

26 JUNE 2022

The Observer Magazine

‘I feel joy and pride’

**Actor and activist
Tracee Ellis Ross on late
success, self-acceptance
and growing up with
her superstar mother,
Diana Ross**



**This isn't going
to hurt: the radical
GP changing lives
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for nature lovers
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Obsession is my secret ingredient

26 JUNE 2022

The Observer Magazine



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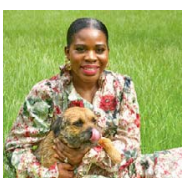
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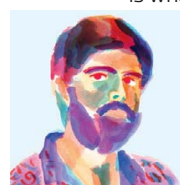
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Contributors

Funmi Fetto is the *Observer*’s beauty editor, a contributing editor at *British Vogue*, the author of *Palette, the Beauty Bible for Women of Colour* and the founder and host of the On Reflection beauty podcast. This week, she interviews our cover star Tracee Ellis Ross (p8).



Having started out editing lurid real-life accounts in women’s weeklies, **Chris Broughton** moved into music magazines, writing about museums and amusement parks before returning to what he does best: badgering people for their striking stories. He has found these in plentiful supply since settling in Hastings. Read his interviews with crafters on p18.



Guillem Casasús worked in design studios, ad agencies and co-founded his own studio. But none of these paths fulfilled him – until he landed in the world of conceptual illustration. This is what he calls a space where current, cultural and global issues, among others, are discussed, as you can see in his illustration for our piece about a pioneering doctor’s practice (p14).



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Eva Wiseman

Does life feel too predictable? Why not let some wildness in



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OBSERVER



SUDDENLY, AFTER 99 LOST YEARS

From the archive

A look back at the Observer Magazine's past

The *Observer Magazine* of 25 June 1967 celebrated Canada's official 100th birthday, though its claim that it had 'suddenly got a new international glamour' – referring to the 1967 World Fair and the Queen's impending visit – was a stretch ('Suddenly, after 99 lost years').

Canada had been born of the British North America Act, 1867, 'And that was passed in an almost empty House of Commons, which then filled up for a lively debate on a dog tax bill.'

The 'educational whizz-kid' was the new Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. 'The university buildings, soaring patterns of glass and concrete, are among the most exciting in Canada,' wrote Marcelle Bernstein. 'But many new towns still have a haphazard impermanent air as if they might vanish overnight, together with the low buildings, the dust and the endless neon fringes of motels.'

This sense of containment and

curtailment was exemplified by Dennis, 20, on the cover, who finished his education in Grade 9 because 'we had no teachers for the higher grades in the school'.

'The fishing people live in insulated communities and, until the building of the vast Trans-Canada Highway, intermarry almost exclusively within them,' wrote Bernstein. 'Now towns are more accessible, but winters are so cold they avoid travelling.'

Ronald Bryden wrote about growing up there. Canadian teenagers, he recalled, talked a lot about sex. 'It was nearly all talk, for Canadian sex, it appeared, was largely a summer activity. In winter you built yourself up, with milk, chocolate bars and sport.'

'Drink was Toronto's problem: it had none,' he complained. 'Like most Canadian provinces, Ontario restricted the sale of alcohol to cheerless government stores where you queue for a strict monthly ration wrapped in brown paper.' **Chris Hall**

The first time I saw Cookie Mueller she was having sex with a chicken. In *Walking Through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black*, a newly reissued collection of her stories, she recalls the day her mother read the script that contained this chicken scene: she was midway through shooting the film *Pink Flamingos* by John Waters and he was due by to pick her up any minute. "ART?!?!?" her mother screamed, trying to stop her leaving the house. "ART?!?! THIS ISN'T ART!!" Waters later described her as "a writer, a mother, an outlaw, an actress, a fashion designer, a go-go dancer, a witch-doctor, an art-hag and above all a goddess." The second time I saw her was in Nan Goldin's photograph taken at her funeral. She lies in a pleated silk-lined casket surrounded by flowers, in bangles and eyeliner, and she looks impossibly glamorous and impossibly alive.

I'm reading her stories now for the third time; the first time, some years ago, ignited a gentle obsession. The second upset me. In her *Last Letter*, she wrote that those dying of Aids, as she would later that year, 1989, were, "people who hated and scorned pettiness, intolerance, bigotry, mediocrity, ugliness and spiritual myopia; the blindness that makes life hollow and insipid was unacceptable. They tried to make us see." Now, reading the expanded reissue in the shadow of the death of Mueller's fellow 20th-century American essayist Joan Didion, I'm excited. Like Didion, Mueller wrote vividly about chaos and culture, but, unlike Didion, Mueller leapt into the mess of it as if a swimming pool painted black.

