to life, though it’s an exhausting attitude that gets increasingly tiresome as I age. But knowing yourself is part of the battle, and if I have to do marathons to keep me running, then that’s exactly what I will do. Running, for me, is not something I do - I have become a runner. This subtle shift in language and attitude is a welcome addition to my identity, and one of which I am immensely proud. **FT**

.....
Susan Bright is a curator and writer based in Paris

‘Groups of elderly people gathered outside the churches with banners. I found myself wiping away tears, amazed at the community spirit’





Honey & Co Recipes



A world in a grain of rice

Photographs by Patricia Niven

In the Netherlands, they bring a pot of rice to the boil, take it off the heat, wrap it tightly in a blanket and put it to bed for a few hours – or so we are told. We’ve never tried this ourselves, but our Dutch friend Jaap swears it comes out great. His partner is Israeli and cooks rice “like pasta” – by throwing it into a pot of boiling salted water until it’s soft, then draining it in a colander. Julia Child had a method that involved wrapping rice in cloth and steaming it, while Persian cooks are pleased if their rice comes out “one by one”, meaning that each grain can be picked out without it sticking to the others. Some Italians like their risotto to ripple on the plate in waves – *all’onda*.

Rice challenges the chef to come up with new ways to get it right. There is always another way of cooking it but the truth is that most ways are delicious. This recipe is one of our favourite dinners, perfected over the past few months. It’s a midweek fixer that is calming and nourishing and doesn’t demand much from the cook.

That said, certain elements require attention. The rice should be good quality – we favour whole basmati for this dish, for its chewy, sticky texture and nutty taste. The vegetables should be cut just so, not too thinly or thickly: you want them soft but not mushy, so they add a bit of bite and texture. The flavour of the cooking liquid must not be overpowering – though we find that a tablespoon of miso paste gives the pot a savoury back note.

Once the rice has been cooked and rested, there is a moment of magic when the lid is lifted for the first time. Close your eyes and have your nose at the ready to catch those first plumes of steam from the pot. Nothing else smells quite like this rare perfume.

To transform this comfort pot into a meal, it needs something sharp, a quick pickle that can be made in the time it takes for the rice to cook. It turns the simple into the special – and a bowl of rice into a rice bowl. **31**

By Sarit Packer and Itamar Srulovich
honeyandco@ft.com

Rice bowl with sesame, miso and pears

Dinner for a hungry duo (with possible leftovers) or 4-6 as a side dish

- 150g brown basmati rice, soaked in plenty of cold water
- 2 tbs toasted sesame seeds
- 3 tbs oil (any plain mellow oil will do here)
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced (about 240g)
- 1 leek, halved, washed and sliced (about 200g)
- 3-4 cloves of garlic, peeled and halved
- A generous sprinkling of salt
- 1 pear, cut into large dice (no need to peel)
- 1 green chilli, thinly sliced (remove the seeds to lessen the spice)
- 20g fresh ginger, peeled and sliced thinly
- 1 heaped tbs white miso paste
- 1 tbs soy sauce
- 300ml boiling water

For the quick pear pickle (optional)

- 1-2 pears, depending on size (about 150g)
- ½-1 green chilli (depending on your preference)
- 2 tbs rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbs toasted sesame seeds
- 10g peeled and grated fresh ginger
- ½ tsp sugar
- A generous pinch of salt
- A few drops of sesame oil

1 — Start by soaking the rice in plenty of cold water. Toast the sesame seeds in a hot frying pan, tossing them for a couple of minutes until they go golden, and set aside.

2 — Set a large pot on the stove and add the oil. Heat a little, then add the carrot slices, the leek and the garlic. Season with a generous pinch of salt and sauté until the vegetables start to colour and stick to the bottom of the pan. Add the pears, chilli, ginger slices and toasted sesame and mix to combine. Drain the rice from the soaking water and add it to the vegetables in the pot. Mix again so the rice is coated with the vegetable mix. Add the miso, soy and the boiling water. Bring the whole mix to the boil, then reduce the heat to minimum, cover the pot with a thin cloth and then a tight-fitting lid. Cook for 35 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to rest for another 10 minutes before lifting the lid.

3 — While the rice is cooking, make the quick pear pickle (or try it with apple – it’s delicious too). Mix all the ingredients together (apart from the sesame oil) and set aside till you are ready to serve, then add a couple of drops of the sesame oil and serve with the hot rice.





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Jancis Robinson Wine

Keeping one's cool

While the earth is going to hell in a handbasket, what you are about to read may seem hideously self-indulgent, even fatuous. But then my professional life has been dedicated to frivolity, so you'll have to bear with me.

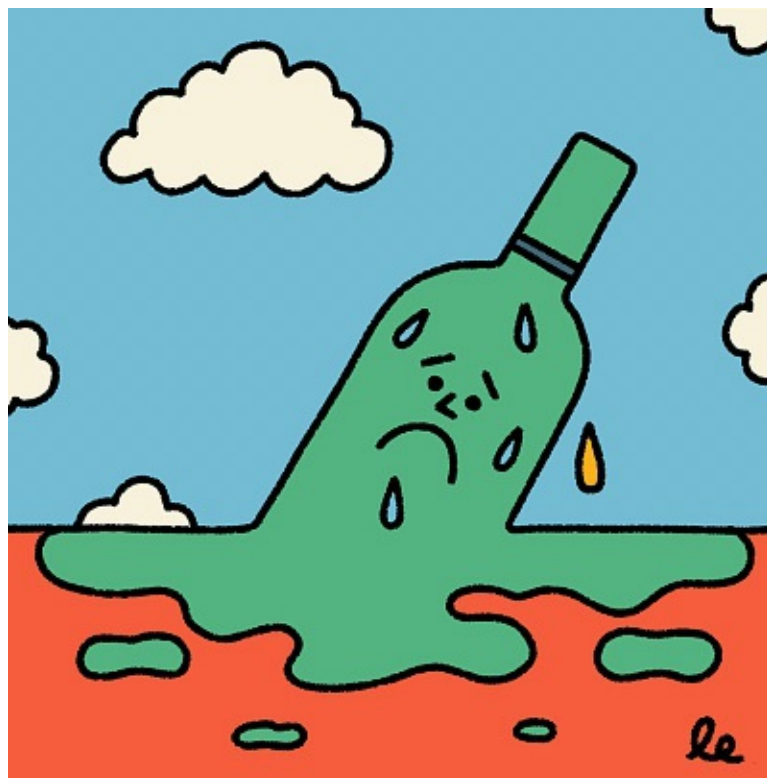
Imagine you're on holiday somewhere warm, glass of wine in hand, waves lapping on a nearby sandy shore, palm trees swaying overhead. A cliché of an idle idyll, perhaps, but one with a structural fault.

The problem – a word that might be putting it too strongly – is that the glass of wine will be at its best for only a few minutes. High temperatures will soon convert a refreshing drink into a tepid soup. And this applies to wines of all colours.

Until recently, what one might call warm wine syndrome occurred only in the tropics. But today, warmer summers are making wine uncomfortably soupy much further from the equator.

It's difficult to exaggerate how crucial temperature is to the enjoyment of wine. If it's too cold, then few aromas will volatilise and it won't taste of much. Chewy tannins and acidity seem to be emphasised at low temperatures, not always for the best. If they get too warm, rosés, whites and even reds lose definition and interest, and can start to smell vinegary. Most importantly, especially on a hot day, the wine will no longer seem refreshing. And the first duty of any drink is to refresh.

I'm not advocating the neurotic use of one of those wine thermometers, but ideal serving temperatures range from around 6C to 10C (42F to 50F) for most white wines. Temperatures should be at the lower end of this for



As imagined by Leon Edler

Recommended chillable reds

These would all respond well to being served cool because they are low in tannin and/or fairly light-bodied.

- Ringleader, Old Vine Grenache 2018 Riverland £5.99 Aldi (low stock)
- Percheron Old Vine Cinsault 2016 Western Cape £6.99 Purple Foot of Oxfordshire and many more
- Jean-Paul Brun, Le Ronsay 2017 Beaujolais £62.50 a dozen in bond Justerini & Brooks

- De Martino, Gallardia Cinsault 2016 Itata £14.50 Berry Bros & Rudd
- Pedro Parra, Imaginador Cinsault 2016 Itata \$23.96 Astor Wines, New York
- Domaine Chapel 2017 Juliéas £23.48 Uncharted Wine, £25 Quality Wines, £28 Lechevalier
- Jane Eyre 2017 Chénas £25 D Vine Cellars, The Wine Reserve, Morrish and Banham
- Le Grappin 2017 St Amour £26 legrappin.com

- Julien Sunier 2017 Fleurie £28.50 Berry Bros & Rudd
- Kutch Pinot Noir 2017 Sonoma Coast £360 a dozen in bond Farr Vintners



Tasting notes on Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com. Stockists via Wine-Searcher.com



sparkling wines (to retain the carbon dioxide in solution), and for some sweet and particularly light wines. Fuller-bodied whites, such as serious white Burgundy, top quality Chardonnays, white Rhônes and other Viogniers, deserve to be served a bit warmer, say 10C to 14C (50F to 57F) to encourage their aromas to express themselves. This is about the same ideal temperature range for light, fresh reds, including Beaujolais, simple Pinot Noirs and many ports and sherries. It's sometimes called "cellar cool", because it mirrors the ideal storage temperature for wine of any colour.

Full-bodied reds, especially those with lots of tannin

'Until recently, what one might call warm wine syndrome occurred only in the tropics'

(particularly common in young reds, notably those based on Cabernet Sauvignon), can be flattered by being served warmer, up to 18C (64F).

All these temperatures are far lower than ambient summer temperatures in most of the world and most temperature-controlled interiors. (The old adage of serving red wine at "room temperature" belongs to a distant, chillier age.) So how do we keep our wine cool enough to enjoy at its best?