Maybe it's the effect of all these years at home in a pandemic, all this time looking out of the window on to streets empty but for an Ocado van, all this time alone, maybe it's personal – the yearnings of a woman entering middle age wearing Uggs in the suburbs – but today the idea of adventure, of an adventurous life, seems particularly important and seductive.

Even before lockdown the kind of world Mueller describes, where in a single day she is nearly recruited by the Manson family, takes a shit-ton of drugs, goes to a gig at San Quentin prison and, on a mountaintop with a Satanist, accidentally summons the son of Beelzebub, was, let's be honest, out of reach. Not so much the content – mountains remain, as do drugs – but the element of chance. The wide openness of a day, the possibilities, the going out and talking to strangers, the extraordinary things that can happen when a person's mind (as Mueller wrote of her own in one of her advice columns) is, "so open that at times I can hear the wind whistling through it".

In her introduction to the book, writer Olivia Laing marvels at how "Cookie's world of happenstance and chance encounter has been obliterated by the internet... I can't think of anyone now who doesn't use Google as a prophylactic against the unexpected, a charm against getting lost that comes at a higher price than might have been predicted." Less happens in our worlds than hers – less bad and less good. Fewer overdoses perhaps, less violence, but also less art and less moving

to a pig farm after falling in love with the farmer that night at a party. Less hope.

Through the 1970s, Mueller took her baby on her adventures – though they weren't necessarily adventures to her, they were just a way of moving through life – to beaches, Berlin, someone's house in the countryside that she accidentally burned down. I held my breath during the motherly parts, which on this reading, with two children under my tight belt, felt breathtakingly transgressive. It made me realise I have time only for two kinds of writing on parenting: the rageful reporting on its horrors and cons, and this, stories where a woman's untameable identity is strong enough that it doesn't get eclipsed by motherhood, in fact is enhanced by it, her love for her son appearing to propel her further and faster through the world.

It's a good time to read about freedom. Part of me itches to live the way Mueller did, colliding with expectations of how a woman should be, always hitching rides, high, to the next good place. But more of me is just grateful that she documented it for us, us mothers and others who have got caught in safety nets and chosen paths of least resistance, recording her too-fast life with its dangers and hilarity and the night she was accidentally locked in a Chinese restaurant. "Why does everybody think I'm so wild?" she wrote, of the time the couple whose house she cleaned invited her to go to bed with them. "I'm not wild. I happen to stumble on to wildness. It gets in my path." It's not just the stories that are exciting, it's the revelation they contain – that we might allow such wildness to stumble on to our own paths, even just for an afternoon. I love her for reminding me, with gentle pressure between the lines, to go out tonight, to see what happens, to live a little harder. ■

One more thing...

So **Kim Kardashian** appears to have damaged Marilyn Monroe's gown when she wore it to the Met Gala, and people... really seem to care? I'd argue that Kim's edits add to the story of a dress, made for wearing. And also that she should be let into the British Museum after hours to mess around with some more precious artefacts, for fun.

I'm excited to read **Vicky Spratt's** book *Tenants*, about the way unsafe and insecure housing lies at the root of Britain's public health crisis. Spratt has been reporting on housing for a decade, and with this, her first book, she's worked to show readers the people behind the shocking figures.

When **Lizzo** received criticism for using an offensive word on her new song, she listened, admitted she'd screwed up, and changed the lyrics. 'As a fat black woman in America, I have had many hurtful words used against me so I understand the power words can have.' That's how it's done.



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This much I know

Frankie Dettori, jockey, 51



Interview **NICK McGRATH**
Photograph **TOM JENKINS**

I've been very lucky with my genes. My mum worked in a circus. She was a contortionist and a trapeze artist, so I got my flexibility from her. The love for the horses I got from my old man.

When I started as a young boy, I was happy to be a middle-of-the-road jockey. Then I started winning and I thought, "Actually, I'm quite good at this." The more I won, the more I wanted to win.

I have to train twice, three, 10 times harder now than I did before. I'm 51 and I'm competing with people in their 20s and 30s. If I said I'm fitter now than I was when I was 30, I'd be lying.

Riding seven winners in three and a half hours on 28 September 1996

changed my life. From about race four I wasn't really there – I was just in an adrenaline trance. Even now I get people coming up to me who bet on me to win all seven races. "Thank you Frankie," they say, "you paid off my mortgage. You changed my life." It's amazing.

Hearing the crowd shout my name when I'm coming down the home straight is what I imagine it feels like for Ronaldo when he scores a goal at Old Trafford. I appreciate it's a very selfish buzz, but God I love it.

Testing positive for cocaine in 2012 was a very difficult time. I had to take my children out of school for a bit and it took me a while to get back into things. I did feel like it was blown out of all proportion, like I was some sort of serial killer. At the end of the day, I failed a drug test, I didn't kill anyone.

It took me three years to get over surviving a plane crash in June 2000. It was a major trauma – everybody told me I was a different person after the experience. I didn't have any therapy afterwards; maybe I should have done. Eventually my family helped me pull through. I've been lucky twice. Once surviving the plane crash, once when my friend Ray pulled me from the wreckage. I grab life by the balls every single day.

Hearing the crowd shout my name on the home straight is a very selfish buzz, but God I love it

I'm definitely not mellowing with age. I'm still all or nothing. What does my wife make of that? She takes no notice. She's used to me now.

I've lived in Britain for 37 years, but I still feel Italian. I don't quite have the stiff upper lip that the English do. I'm quite flamboyant – I approach life with a smile on my face.

I don't know when I'm going to stop. I'm still enjoying it. I'm still getting the winning rides. There's no reason to quit. Lester Piggott was still riding when he was 58 – that's a good benchmark – but to me age is just a number. It was a big shock turning 50, but since turning 51, I feel like the clock's going the other way. ■

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**‘I’m
excited
about
getting
older’**

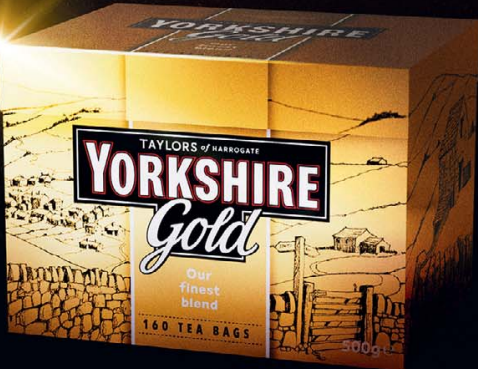
Whether it’s sharing a platform



with Oprah or sending herself up on Instagram, actor and activist Tracee Ellis Ross keeps it real



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he's not surviving too well. I've just had to have a conversation with her and told her, 'I'm soooo sorry.'" Tracee Ellis Ross is sitting across from me, via a screen, lamenting the dire state of her shrub. "I talk to my plants all the time," she chuckles. This warm, full-throated sound, something of a trademark, will pepper much of our conversation. Ellis Ross's hair is slicked into a dancer's bun, her signature bright lips, which pop against the white of her blouse and deep green walls, mimic the hue of the fuchsia peonies blooming on her side table. "Flowers are magical to me," she says. "I always have to have them in the house." She has just returned home to sunny LA after a stint in Vancouver, shooting an indie film.

Most people became familiar with Ellis Ross as Dr Rainbow "Bow" Johnson, the matriarch in *Black-ish*, the multi-award-winning sitcom about an upper-class Black family trying to retain their cultural identity while navigating white spaces. Famed for deftly weaving laughter between nuanced conversations around everything from the use of the N-word to police brutality against Black people in America, *Black-ish* is widely celebrated as a cultural touchstone. It has featured cameos from Michelle Obama and Zendaya, and ended its run in April. While Ellis Ross admits to shedding tears "a lot", she's not solemn about *Black-ish* wrapping. Rather, she says, "I feel so much joy and pride. You know, it's the second eight-year-long show that I've been a part of and to be able to say a proper good-bye and let something end with the value and the reverence that it deserves felt really special".

This new chapter of her career coincides with a landmark birthday: Ellis Ross turns 50 in October. ("My dream would be to buy a piece of art that will be a marker of this point in my life. And I would like a Faith Ringgold... I mean I don't even know if I can afford that.") I ask her how she feels about getting older in an industry obsessed with youth. "Oh my goodness, yes they are *obsessed*," she agrees. "And it is especially aimed at women. But you know, I've always been excited about getting older. I love getting wiser and having more experience. I mean, don't get me wrong, I have vulnerabilities and discomforts around my age, but trying to pretend or hide the things that I feel insecure or uncomfortable about doesn't make them any less comfortable, you know?" "Also," she says, "it's actually a real honour to get older. Not everybody has that honour, with everything going on in this country, with all of the violence and the children that don't get to live that long..."