It's easy with spirits and cocktails – you just add another ice cube. But wine and ice cubes are not great friends. Ice often alters the taste and balance of wine, not to mention the potency. While I was judging the world's best sommelier contest in Antwerp recently, a past winner told me ▶

◀ the approved etiquette for providing wine drinkers with ice cubes: letting the customer add their own.

In warm weather, it can be a good idea to serve wine a little too cold – by refrigerating red wine for half an hour before serving, for example. This means it can warm up to the ideal serving temperature. But a problem remains: the wine begins too cool, and will probably end up as flabby soup regardless.

Oh, the problems we wine drinkers encounter!

‘As temperatures rise, we are likely to become keener on chillable rather than full-bodied reds’

Fortunately, various bits of hardware can help. My favourite is the vacuum-lined cylinder that keeps a bottle of wine’s temperature stable. I have found them effective even in blazing sunshine, and they take up far less space than an ice bucket.

Ice buckets – much more effective when filled with a mixture of water and ice cubes than ice alone – are good at chilling bottles rapidly. In restaurants, we often ask for our bottle of red, once tasted, to be cooled in an ice bucket. But they take up a lot of room, demand a stock of ice and result in bottles that drip inconveniently.

Another option is buying bits of metal that can be chilled in a freezer and then popped in a wine glass. These cool drinks without diluting or affecting the taste. John Lewis sells “granite whisky stones” (£15 for six, with pouch) that do much the same job. (Incidentally, I do not advise storing bottles of wine in a deep freezer. Wine expands rapidly when frozen and has a nasty habit of pushing the cork out of the bottle.)

I have a feeling there are only two ways to ensure that we can sip wine at ideal temperatures. The first is to keep the bottle at the right temperature or just below it, either in an ice bucket or in one of those vacuum coolers, and to pour only the smallest of servings each time. And the other is to drink your wine at a lick – hardly an inviting prospect.

I would welcome advice on how to combat warm wine syndrome, and meanwhile make the following prediction. As temperatures rise, we are likely to become keener on chillable rather than full-bodied reds. Complex, serious red wines do not show their best in high temperatures and, as summers warm up, many of us will yearn for wines that are refreshing but not always white or pink. We will be looking for red wines that respond well to being served cool. See some suggestions on the previous page. **FT**

More columns at ft.com/jancis-robinson

MY ADDRESSES – BOLOGNA

PETE GRAY, CHEF



Bologna is a city rich in history and architecture, full of fantastic cafés and restaurants, though they are often the kinds of places that don’t stand out as you walk by. For many years, I’ve been travelling there for inspiration and to visit friends.

— To start the day, **Pappare’** offers a great selection for breakfast/brunch: everything from Lebanese hummus and falafel to American pancakes with maple syrup. Its pastries are flaky; the fresh granola bowls are layered with fruit, yoghurt and chia seeds. The coffee is also a highlight.

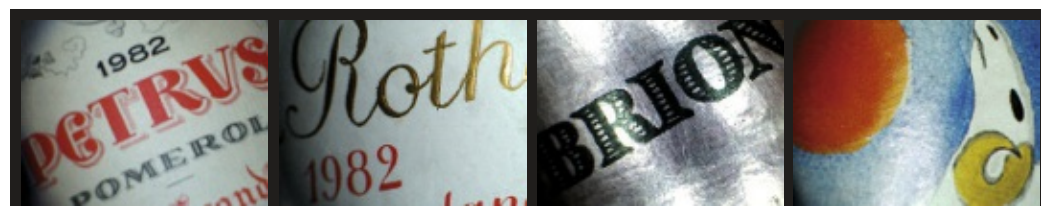
— Stroll through the historic Via Caprari, which has housed butchers since the 13th century, and pop into **Tamburini** (above left), a delightful restaurant, run by the Tamburini family since 1932. I love the freshly made pasta, especially the tortellini. The ham, charcuterie and cheese boards are also essential. It’s the perfect place to people-spot over an *aperitivo*.

— For an afternoon treat, head to **Il Gelatauro** for some of Bologna’s best gelato (above right). It’s located in San Vitale, a little distance from the city centre but well worth it. Rather inconspicuous, the tiny gelateria is frequently teeming with students, who dominate this part of town. The ice cream is made with organic eggs and no vegetable fat is used, resulting in a silky, soft but dense cream. My favourite is the pistachio.

— For dinner, I’d recommend a hidden gem – **Osteria dal Nonno**, or Grandfather’s Tavern. Run by the Natali family, it is one of the oldest osterias in Bologna. Try the perfectly light *crescentine* – small, fried portions of dough to accompany local meats – which pair brilliantly with a chilled Lambrusco. And you might be lucky enough to meet the family chicken!

Pete Gray is head chef at *The Hind’s Head, Bray*; hindsheadbray.com

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FT Weekend

Restaurant Insider

Nicholas Lander



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD HAUGHTON (LEFT) AND STÉPHANIE DEROUAUX

Bon Bon, Brussels

I have known for many years that Belgians take their food and wine extremely seriously. Chef Christophe Hardiquet and his team at Bon Bon do them both proud.

I was struck by Hardiquet's use of the colour white and his obvious love affair with mushrooms. Top restaurants tend to favour white napkins and tablecloths because the colour is associated with good hygiene. At Bon Bon, Hardiquet goes a step further.

Entering the plush front door of this handsome villa, a 15-minute taxi ride from the centre of Brussels, I noticed that all the staff were bravely wearing extremely white trainers.

When the white-shoed Hardiquet came to our table, acting not just as chef/owner but also as waiter, I asked him about this particularity. "So much has changed in the world of cooking over the past decade and this is my point of difference," he explained. "It is a way of bringing a more casual nature into my profession, and into my restaurant that is continually becoming more and more informal."

As for the mushrooms, they appeared in multiple forms. First, we were given thin slices of Paris mushrooms on top of a disc of avocado mousse, on a purée of wild mushrooms, which added a rich undertone. The result was both lush and satisfying.

Next, slices of mushrooms were blowtorched and served on top of a dessert that included caramel ice cream and small, creamy mounds in the shape of mushrooms. The caramelised mushrooms lifted the less-than-sugary ice cream to an extremely high level.

All this creativity has not come overnight to Hardiquet. A youthful-looking 42, he began cooking in a friend's apartment in the middle of Brussels 20 years ago. He opened Bon Bon seven years ago. The name, he explained, came to him one night while drinking with friends.

The space is well designed. The kitchen runs down the side: it is completely open, with the cold and pastry sections at one end, followed by the meat, fish and sauce sections. Through a gap in the counter, Hardiquet often slips out to chat with customers.

Because we were in a party of seven - one Scot, two English and



'The chef displayed sophisticated culinary technique but never veered into silliness or conveyed the idea that he took himself too seriously'

Bon Bon
Avenue de Tervueren 453
B-1150 Brussels, Belgium
+32 23 46 66 15
restaurant-bon-bon.be
Starters €35-€60
Mains €48-€95
Five-course menu €185
Seven-course menu €245

four Belgians - the kitchen insisted on serving us a set menu. Initially, my heart sank - I just don't believe one can judge a restaurant by a set menu as fairly as an à la carte - but, on this occasion, I was to be proven completely wrong.

Our meal started gently, with the kitchen's reinterpretation of a classic Belgian dish of sliced bread with cottage cheese. Then followed a tube of crisp pastry topped with grated Parmesan and filled with something that had the entire table guessing. Was it, someone wondered, smoked ham? The answer was a delightfully whipped mashed potato mixed with Ardbeg whisky, the ingredient that gave the dish its smoky flavour.

Throughout dinner, Hardiquet displayed great respect for his produce, sophisticated culinary technique and, at one stage, a real sense of theatre. He never veered into silliness or conveyed the idea that he took himself too seriously.

Our first main course was a pleasure to look at as well as to eat: oysters from Utah Beach in Normandy. These were cut into three and placed artfully on a delicate white plate, alongside small cubes of a green mint jelly and a white jelly made from a vodka-and- tonic mixture, both of which exploded in the mouth.

Next came a couple of exceptional vegetarian dishes. First, two stalks of this season's thick green asparagus, alongside a creamy mousseline highlighted by cedrat, a thick-skinned member of the citrus family. Then four melting gnocchi, generously covered in black truffles - a classic manifestation of an inexpensive ingredient, the potato, bringing out the best in the far more costly truffle.

Between the fish and the main meat course, the waiters arrived with nothing more than a basket, surprising everyone. On closer inspection, there were 15 different knives - each equally sharp, each with its blade facing down and each with a distinctive wooden handle - with which to slice through a tender piece of Black Angus beef.

Common to all these contrasting dishes was the intensity of the aromas that soared off the plates. This was a tour de force. **FT**

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE



Trilogy: A unique sky-rise hub in Cyprus

Trilogy Limassol Seafront is a new chapter for established developer Cybarco, with a success story spanning over 70 years and including landmark projects like Aphrodite Hills Golf Resort, Limassol Marina, Akamas Bay Villas and The Oval.

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Trilogy is high living in every sense - a trio of shimmering beachfront towers, surrounded by a bustling

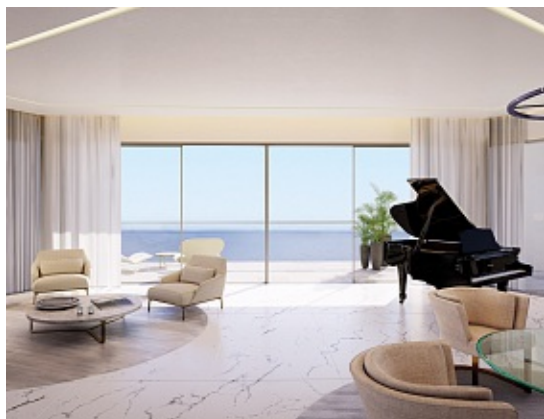
inner plaza, right in the heart of Limassol, the most vibrant and cosmopolitan city in Cyprus. A place to live, work and play with unobstructed views of the Mediterranean Sea, it is as much an experience as it is a destination. Brought to life by a world-class collaboration of architects, designers and developers, it offers a lifestyle experience, blending the aspirational dream of high-end beachfront living, with the sophistication of urban cool.