We are speaking shortly after the horrific school shooting at Uvalde in Texas, where a teen gunman killed 19 children and two teachers. "I don't have any words. I haven't stopped crying this week. It's unbearable, utterly unbearable and it feels infuriating," she says. The recent incident has meant that the debate around gun ownership is, once again, at the heart of both public and private discourse in the US. Ellis Ross herself shared a post on her social media honouring each victim of the shooting, providing details on how to support the families, while also encouraging everyone to join the fight to end gun violence.

Openly addressing hot-button issues – whether on social justice, politics or feminism – is not something Ellis Ross shies away from. In 2020, she hosted the second day of the Democratic National Convention where she called for the US "to be driven by people who understand that our democracy is based on the value of each and every one of us being treated with dignity and respect," a thinly disguised swipe at Trump. In 2017, when she won the Best Actress Golden Globe for *Black-ish*, she was the first Black woman to win that category in 33 years (the last was Debbie Allen for *Fame*). Her acceptance speech famously addressed the elephant in the room. "This is for all the women, women of colour, and colourful people whose stories, ideas, thoughts are not always considered worthy and valid and important."



Today, five years on, Ellis Ross pauses for a very long time, mulling over how much progress has been made in an industry still routinely criticised for being "oh so white". Finally, she says, matter-of-factly, "Well, it's a tough one. I mean, I was very honoured and it was wonderful to win, but I don't know if that's something we need to use as the example. It was over 30 years since a Black woman had even been nominated in that category. *Nom-ina-ted*," she says, drawing out her words for emphasis. "I heard a friend recently say, 'It's not enough to celebrate the first.' It's embarrassing, you know? Because it's not for a lack of talent existing, it's not for lack of stories. It's simply an industry that is still not telling our stories in a way that matches the reality of our humanity. I don't... I don't know," she says, shaking her head. "I think it's changing, but we're still not at a place of equity and equality of storytelling. When I won the Golden Globe my speech was very specific. I always choose to speak about the narrative that is not out there. Everywhere I look, Black women are the leads in their lives. So why is there a gap here? There are many that are also so worthy of this [success]. So let's talk about that and not that I am some special thing that has evolved out of nowhere."

Telling her story: (clockwise from top) with her mother, Diana Ross; speaking to Oprah about being free and single; in *Black-ish*. Below: with her Golden Globe

Though her success – and public recognition – has come relatively later in life, Ellis Ross has always existed in the limelight. Her mother is the legendary singer Diana Ross, her father, the influential music executive Robert Ellis Silberstein. Dalton, the prestigious Manhattan school she attended, is where Gloria Vanderbilt, Ralph Lauren and Robert Redford sent their children. ("I went to school with people whose parents are the fabric of American culture," she has said previously.) Later on, while studying fashion at Brown University, another elite New York institution, she auditioned for a role in Spike Lee's seminal



Advocating for yourself as a Black woman is 'a form of resistance'

film, *Malcolm X*. She didn't get the role. It did, however, leave her with a taste for performance. So she switched her BA to theatre arts and consequently, while working on fashion magazines *Mirabelle* and *New York*, she began auditioning. It was an experience she recalls as "disappointing and painful. I kept getting rejected." A few bit parts eventually led to a role in 2000, playing Joan Clayton in *Girlfriends* – a sitcom following the relationships and careers of four Black women in LA. It was a hit with Black audiences in America, but flew under the mainstream radar. "When *Girlfriends* ended (in 2008)," she previously told the *Atlantic*, "I thought the pearly gates of Hollywood were going to open. They did not." It took six years before she landed the role of Bow in *Black-ish*.

Ellis Ross has always said that advocating for yourself as a woman, "takes a lot of courage" and that, as a Black woman, it is "a form of resistance". One can't help but think of this personal advocacy in light of the question she is asked in every single interview she gives: why is she still unmarried and childless? It is a societal expectation she addressed at *Glamour's* 2017 Women of the Year Summit. Her speech went viral. Years later, in an interview with Oprah Winfrey, a Black woman whose childfree, unmarried status has also long invited public scrutiny, Ellis Ross said, "I was taught, like many of us [women], to dream of my wedding and not of my life. So I spent many years dreaming of my wedding and waiting to be 'chosen'. And in the world we live in it is easy for me to feel undermined in all my accomplishments, because I'm not married or a mother. But here's the thing, I'm the chooser. I can choose to be married if I want to but, in the meantime, I am choicefully, happily, gloriously single." She doesn't mind constantly being asked about it because, she says, "It's an opportunity to change the narrative and expand the story of what we can be as women."

For all her work as an activist – she's also a co-founder of the Times Up movement that fights discrimination, sexual harassment and the assault of women in Hollywood – anyone who follows Ellis Ross on Instagram will be privy to her multifaceted personality. She is lauded for her style: in 1991, she walked the Paris runway with her ▶



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► mother for Thierry Mugler's "Butterfly" show; she is an ex-fashion editor; her best friend is Samira Nasr, editor-in-chief of US *Harper's Bazaar*... But she's also become something of an unofficial master of high jinks and tomfoolery and her Instagram posts keep her 11m followers in stitches. There's a recurring appearance from her alter ego "Madame Hiver" – the life coach who "sometimes drinks too much" or throwbacks like the one where Ellis Ross, adorned in a printed catsuit, delivers an impressive lip-synching performance to Nicki Minaj's tongue-twisting Super Bass (it makes very funny and addictive watching). And then there's the plethora of videos where she appears on screen, up close sans polish and makeup.

In a world – and a social-media platform – where a flawlessly curated reality is de rigueur, this level of transparency is unusual. "I have struggled with perfectionism," she admits, "and now I shun it. I want to be in a relationship with myself as I am. I don't want to be fighting with an image that I put out that I can't keep up with. I've posted pictures of me in my pyjamas and my hair everywhere, my glasses... I just feel like it's part of the whole picture. I did not 'wake up like this,'" she says, "That whole Beyoncé song... it was very, very, uh, challenging for me," she says, bursting into laughter.

That "hair everywhere" references Ellis Ross's bounty of coils, which takes centre stage in so many of her posts. The actor is the founder of PATTERN, a bestselling US hair care range that targets curly, coily and tight hair textures and will launch in the UK this month. As she delves into the genesis of the brand, Ellis Ross's speech is excitable and expedited. "As a child, I just had wild and free Tracee hair, which I was fine with. But then when you hit high school you start interacting with the patriarchy," she says. "And then there was also the media's idea of

what 'beautiful' is... all these commercials of 'bouncing and behaving' hair, 'easy, breezy beautiful' hair... I was seeing all these versions of what is considered beautiful everywhere and thought, 'How do I get my hair to do that?' This, she says, led to experimentation: "I even put beer in my hair." And she recalls spending a lot of money trying to find the right products. "At one point, when I came home from high school, my mom opened up my bedroom door and was like, 'Listen here, it's enough with the hair products! I don't know what's going on. There's shampoo and conditioner in the shower. There is a brush in there. That's what you got. If you want anything more than that, you have to get yourself a good job or, one day, maybe you'll get yourself a great husband. I don't know what to tell you, but *enough!*'" She laughs. "And so I got myself a great job and I got myself a hair company." Of course the story is all the more amusing because of who Ross's mother is. "I created the company because the more I looked around, I realised I was not the only one. There was a vast community of people who were being underserved".

Ellis Ross makes clear that being a well-known actor, with a famous mother, didn't pave a smooth path. It took 10 years to get PATTERN to market. "There were so many different kinds of 'nos,'" she says. "There is a major blind spot in the industry, because there's no data to support the power of this demographic and this consumer. It is

a blind spot of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, all of those things. There seems to be a misconception that Black hair care is a niche market – it's not. The industry did not understand the importance of the power and the money on the table with this vast community of people."

Ellis Ross is in a good place right now. She is launching PATTERN in the UK, while simultaneously working on *Jodie*, a spinoff inspired by the 90s animated series, *Daria* – she is the voice of the main character as well as an executive producer. There is *Hair Tales*, a six-part series exploring Black women through hair, which she is producing with Michaela Angela Davis and Oprah Winfrey. And a podcast which, she says, "tells the stories of people who make up the promise of America". Somewhere in between her work schedule she plans to travel to Europe – she speaks fluent French. She spent part of her high school years in France and Switzerland. Her 50th birthday celebrations in October are still up in the air, yet the date draws ever

nearer – "I keep thinking about it and I can't figure out what I want to do." But for now, she says, smiling widely, leaning forward, "I'm in the process of dreaming new dreams." ■

PATTERN Beauty by Tracee Ellis Ross is available instore at Boots and online at boots.com and patternbeauty.com from 29 June

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A better way to get better?

A pioneering surgery in Brighton is pushing the boundaries of what patients can expect when they visit their GP, from homeopathy to dance classes and art to foraging. Dr Laura Marshall-Andrews tells Eva Wiseman why her radical, all-encompassing approach helps both people – and the NHS

Working as a GP in 2022 brings Dr Laura Marshall-Andrews deep joy and pride, but it also scares the living hell out of her. She greets me in the waiting room of her Brighton practice, a tall building on a shopping parade close to the beach, and we climb up to a consulting room, where through an open window come sounds of drunk men and seagulls. Though I'm sitting in the patient's chair, today it's the doctor who will tell me what's wrong.