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occupy two floors of each tower, offering relaxation with unparalleled first class services and outstanding views of the infinite horizon.

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Games



A Round on the Links by James Walton

All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the link, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1 Who's the only person who had two of the top 10 bestselling albums of the 2000s (noughties) in the UK?

2 Buck Mulligan is the first character to appear in which 1922 novel?

3 For which film did John Gielgud (right) win his only acting Oscar?

4 Which character has been voiced or played by Sophia Myles, Rosamund Pike and Sylvia Anderson?

5 Which *Archers* character stabbed her husband in 2016?

6 What name is missing from this sequence: Tweedy, _____, Fernandez-Versini, Tweedy?



7 According to the opening lines of the James Bond theme song "Goldfinger", what kind of man is Goldfinger?

8 The first London production of which play in 1914 featured Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Henry Higgins?

9 In a poem by whom do the main characters go to

sea in "a beautiful pea-green boat"?

10 On which square does the main building of the Czech Republic's National Museum stand?



The Picture Round by James Walton

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



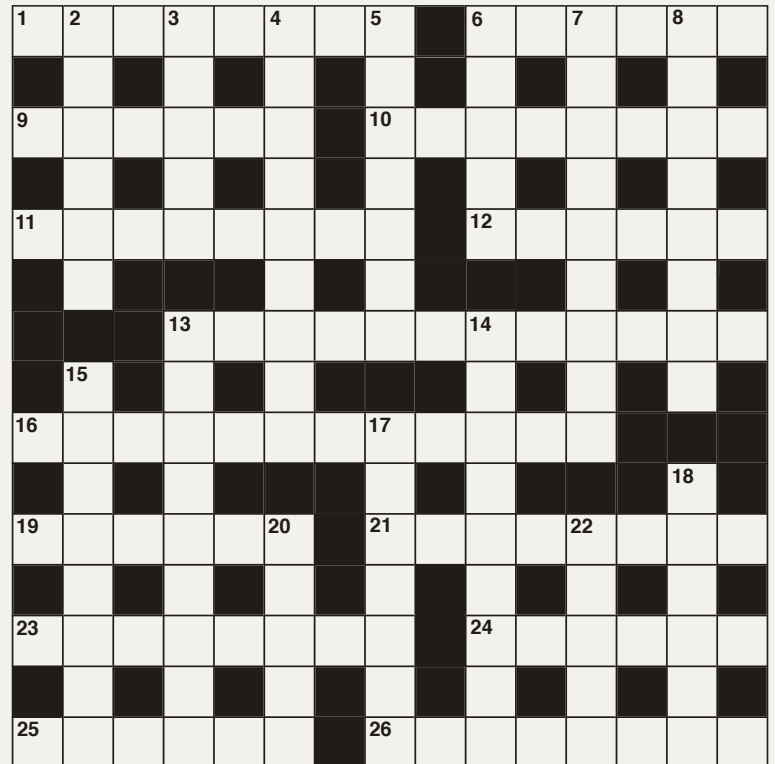
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Answers page 10

The Crossword No 431. Set by Aldhelm



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

ACROSS

- 1** Heating appliance (8)
- 6** Alberta's country (6)
- 9** Principles (6)
- 10** Part of a country (8)
- 11** Courgette (8)
- 12** Plot (6)
- 13** Livestock disease (4-3-5)
- 16** One with insurance (6, 6)
- 19** Quality of creating pity (6)
- 21** Attractive (8)
- 23** Face (8)
- 24** Mythical snake-haired monster (6)
- 25** Ski event (6)
- 26** "The Monarch of the Glen" artist (8)

DOWN

- 2** Fire is more 'arsh for the audience (6)
- 3** Patriarch is one sitting over ancient clans' leaders (5)
- 4** I'm about surrounded by cross witness's story (9)
- 5** Copy record - left one covered by record company (7)
- 6** Cuts climbing crop after cultivation, primarily (5)
- 7** Be rough in upsetting one nearby (9)
- 8** Cut fruit without pests getting up (8)
- 13** Bit of fighting's just horrible (9)
- 14** It's the same last month working with silver shape (9)
- 15** Nobody sorted loans out (3, 1, 4)

- 17** Going around Bali, I trot awkwardly without it (7)
- 18** Envelop even Robert, in part (6)
- 20** Attack king with most unruly elements going round (5)
- 22** Some get worried about right rules of behaviour (5)

Solution to Crossword No 430





GILLIAN TETT

PARTING SHOT

The dangers of trigger-happy technology



A few weeks ago, some old Silicon Valley hands suggested I take a look at a weapons company called TrackingPoint. I duly perused its website, not knowing what to expect, and quickly found myself both amazed and chilled.

This tiny tech business, currently based in Texas, sells “precision-guided” weapons that “[enable] anyone to accurately hit targets at ranges from 100 yards up to one mile in some cases”. More specifically, these guns are fitted with devices that use laser beams, sensors and computers to track targets and hit them in almost any conditions, irrespective of shooting skill. They are so effective that there are videos circulating online that depict a blind military veteran hunting with a gun - and hitting the target; company officials say he was guided by a friend with a computing device.

Until recently, it was assumed that the job of a sniper or a hunter was a human one, requiring fantastic eyesight, great mental and physical discipline and lone-wolf patience. Just think of the images presented in movies such as *American Sniper* or *The Day of the Jackal*. Today, however, we are witnessing the emergence of quasi-robotic snipers equipped with “smart” guns. This does not mean that flesh-and-blood people are redundant: they are still needed to tote the weapons and select the targets. Instead of talking about “artificial intelligence”, it is more accurate to talk about “augmented intelligence”, in the sense that human shooters are enhanced by technology.

Even allowing for that caveat, the TrackingPoint guns take military and recreational shooting to a new level - starting at \$6,995 per gun, according to the website, with products aimed at the hunting market as well as military niches. And TrackingPoint is not alone: although details are elusive (since most material is classified) other US companies are reportedly developing “smart” bullets, which use guidance systems and powerful computers to hit their targets.

Sniping skills, in other words, are being quietly digitised - just like the expertise underlying taxi driving or paralegal work. Or as TrackingPoint’s co-founder John McHale put it in a 2016 press statement for a new “squad-level M1400 338LM bolt-action rifle”: “Extreme distance lethality is no longer the exclusive domain of trained snipers. With minimal training, any soldier can reliably deliver lethality well beyond what is possible for today’s expert marksmen.” The statement adds: “As a Soldier... pulls the trigger, the target is automatically acquired and tracked... Total Time-To-Kill (TTK) is approximately 2.5 seconds.”

Is this a good idea? When I first saw the website, I wanted to howl “no” - and not just because I find the TTK idea distasteful. The US is a country that is already blighted by an excess of guns and gun violence. And one obvious problem with combining computers and weaponry is that software

can malfunction. Just look at the current furore around the Boeing 737 Max 8.

There is another obvious risk: these guns could fall into malicious hands. TrackingPoint insists in its publicity material that it will only supply the guns to “the United States military, other United States organizations that can legally fight our adversaries, and qualified United States citizens”, and suggests the main purpose is to “deliver mission dominance, force multiplication, and remarkable battle overmatch in the war on radical Islamic terrorism”.

“These guns use laser beams and sensors to track targets and hit them in almost any conditions, irrespective of shooting skill”

Maybe so. But what if someone were tempted to sell this know-how elsewhere? (Which is not impossible to imagine, since TrackingPoint was forced to restructure a few years ago, owing to financial pressure.) What if terrorists stole the technology, or hacked into the software? “That is the real worry,” observes one veteran Silicon Valley technologist, who says that these days the military is spending almost as much time developing systems to jam robotic weapons as it is on developing the weapons themselves.

Of course, these problems are hardly new: proliferation existed long before robots arrived. And it is not clear that robotic guns are more dangerous than the non-robotic sort. As with driverless cars, it is probable that automation will produce fewer casualties - these weapons are so accurate that there is less danger of hitting the wrong target. But such arguments will be of little comfort to many. Nor will it be reassuring to hear that the company was recently folded into a bigger weapons group (including Joint Force Enterprises and Talon Precision Optics) based in Jacksonville, Florida; company officials tell me they hope this deal will turbocharge sales, enabling them to supply more smart guns to the US military.

I suspect the only reason why there has been so little public debate about these guns is that it is not widely known such hardware exists outside Hollywood films. So for a new twist on the idea of automation, take a look at the tracking-point.com website. Then remember that this is just one tiny - visible - tip of a vast iceberg of innovation, most of which we cannot see because it is classified.

That is truly disquieting; and it puts a whole new spin on the idea of digital disruption. **FT**

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gillian.tett@ft.com; [@gilliantett](#)

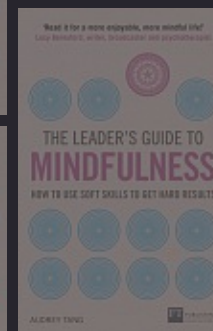
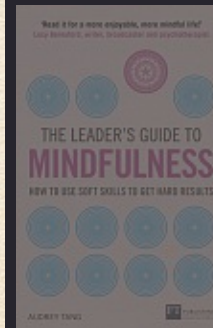
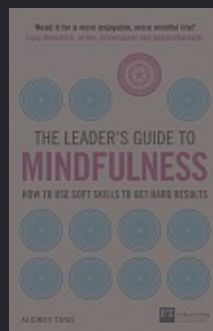
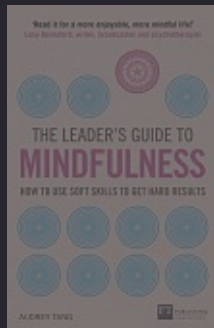
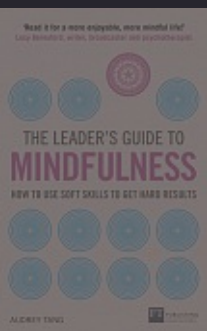
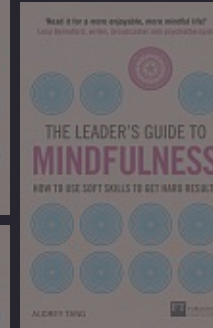
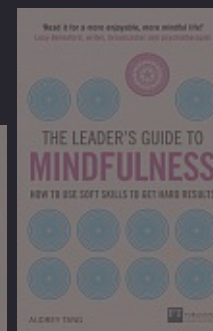
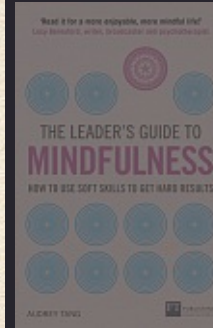
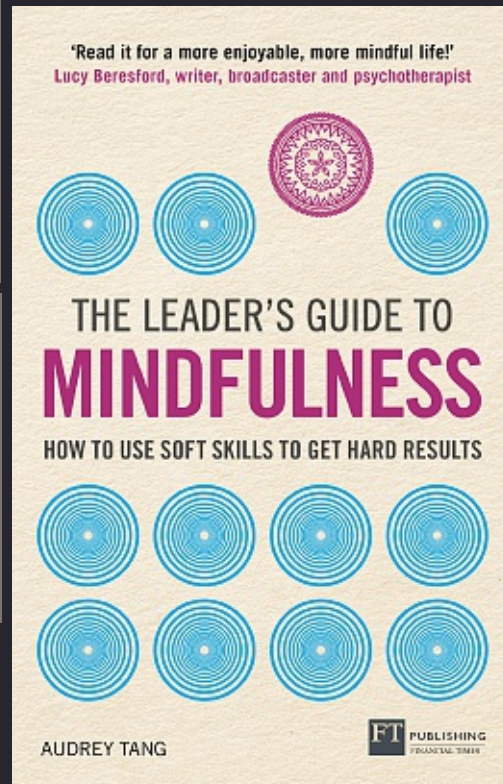
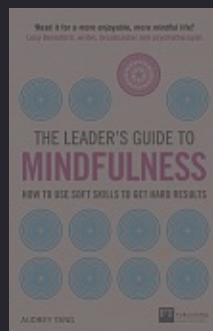
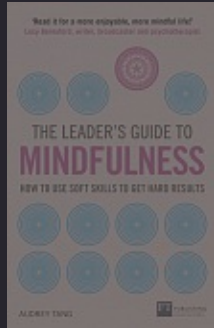
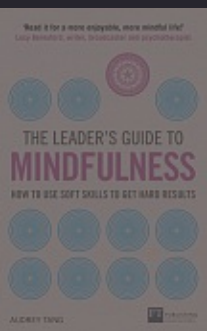
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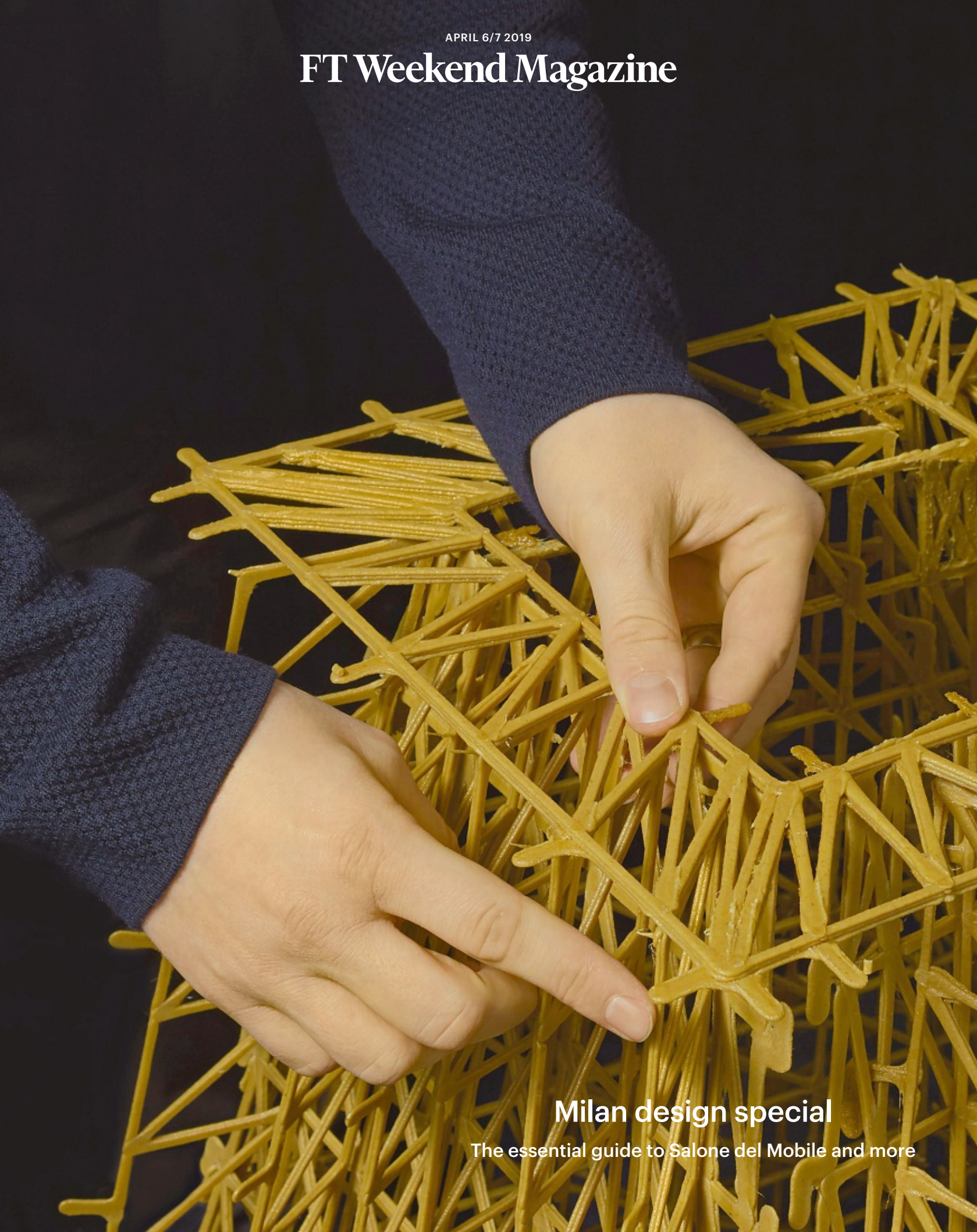
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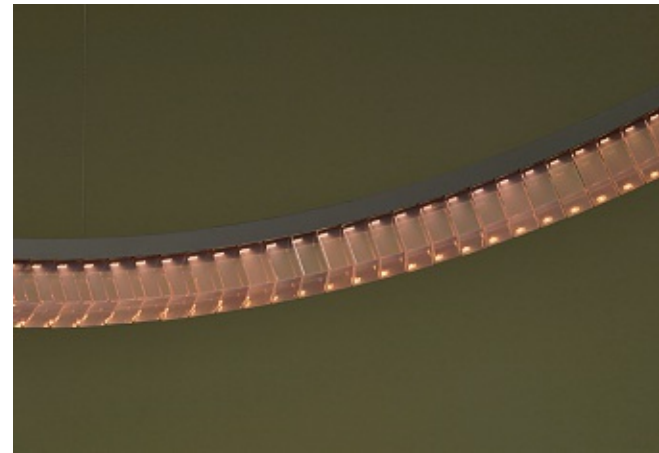


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Swarovski's 'Cyanometer' light, designed by Marjan van Aubel

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Campbell Rey's Zara Home



Cover One of Arthur Mamou-Mani's computer-designed 3D-printed building blocks. Photograph: Nhu Xuan Hua

WHAT'S ON

From April 9-14, thousands of exhibitors and visitors will descend on Milan for Design Week. Alongside the official show at the Fiera Milano Rho, a host of independent events will spread out across the city. *Hanna Dokal* selects some highlights



La Triennale Milano Palazzo dell'Arte

Plans were announced earlier this year for “a museum that does not exist, but one that Milan thoroughly deserves”. Using €10m of state funding, La Triennale, an arts centre that houses about 1,600 Italian design pieces (above, Giorgio de Chirico’s “Mysterious Baths” fountain), will be turned into a museum dedicated to Italian design and architecture. To get the ball rolling, its first exhibition will take place on the ground floor of the current Triennale building during Salone del Mobile.



Workplace3.0 Fiera Milano Rho

Workplace3.0 explores how home, work and public spaces are increasingly intersecting, as the boundaries between different categories of interiors dissolve to create flexible, playful working environments. The exhibition identifies four key areas: “liquid” space, privacy, smart offices and work-centred design. Among the exhibitors is Slalom, which has devised a partition system that is both sound-absorbing and eye-catchingly colourful.

A Space for Being Spazio Maiocchi

Watch out for Google’s collaboration with Reddymade Architecture, Muuto and Johns Hopkins University’s International Arts+Mind Lab. Together they will be presenting “A Space for Being”, a multi-room installation exploring the field of neuroaesthetics, looking at the impact the designed environment has on our health. Each room will provide a different aesthetic experience via its architecture and furnishings.

SaloneSatellite Fiera Milano Rho

A space for designers under 35, SaloneSatellite is back for its 22nd edition. This year, the theme is “Food as Design Object”, a topic that aims to encourage debate on climate change, shrinking resources and ways to secure the future of food.