It is a difficult time to be a GP. The *British Medical Journal* reports that police see an average of three violent incidents at surgeries every day. Not long ago, at an appointment, a patient tried to strangle Marshall-Andrews. Last year, Sajid Javid joined a *Daily Mail* campaign demanding that GPs restore pre-Covid working practices, promising to

"name and shame" practices that offer too many video appointments. Increasing numbers of doctors are quitting, citing stress. In 2019, Boris Johnson promised to increase the number of GPs in England, but in fact it has fallen. The doctors remaining are struggling, which means Marshall-Andrews's book, *What Seems to be the Problem?*, a memoir about her pioneering approach to frontline medical care, feels especially vital, and oddly hopeful.

"What scares me," says Marshall-Andrews, "is that at the moment the system feels out of control. What's happened is a fragmentation of care." As areas of the NHS have been segmented off, different organisations are running different services, "and so it's created this culture of everyone saying, 'This doesn't fit my box.' The management of referrals used to be run by clinicians, who would understand if you said, 'I'm not quite sure what's the

matter with this patient, but I've got a bad feeling.'" But clinicians were replaced with administrators, which has resulted, she explains, in patients regularly being bounced from service to service, becoming increasingly frustrated, and often, increasingly ill. "You get these islands of care. But there are quite a lot of patients who seem to sort of bob around in the sea, between these islands of care. So they keep... floating back."

These floating patients were one of the things that started to shift her ideas about medicine and care. It was the early 2000s when Marshall-Andrews (then in her 30s, with three small children) started to notice people responding unexpectedly to treatments, undermining "the gods of mass trial data and clinical evidence" that she'd worshipped at medical school in Southampton. "People, I realised, are not textbooks. They are far more complicated than that, >



Illustration GUILLEM CASASÚS

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► and far more interesting.” After a worrying blood test at the surgery, a patient called Julie received the prognosis that she had only months to live. She returned with a very clear idea of how she wanted to die. Declining medication in favour of acupuncture and homeopathy, Julie changed the way Marshall-Andrews looked at her role as a doctor. “We sort of went on a journey together. And it changed me. It was difficult to negotiate through a system that was very restrictive, but trying to bend it really made me realise that we could do things better.” She helped Julie with palliative support on a final holiday to Wales and, visiting her in the hospice in her last days, started to feel a pull towards a different way of practising medicine.

And so, here we are. The first thing Marshall-Andrews did when taking over these premises, a surgery based between four homeless hostels that house many patients suffering from addictions, was remove the safety screens around the reception desk. It was a statement of intent. Today, the waiting room at the Brighton Health and Wellbeing Centre is pasted with self-portraits in pastels, work from the patients’ art group. This is where the singing group practises, too. The photography group regularly takes a bus out to Seven Sisters cliff and the Downs to talk and walk and take photos of nature. There are dance classes and creative writing. “There was a big study,” Marshall-Andrews tells me, as we walk through the surgery, “that showed every £1 spent on arts in health saves the NHS £11.” It’s not just art – there’s a growing body of evidence that “social prescribing” (ranging from support for people with housing issues to tackling loneliness through local walking groups) reduces pressure on the NHS.

An evidence summary published by the University of Westminster suggests that where someone has support through social prescribing, their GP consultations reduce by an average of 28% and A&E attendances by 24%. Last year in Brighton, people engaging in three or more group sessions at Marshall-Andrews’s practice saw a 41% reduction in their need for GP appointments. Down the road the gardening group takes foraging workshops, and there’s coursework with horses. This is not your average GP surgery. Upstairs are therapy rooms for acupuncture and massage. When I put my head round the door a therapist is setting up for a reflexology session where the patient shakes – “neurogenic tremoring” – to release trauma. Everything smells of tea and flowers.

This was what Marshall-Andrews dreamed of when she decided, soon after Julie’s death, to set up her own “integrated” practice, with space for therapists as well as doctors, offering meditation alongside medication and (through a charity she set up) access to complementary therapies for anybody who wanted them. “We’re trying to enable people to have the tools to improve their lives, which will make them healthier. And there’s so much evidence now that the way you live, not just in terms of your diet and your exercise, but loneliness and social connection, changes your physiology. Psychoneuroimmunology [looking at the interactions between the central nervous system and the immune system] is coming to the forefront, particularly since Covid.” The final chapters of her book document life as a doctor in lockdown, wrestling with PPE in the wind, arguing for ventilators and seeing the crumbling mental health of patients who her team has worked hard for years to stabilise.