Shape of Gravity Istituto dei Ciechi, Via Vivaio

The prolific Japanese design studio Nendo will be introducing its new exhibition, *Shape of Gravity*, in collaboration with Venetian brand WonderGlass. According to Nendo’s Oki Sato (below), it was achieved by laying hot glass sheets over steel shapes and suspending them between bars to allow the natural drape of the material to form. The result is “Melt”, a collection of furniture and tabletops.



The Manzoni Via Alessandro Manzoni


British designer Tom Dixon is taking an innovative approach to the showroom experience this year. Instead of exhibiting at Salone del Mobile itself, he will be opening his own restaurant. Called The Manzoni, it will double as an interactive and immersive showroom during Salone, but will remain open after the fair has left town. Diners will sit on “Fat” dining chairs among Dixon collections such as “Spring”, which includes pliable steel pendant lamps moulded into giant flower-like shapes and ribbons. “It is the right time to forget being temporary and build something permanent,” explains Dixon.

The Art Side of Kartell Palazzo Reale

Milan homeware brand Kartell celebrates its 70th anniversary with a history-minded installation at Salone. “The Art Side of Kartell” (April 9 until May 12) tells the story of the company from its beginnings producing car accessories to its pioneering use of plastics under Anna Castelli Ferrieri right up to more recent collaborations with designers such as Philippe Starck and Patricia Urquiola.



Paul Smith + 1882 Ltd Palazzo Gallarati Scotti

Drawing on her family’s history in the Potteries, Emily Johnson’s ceramics brand 1882 Ltd already has several noteworthy collaborations under its belt, with designers including Max Lamb and Brooklyn-based studio Snarkitecture. For this year’s Salone, she is teaming up with British fashion institution Paul Smith (pictured above with Johnson) to produce a range of ceramics titled “Stack”. The colourful, rustic pieces, which can fit together to form a collection, will be displayed in Smith’s clothing store in Milan. 



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LED technology is freeing up lighting, allowing designers to make sculptural statements that fold, flex and interconnect. *Tom Morris* talks to those who will be showcasing the trend in Milan

Carlotta de Bevilacqua is telling me about a light that she thinks could revolutionise how we illuminate our homes. "La Linea" is a 5m-long silicone tube that will, according to the vice-president and CEO of Italian brand Artemide, give users the freedom to bend light as they prefer, "whether around the body or along the walls". The fixture has been designed in collaboration with Danish architecture practice BIG, and works in conditions as cold as -20C and as warm as 40C. It will also resist rain and can be folded up and bent into different shapes. This LED number, says de Bevilacqua, is not just decoration but "a whole new way of lighting a space", whether that's a home, office, park, kindergarten, shop, spa or hospital.

It sounds like a grand claim but, on the eve of EuroLucce, the huge showcase of new lighting design that takes place every other year in Milan, many in the lighting industry share de Bevilacqua's sentiment. The death of the incandescent bulb over the past decade has been much mourned, but the introduction of LED technology - lights that use less electricity and are more cost-efficient - is hugely freeing. Instead of bulbs screwed into lamps sitting in corners, or glaring fluorescent strips overhead, lights are now finding all sorts of forms, functions and a big, bright future.

"It was a radical shift from incandescent bulbs to LED technology but it was definitely positive," says London-based lighting designer Michael Anastassiades. He is on the phone from Cyprus, where he has just opened an exhibition of his work at the capital Nicosia's largest contemporary art gallery NiMAC. Not the usual event for a designer, but Anastassiades is known as much for creating sculpture with his pieces as he is for illuminating rooms.

Since he began his lighting brand in 2007, Anastassiades has designed lights on strings that can be tied around a room like a cat's cradle; he has made customisable chandeliers out of straight and circular illuminated tubes; and he has created pendant lamps that balance like see-saws.

"The idea of transferring an endless string of light without actually losing power was something that only LED technology could achieve," he says of the "String" lights he designed for Flos in 2014. "Add to that the colour temperature, the dimmability and the fact you can control it through an app... All these gestures simply could not be achieved through incandescent light." In Milan he will be unveiling 10 new pieces - some for Flos and some for his own brand.

Nemo's "Linescapes", a modular system of tubes that can be easily replaced or changed, ►

'The goal is to understand technology and tame it down to a human scale'

Michael Anastassiades, designer



Clockwise from left
Michael Anastassiades's
'Vertigo'; 'Cyanometer',
designed by Marjan van
Aubel for Swarovski; 'Bird'
task light from Nemo; the
'74' system from Bocci



◀ is another collection that shows how lighting can be used to enhance a space sculpturally. Lines of light can be linked for metres on end - perfectly suited to offices - or can be connected to make dangling shapes, ideal for creating talking points in the home. "This is the school of pure technology," explains Federico Palazzari, Nemo's CEO.

At Euroluce, Nemo will launch a powerful LED task light called "Bird", which balances on the edge of a surface. "It is for small desks where you don't want big bases taking up room," explains Palazzari. The light's designer, Bernhard Osann, first approached Nemo with the idea a decade ago. "When Bernhard showed it to me, the technology just wasn't there, so we had to wait," Palazzari says. What makes it so technologically advanced? "The LED turns 360 degrees and is so powerful and tiny."

Palazzari explains that technology is the fine balance between three assets: performance, meaning the quality of light; control, meaning its dimmability; and the size of the elements. Get that right and you have a perfect product. However, he is wary about stepping much beyond that; there is a limit to what people want from a light. "A 3,000hp car is cool, but if you don't have a road where you can drive 600km an hour,

then it's nonsense," he says. "Our job is to work for the real need of the people. And people want good lamps with a good combination of performance, control and size."

Anastassiades concurs. Accelerating lighting technology is a good thing but we should not become a victim of it. "The goal is to understand technology and tame it down to a human scale," he says, pointing out that his "String" lights can be turned off "like a candle" simply by touching the cable. "This tactile way of interacting with a product is important to remind us how things are. We need this in our life - not a voice-activated something, and saying 'do this' or 'do that.'"


Embracing the organic, old-fashioned nature of light is something that Bocci has always done. The Berlin-based design brand is known for creating blown-glass coloured clouds of light, all handmade in Vancouver.

At Euroluce, Bocci will show a new LED spotlighting system that, like Nemo's "Linescapes" and Artemide's "La Linea", offers an alternative to conventional track lighting. Each spotlight is housed inside a mirrored sphere connected with magnets that can be easily adjusted, further freeing up how we use light. Called "74", it is a chic, innovative version of the traditional spot - but essentially

it is still a traditional spot. "Regardless of candles, halogen lamps or LED lighting," says Bocci co-founder Omer Arbel, "the platform may change but the effect stays constant."

As the crowds converge on Milan this week, what's the next big frontier for lighting? "The future is getting rid of the cable," says Nemo's Palazzari. "Light is the only thing that doesn't work on WiFi! Now that the power and control of LED is mature, all the rest will just be development until then."

Back at Artemide HQ, de Bevilacqua is relentlessly enthusiastic about what lies ahead. She touches on the subject of apps; when people can govern the lights around them (Artemide's app can manage 500 appliances), it means fewer buttons, she says. This will have a knock-on effect for architecture, as spaces can be designed without pesky electrical plans.

But there is more. We are entering "the age of photonics", she says, an era when data such as messages, images and videos can be transmitted via beams of light. "In the near future, photonics will redefine the role and potential of light, opening new landscapes of perception and interaction," she exclaims in full "eureka!" mode. "Today," says de Bevilacqua, "we are only at the beginning of a great revolution." 



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Below Matka silk with chevron motif, from Como-based textile maker Dedar
Right Fabric from Rubelli, another manufacturer from northern Italy



HOME-GROWN HEROES

A spotlight on Italian talent, a new design museum, Leonardo celebrations... *Hannah Roberts* finds a strong local accent to this year's Design Week

Having breakfast in Milan's Brera neighbourhood last summer, stone specialist Gabriele Salvatori and architect Piero Lissoni admired the café's shabby marble coffee table and determined to reproduce it in a collection. "It was old and broken and romantic," recalls Salvatori.

But duplicating the timeworn table proved problematic. From Salvatori's base in Tuscany they looked to the nearby Carrara mountains, one of the largest sources of marble in the world, where Renaissance masters such as Michelangelo found the stone for sculptures including "David". They tried breaking newly extracted slabs of marble but this "looked fake", says Salvatori. To source weather-beaten, sun-baked stone, they sought out abandoned marble blocks from pits, some of them closed centuries ago. "We even bought the last few slabs left over from the construction of Notre Dame and from the Vatican," says Salvatori.

Renaissance-inspired and unreservedly artisanal, the "Rene" table, which will be exhibited at Salone, is emblematic of a

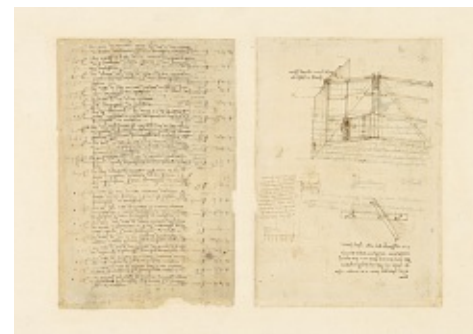
decidedly Italian thread running through this year's Design Week. S.Project, a new pavilion for Salone del Mobile, will be dominated by home-grown talent such as fabric brands Rubelli and Dedar, marble atelier Budri and metal specialists De Castelli. In February, Italy's minister of culture Alberto Bonisoli announced that millions in state funding would be given for a permanent design museum in the city, with the first exhibition coinciding with the start of the fair.

Since a populist government took power last summer, there have been concerns over nationalist rhetoric being attached to Italy's cultural institutions. Bonisoli recently suggested that the previous government's decision to appoint international directors to Italian museums may be reversed. With up to 500,000 people attending the week's events, the City of Milan and the ministry of culture have co-operated closely with organisers.

Salone director Claudio Luti insists the focus of the fair is international, but admits it is natural for politicians to try to capitalise on its power. ►

'The country is still not out of crisis and design must do its part to help'

Luca Fuso, Cassina



Top One of Leonardo da Vinci's studies of canals, from the 'Codex Atlanticus'

beneath Milan's Conca dell'Incoronata; inspired by Leonardo's work, it is one of a series of events marking the 500th anniversary of the artist's death

Above Sketch for Balich Worldwide's 'Aqua', a water-themed installation

Above Marble 'Rene' table by Piero Lissoni for Salviati; 'Cab' chairs, designed by Mario Bellini in 1977, now relaunched by Cassina
Below 'B'Tree' floor lamp from Florence-based designers Brass Brothers & Co; Missoni's 'Glass Fantasy' collection

◀ "Politicians do politics. They always try to use the best of the best for their own ends and Salone is the jewel in Italy's crown," he says.

But at a time when Italy's growth forecast has plunged to a five-year low, could a focus on the home-grown serve as part of a broader drive to promote domestic manufacturers and designs? For Luca Fuso, chief executive of furniture designer Cassina, an Italian-accented Design Week could be a boon for the industry. "The country is still not out of crisis, and design, the pride of Italy, must do its part to help. I hope that there is an Italian spirit this year." Cassina will play its part in this by relaunching one of its iconic pieces, the "Cab" chair by Mario Bellini, as a way of "paying homage to a pillar of our collection".

"It's right to have more of an Italian presence this year," agrees Mauro Lorenzi of Lorenzi Milano, an artisan knives and accessories producer, who says that Design Week, which started in 1961 as a vehicle to advance Italian design, has been too focused on foreign designers in recent years.

Giulia Molteni, of the celebrated Italian brand Molteni Group, believes that an increased emphasis on national identity is in the air everywhere, not just Italy. "Nation states are increasingly looking for their own identity and creative spirit. They are asking: 'What is our DNA?'"

One designer who remains a touchstone for ideas of Italian sovereignty is Leonardo da Vinci. He made headlines again recently when the

culture ministry threatened to renege on an undertaking to lend some of his paintings to France for an exhibition marking the 500th anniversary of his death. Design Week will also signal the beginning of a year-long series of events celebrating this anniversary. Giuseppe Sala, Milan's mayor, says that Leonardo, who worked in the city for some 20 years, is "still a reference point for today's designers".

His influence can be found across Salone. The events producer Marco Balich has created "Aqua", a water-themed installation in a room under the Conca dell'Incoronata, a canal lock that Leonardo oversaw the building of. For Balich, the anniversary is more a celebration of Leonardo's excellence than of Italy's. "But the Renaissance was a magical moment for history and art, and Italy contributed massively to that," he says. Meanwhile, "De-Signo", a cinematic installation by Davide Rampello and Alessandro Colombo, recreates the Renaissance workshops of designers including Leonardo.

In addition to official events, a number of design houses have also attempted to decode Leonardo. Molteni will mark 50 years of its office brand UniFor at the Pinacoteca di Brera, in the room where "The Last Supper" hangs; metalwork specialist Dieffebi has produced "Ottaedro", an office-storage system inspired by the artist's drawings. "Italy is not very patriotic but design has the advantage of uniting us," says marketing director Alessandra Fardin.

For Milan-based architect and designer Cristina Celestino, channelling Italy is something that's unconscious for the country's designers, whatever the contemporary climate. "It's part of our history and language. It's spontaneous," she says. **FT**



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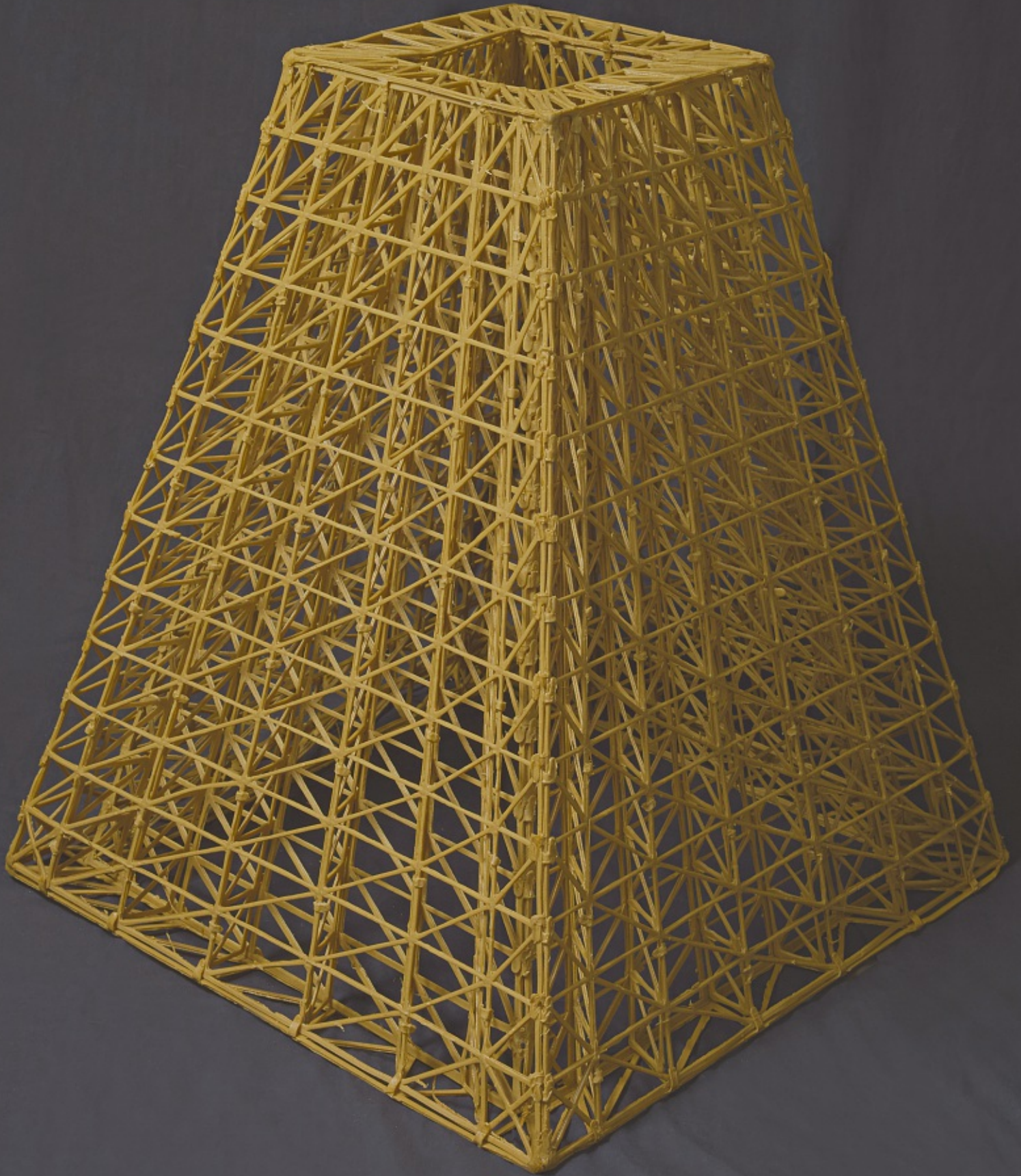
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THINK OUTSIDE

THE BLOCKS



Visitors to Milan will be welcomed by the latest eye-catching installation from Arthur Mamou-Mani. From his temple at Burning Man to the hypnotic Polibot, the French architect brings cutting-edge technology to traditional making. Interview by *Caroline Roux*. Photographs by *Nhu Xuan Hua*

venue. His Parisian parents were thrilled. “They thought it was the 1970s again,” he says. The short ceremony ended abruptly when another Burning Man attendee came to complain. “They said it was a sacred space and we had to leave,” laughs its designer.

Next week, another Mamou-Mani work will welcome visitors, this time in Milan: a dense trellis, 30m long, that will cross the courtyard of the 16th-century Palazzo Isimbardi. It will be constructed from 700 basket-like blocks, using software perfected in Mamou-Mani’s studio in east London, with the results 3D-printed in various locations. “We wanted it to offer a sense of protection while being as minimal as possible,” he explains.

The project, sponsored by the fashion company Cos, may well be the biggest ever created entirely in PLA (polylactic acid, the biodegradable material used in 3D printing). Its colour will vary from brown to grey to pink, thanks to the addition of Douglas fir to the usual PLA components of corn starch and glycerol. The material, along with the means of production, allows for a building with a carbon footprint that, Mamou-Mani says, is 68 per cent less than that created by conventional construction techniques.

Mamou-Mani represents a new kind of architect, one who wants to tie back together the processes of designing and making through the use of cutting-edge technology. He has worked briefly with both Jean Nouvel in Paris and Zaha Hadid in London, absorbing the first’s top-down approach (“He shows you his vision, and you go off and try and model something ►

Above Arthur Mamou-Mani
Facing page A 3D-printed
basket-like block of the kind
that will form Mamou-Mani’s
computer-designed
installation in Milan

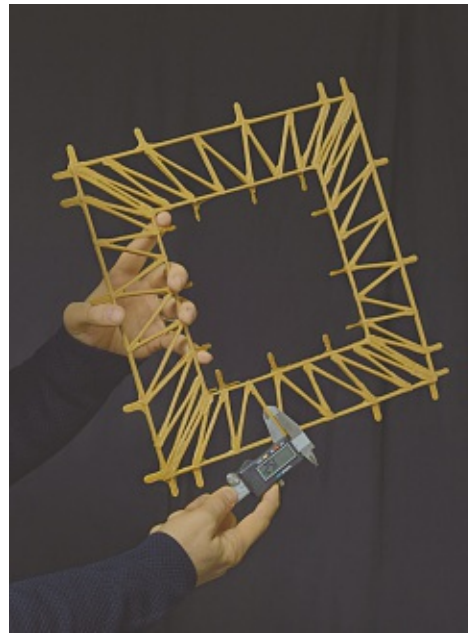
At the tail end of August 2018, Arthur Mamou-Mani put on an intergalactic spacesuit and set off across the desert in something that resembled a spacecraft. At his side, his partner Sandy was dressed in a space princess dress. The two were about to be married – Burning Man-style. Mamou-Mani, a 36-year-old French architect, had just finished building the Temple Galaxia, the central edifice of the festival that takes place each year in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert. His design had been personally selected by Larry Harvey, co-founder of Burning Man, shortly before he died in April last year. As per the rules of the event, it was to be burnt at the end of the festivities.