One of those patients was Eric, who had freed himself of opiate addiction using acupuncture and regular visits to a table tennis club. But alone in lockdown he slipped, got into crystal meth, arriving at the surgery in a violent “state of total emergency”. Seeing a psychiatrist at



that point was unlikely. Marshall-Andrews, in the calmest voice she could find, suggested he talk to their homeopath.

Whenever she mentions homeopathy, I stutter a little, so we stop, and I ask, what are the ethics of a GP recommending something that the chief executive of the NHS expressed “serious concerns” about? Marshall-Andrews sighs politely. “I’ve seen loads of patients do better with homeopathy than they have with my medicine. It makes no sense, the way I was trained. And I can’t explain it other than it being a placebo effect.” The cultural meaning of a treatment impacts its results – patients get better, not because of the “remedy” necessarily, but because of a placebo effect and a compassionate clinician. “A lot of it is in your intention – the way the person delivers it is really important. That’s what alternative practitioners do way better than us. They create a caring environment, they listen.” The homeopathist here used to be a psychiatrist, “and a lot of the people who she sees are patients with personality disorders, or people who had a very refractory illness, where we’ve tried treating them and they’re not getting any better. I sometimes tell a patient,

“Try that, it might help.” She smiles carefully.

As the lockdowns continued, it was their homeopath who Eric thanked for getting him off meth. “She gives me tablets,” he told Marshall-Andrews, “but I think it’s talking to her that really helps.” Good care, she believes, requires a team working together, “integrating different systems”, treating Eric “as a whole person” rather than a series of boxes to tick. “The cultural shift that we need to see is that health is made in communities,” she says.

“And if you look after your community and keep them happy and healthy and creative, then you’re not going to need loads of expensive hospital treatments.” People know about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet, “but they can’t do it. Because a lot of the time, they don’t have the capacity to because it costs money, or they’re working really hard, or they just don’t value themselves. They may have had trauma in their past – in fact, we’ve looked at difficult-to-control diabetics and most of them have quite high ACE scores.” That stands for Adverse Childhood Events, a tally of different types of

abuse and neglect. “Psychology, lifestyle, connection and these kind of groups should really be embedded in the first stage of their treatment.” So why is Marshall-Andrews’s approach

so rare? “It’s easy prescribing to someone, and it doesn’t take very long. And when you’ve got 90 patients to see in a day, it’s hard to have that conversation.” Yet she persists.

We walk out into the warm afternoon and find a bench in a community garden. She’s wearing blue scrubs and bright nails, and the people we pass nod to her with a respectful reverence. I want to talk about wellness, a concept (and industry) Marshall-Andrews’s work aligns with closely, but one which often requires interrogation. “Yes,” she nods. “It can be incredibly helpful. But what can be difficult and confusing for patients is when there’s a gap between that and doctors with western medicine, so, an acupuncturist who says, ‘You mustn’t take that medication,’ or ‘Vaccines are bad,’ or doctors who go, ‘Anything else is a waste of time.’ But if you’re working together, it can be great.”

Yes, in a neutral and apolitical world her approach might already have rolled out across the UK, but we live in this world, tilted and divided, with attitudes and treatments often seemingly welded together. She thinks for a second. “The brilliant thing about a lot of alternative practices is they’re not looking for a diagnosis. They’re looking to treat the whole person. We doctors can get really stuck on diagnoses, particularly mental health diagnoses that change all the time, and there’s very little consensus on them anyway. But actually, often it doesn’t really make any difference. Sometimes when you’ve got someone who is distressed, you can help them without coming down on a diagnosis. I think we’ve got a lot to learn from alternative practitioners.” She gives the impression this is an argument she’s had to make many times.

In trying to fashion a new way to care, Marshall-Andrews has fought many battles, including with a Clinical Commissioning Group (who brought a case against her for, among other things, her approach to prescribing unlicensed medication) and on behalf of patients, many of whom appear in her book, sucking fentanyl lollipops, chattering through cancer, living with pain, dying in love. What’s the most controversial aspect of her work today? “We’ve had a lot of negative scrutiny from authorities recently – NHS England, the CCG and the GMC [General Medical Council], it seems because someone in the regulating bodies has a problem with our work [prescribing hormones] with transgender people. We’ve had two NHS England investigations, both of which have ended up with them saying, ‘This is a great practice.’ Which is good, but it’s just very stressful going through it. It’s the societal context that we live in, I guess.” She shrugs impatiently. With every story she tells, of humanness, of providing care to patients marginalised by circumstance and luck, it seems wilder and wilder that her methods are seen as contentious.