Designed on a computer, then hand-constructed from thousands of wooden battens over 22 days by a team of 140 volunteers and spiralling up 20m like a volcano, Mamou-Mani’s temple was also to be his wedding



'It could be true that the higher the skyscrapers you build, the nearer to collapse you are'

Arthur Mamou-Mani



Left 3D-printed pieces are assembled into modules
Below Aerial view of the Mamou-Mani-designed Temple Galaxia at last year's Burning Man festival in Nevada

◀ close to it in 3D") and the second's generation of actual design based on algorithmic thinking.

He grew up in the 19th arrondissement of Paris, where his French mother is the press attaché for Albin Michel, a century-old publisher whose authors include Philip K Dick and Irène Némirovsky. His Tunisian father is a computer scientist. The young Arthur was good at art, geometry and trigonometry, and he later developed a passion for the poetry of Baudelaire and Pessoa. "I think I'm interested in rigour being applied to the subjective," he says.



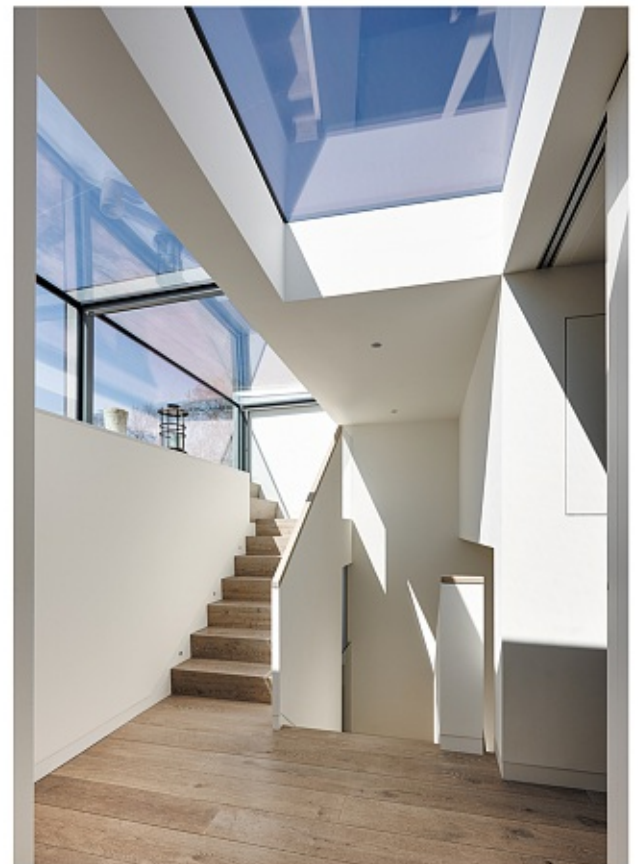
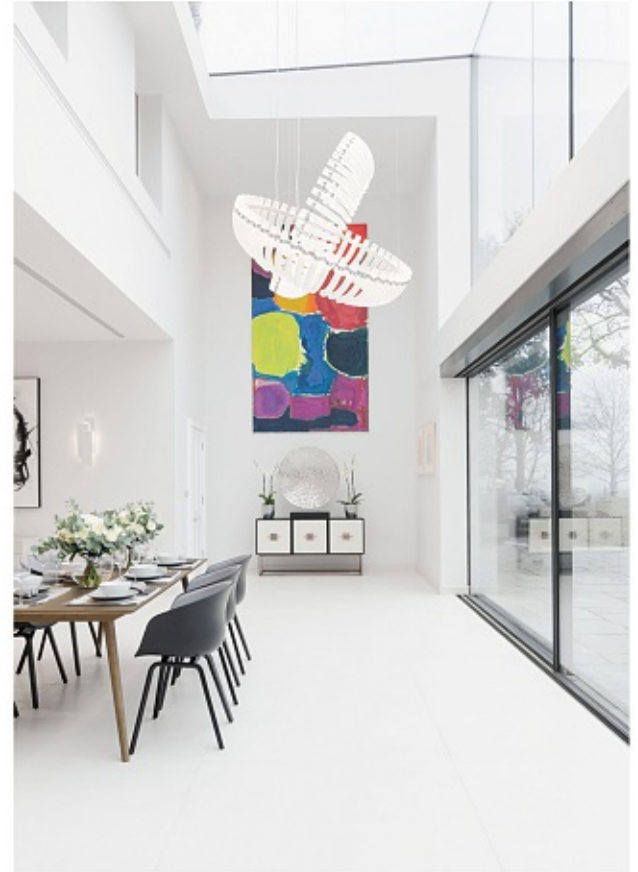
He studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a conventional school in spite of some adventurous teachers. It was only when he arrived at the Architectural Association in London in 2003 that he felt creativity could be the basis of both learning and architecture. "We'd do funny exercises that made you think outside the box," he says. "The French are very concerned about scholarship and the academy, and still worried about experiments. We lost our kings, so we have to hold on to everything else. Paris is about uniformity; London is about constant renewal."

At the AA, he benefited from the teaching of George L Legendre, an architect who in 2006 succeeded in designing Henderson Waves, a 274m-long pedestrian bridge in Singapore, with a single equation. "He absolutely loves mathematics but he couldn't accept the imperfections of life," says Mamou-Mani. "I realised that I like the natural processes and the imperfections of materiality."

Since 2014, Mamou-Mani has worked from a quadrangle of containers just off Hackney Road, which also houses a vegan café, a masseur and a handful of other East End-type creatives. His team of eight has completed a number of pop-up projects: a continual wave of wood that wound through the windows of Karen Millen's flagship fashion store on Regent Street in 2013; a temporary space in the Xintiandi Style store in Shanghai in 2014 that also offered 3D-printed dresses and *objets*.

This is how many young architects start out but, in Mamou-Mani's case, it also suits his way of thinking. "It's about impermanence, the circular nature of today's economy, the possibility of a reversible architecture," he says. "When you see the statistics on concrete and steel and their contribution to carbon emissions, it has to make you question even more why there are so many buildings that are left empty. It could be true that the higher the skyscrapers you build, the nearer to collapse you are." ▶

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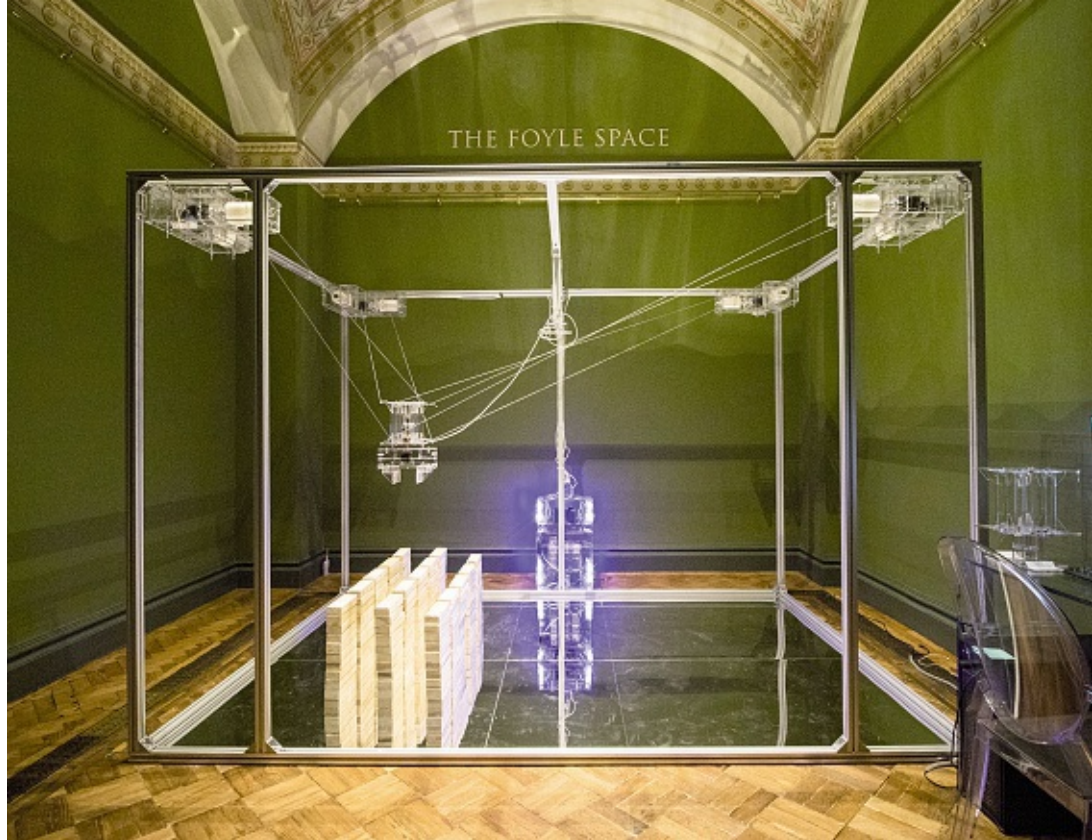
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‘A lot of people are looking at new technological possibilities but Arthur also has an aesthetic sensibility’

Owen Hopkins, Sir John Soane Museum

◀ He is far from the first architect to consider different ways of building. Designers including Richard Rogers and Norman Foster were seeking out new methods and materials as far back as the 1960s, introducing off-site automated production and trying to defy the omnipresence of building with brick. But they didn’t have a hand-built construction robot in their studio, one that can slowly but surely pick up single building blocks and put them in position, according to a determining software.

Mamou-Mani’s “Polibot” has been evolving since the practice won a competition in 2017, run by the engineers Arup. “They gave us one month and £30,000 to build our robot,” says Mamou-Mani. “It was a leap of faith.” Since then, the robot has been refined and another version was shown at the Sir John Soane Museum in Holborn late last year.

The idea to bring Mamou-Mani’s 21st-century arguments about architecture into the space that the neoclassical Soane created 200 years ago was an enlightened one, brought about by the museum’s curator, Owen Hopkins. Soane, too, was an innovator, as enchanted by technology as he was by craft. “A lot of people are looking at new technological possibilities,” says Hopkins, “but Arthur also has an aesthetic sensibility, which often isn’t there. They made the Polibot so beautifully, laser-cut from transparent acrylic.” During its time at the museum, visitors came across the robot quite unexpectedly and, on the occasions when I was there, stood transfixed by its painstaking process of picking and placing.

Back at his east London hub, Mamou-Mani is also trying to democratise the process of 3D printing. He has a separate company there, FabPub, which offers courses in Grasshopper, a programming language for computer-aided design, as well as the use of a 3D printer and a large-scale laser cutter for around £40 an hour. Designs can be printed out by Mamou-Mani’s experts for a little more. “It’s like a gym of machines,” says Mamou-Mani. “Or like the old days, when you’d take your own photos but have them developed somewhere on the high street. I am excited by the democratisation of design these machines can help to happen. I’d like to think that instead of going

to Ikea, you could design your own shelves and come here to have them cut.” So far, the take-up has been more professional than hobbyist, but in an area filled to the gills with designers, he can at least consider himself to be serving the neighbourhood.

Mamou-Mani’s Milan project will be the ninth of its kind for Cos. Last year, the American artist Phillip K Smith muddled the Palazzo’s courtyard with a series of mirrors. Before that, London duo Studio Swine created an extraordinary immersive installation in an old cinema, where scented bubbles blossomed from metal trees. Mamou-Mani’s Temple Galaxia had appeared on the fashion company’s mood board even before it started looking for this year’s designer. “We were really drawn to his process,” says Karin Gustafsson, Cos’s creative director. “We work as traditional tailors but use new technology to bridge the gap between designers and pattern cutters and fabricators, much like Arthur.”

The noise is loud during Salone week in Milan and, for the most part, only projects of this scale succeed in rising above it. For Mamou-Mani, it’s another step forward. He tells me that he’s devised a demountable skyscraper made of containers and other ways to turn an ugly and outdated construction industry on its head. “Give me five years and I’ll have something to show you,” he says. I’m quite sure he will. **FT**

Above the ‘Polibot’ robot on display at the Sir John Soane Museum in London
Above left last year’s Cos installation at the Palazzo Isimbardi in Milan, by the American artist Phillip K Smith

INVITATION TO VIEW

With so much to see at the Milan Salone, how do you choose? *Aimee Farrell* on the trend for tours that cut through the melee to offer an insider's view of designer homes and architectural jewels

This month's Salone del Mobile promises to be bigger and more global than ever, with close to 3,000 designers

and exhibitors taking over every corner of Milan. Once an industry-only affair, today this creative extravaganza - dubbed the design Olympics - is a key stop on the design trail for a growing army of visually literate travellers, for whom it's as much about fun as furniture.

"Salone was once a closed shop," says David Prior, the former travel editor and consultant who runs the members-only travel club Prior. "Nowadays, it's become really desirable as a travel destination in a broader sense. Anyone who's interested in design and craft wants to be there. There's barely a week beyond the Olympics when hotel-room rates shoot up so dramatically." But the sheer breadth and scale of the fair is at once a draw and a drawback. With so much to see in so little time, how do you decide where to go?

Increasingly, for the deep of pocket, the answer lies in the expertise and heavily loaded address books of travel companies such as Prior and Indagare, which create routes through the fair tailored to specific tastes or curiosities - one, for example, takes visitors to the house of the interior designer and architect Renzo Mongiardino (1916-98). These itineraries cut through the melee with insider access.

From his office in Manhattan's SoHo, the Australian-born Prior and his team are creating bespoke Salone experiences - part of a new design-focused travel programme that launches in Japan this autumn. This kind of carefully edited design destination travel, he says, comes in the wake of the more well-trodden art routes: "The art-studio visit became something a certain sophisticated traveller wanted, and art fairs brought a new

awareness of the concept of travelling for art beyond galleries - and now that's happening in the design world too."

For Prior, the driving force behind this kind of design experience is the desire to tap into the provenance of an object or a location. "It's about celebrating what's intrinsic to a place - not Identikit hotels with infinity-edged pools." Design is an important part of this. Going to the source of local craft and traditional techniques "speaks to a human need to use your hands to get out of your head".

It's an experiential model exemplified by the success of contemporary art biennials such as Desert X, whose second edition saw a roster of 18 contemporary artists create installations against the dramatic backdrop of California's Coachella Valley, requiring visitors to trek across the arid terrain for art's sake. Similarly dynamic in spirit is Nomad, the invitation-only design fair established by Giorgio Pace and Nicolas Bellavance-Lecompte in 2017. Deliberately intimate and itinerant, it has taken up temporary residence everywhere from La Vigie, the late Karl Lagerfeld's one-time Monaco residence, to a 16th-century mansion in St Moritz; its next stop is the Palazzo Soranzo Van Axel in Venice this September.

Putting design into a world, rather than a white box, encourages visitors to linger. Duncan Campbell is one half of Campbell Rey, the creative consultancy and interiors firm he runs with Charlotte Rey. "It's not just about seeing design, it's the whole process of going to a unique place and watching a talk or meeting a designer," he says.

Certainly at Milan's Salone, it's easy to see the appeal of such sumptuously scaled-down offerings. "How many things can people really see in one city at one time?" Campbell asks. ▶



Left Chesa Planta in St Moritz, home to an invitation-only Nomad design fair earlier this year

Facing page Martina Mondadori Sartogo's family home in Milan, one of the Renzo Mongiardino-designed interiors included on the tour she organises with members-only travel company Indagare





Clockwise from left
Martina Mondadori Sartogo's family home;
bathroom by Campbell Rey for Zara Home at the Villa Borsani, near Milan;
'Specter' by Sterling Ruby, at Desert X in California this year; Campbell Rey's 2017 Milan installation 'Un Momento'



◀ To capture the attention of audiences above the cacophony, events need to be innovative and experimental - or private. "It's not about being the biggest or the most over the top any more," says Campbell. "It's about offering the exceptional and the personal."

In Milan last year, Martina Mondadori Sartogo did just that. Sartogo, the founder and editor of the maximalist interiors

'These days, the most talked-about Salone events ironically tend to be the ones that are less about furniture'

Duncan Campbell

magazine *Cabana*, joined forces with members-only travel company Indagare to create an exhilaratingly aesthetic Salone tour. It included a private visit to the Mongiardino-decorated Villa Necchi Campiglio led by the film director (and interiors aficionado) Luca Guadagnino, who made *I Am Love* (2009) there, and a dinner at the host's Mongiardino-designed family home. So successful was the trip that Sartogo will reprise it this October.

"The principal design fairs have always been about experiencing a city in a different way," says Sartogo, who sees the movement mirrored in the fashion industry,

where luxury brands fly editors to increasingly far-flung destinations to show their collections. "There's nothing like the visual inspiration you get when you're travelling," she says. "So when you're given the chance to explore the hidden parts of a place, it's not just an enriching experience on a personal level but one that will feed into your wider work."

When Indagare returns to Salone this year, guests will experience dinner at the home of the Missoni fashion family, a look around the private apartment of the decorator Gabriella Crespi (1922-2017) and a private audience with Dimore,

the maverick Milan-based design house founded by Britt Moran and business partner Emiliano Salci. Moran and Salci first showed at the fair in 2005, turning their apartment - now Dimore Gallery - into a showroom for their opulent, 1970s-flecked vision.

Perhaps more than most, Dimore has come to epitomise the appetite for personalised, immersive design experiences. "Everything is so spread out at Salone," explains Moran in his North Carolinian tones. "When we started showing, we wanted to make sure not only that we stand out but that if people choose us out of everyone else that it's really worth the trip."

The duo's events are so popular that hour-long waiting times are now the norm (this year, they're presenting their fabric and furniture collections in a former cinema on Via Pietro Mascagni). They cite their background in hospitality as key to Dimore's success: "We're used to creating experiences," says Moran, whose clients include hoteliers Thierry Costes and Ian Schrager.

For Campbell, "These days, the most talked-about Salone events ironically tend to be the ones that are less about furniture." He cites London-based creative duo Studio Swine's 2017 installation, made in collaboration with fashion brand Cos, which saw visitors queuing round the block to view their bubble-emitting sculptural tree.

Arianna Lelli Mami and Chiara Di Pinto of Milanese design agency Studiopepe agree: "Things have changed. It's not enough to simply present your designs," says Di Pinto. "Importantly, you have to make a connection between the ideas behind the furniture and turn that into a connected experience."

This year, Studiopepe takes over a former gold factory with "Les Arcanistes", where visitors can explore their materials first-hand, have a tarot reading, drink water from the "fountain of knowledge" and gaze at a series of storytelling *Wunderkammer*.

"It's important that people take time to savour it," says Di Pinto of the invitation-only approach. "It doesn't matter how many places you go if you don't take the time to really see anything." 

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