Would she recommend a job as a GP? “It’s brilliant, and it’s an honour,” she says. “And it’s difficult. But then, nothing that’s worthwhile is ever easy.” As we walk back to the centre and she considers her next patients, I know it would be easier if she was able to simply tell herself, as GPs historically have, that “the doctor knows best”. But good medicine, she writes, is what works. “It’s the only way to bring about the changes we need. I believe that the practice itself has become a living manifesto for that change.” She’s proud of this, of pioneering a new way to care. “We’ve always tried to do what is right, rather than what is easy,” she smiles, grimly. “Even if sometimes, that gets complicated.” Do I know what the motto of the Royal College of General Practitioners is, she asks suddenly. “It’s *Cum Scientia Caritas*.” I wait. “Which means,” and she grins, “Science With Love.” ■

What Seems To Be The Problem? (HarperCollins) by Laura Marshall-Andrews is published on 7 July at £14.99, but it from the [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com) for £13.04. The names of some patients have been changed.

‘We’re trying to give people the tools to improve their lives’





Interviews **CHRIS BROUGHTON**
Photographs **JOONEY WOODWARD & RORY MULVEY**

Tricks of their trade

Glass eyes, sieves, sails... Meet the dedicated crafters keeping their unique skills alive

'We cut the rushes while they're at their full height and in flower – the stems can grow 10ft high': (from left) Felicity Irons; and eye maker Jost Haas

Felicity Irons, 54, rush weaver and merchant

Back in my early 20s I had a car accident and needed lots of treatment, which made it hard for me to hold down a job or pursue the career that I'd intended – I had a degree in drama. Between treatments, I started teaching myself how to work with rush, using a book I'd found. With the help of a business loan, I set up the Rush Matters workshop and spent the next couple of years repairing rush seating.

I bought my materials from a chap called Tom Arnold. His family had been cutting rush along the River Ouse since the early 1700s. Tom had no children to pass the business on to and when he died, his brother Jack, who had no interest in continuing it himself, suggested I take over.

The blade I use to cut rush is 3ft long on a 6ft wooden handle. I did all the harvesting on my own for the first few years. Now I have a team – my brother who comes down from Scotland every summer and my husband, Ivor. We do

most of our cutting towards the end of June and throughout July; the aim is to catch the rushes while they're at their full height and in flower. The stems can grow up to 10ft high.

I absolutely love being out on the river, even though it is really hard work. We aim to cut about a couple of tons each day we are out. The landowners are happy for us to cut along their banks – we also remove rubbish from the river as we go.

We cut on the Great Ouse in both Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire and then along the Nene in Northamptonshire. When I'm gathering, I'll sometimes think, "Oh, that's going to be beautiful to work with," and then later on I'll recognise that particular bolt in the workshop and remember exactly where I was when I cut it.

We've made rush flooring for heritage houses and we did a lot of work for Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London. I've made props for films, too. When I talk to people who have to work from home and look at a screen all day I just think, "Crikey, I couldn't do that."



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'In the old days, the finest riddles had a mesh of an eighth of an inch. I haven't quite managed that yet, but I am down to a quarter of an inch'. Steve Overthrow

Jost Haas, 85, glass-eye maker

Is my job unique? You could say that. I used to be one of three glass-eye makers in the UK, now I'm the only one.

The world's earliest glass eyes were developed in Germany in the 1830s and one of the first companies devoted to their production was established in Wiesbaden near Frankfurt, and that's where I come from. My father did some administrative business for the company and I became fascinated by the work they did there. I completed a four-year apprenticeship in my teens, sitting opposite an experienced ocularist who taught me how to handle the glass, how to blow it, how to paint on the irises and so on.

In 1968, I moved with my wife, Ulla, to north London to take over from another German practitioner who had died. I'm still here working in the same room in my house where I started out more than half a century ago. My clients sit and watch while I work – and I watch them so I can reproduce their iris, mixing colours like blue, green and grey, painting from life, so I can match the existing eye as closely as possible. I heat and separate off a section of glass tubing using a Bunsen burner, creating a "bubble", then I gently inflate it to the required size by blowing into the tube.

Artificial eye technology is still moving on. Last November, an ocularist at

Moorfields Eye Hospital fitted a patient with a 3D-printed prosthetic eye for the first time, which I gather was a great success. But I think there will always be a demand for glass – some people are allergic to plastic and others just prefer the way glass looks or feels.

The whole process takes two or three hours, though sometimes I'll have to make a couple of eyes if the first one doesn't turn out as well as it should. Some of my clients have been coming for decades – I consider them friends and look forward to them visiting so we can catch up.

The first time they come, people can be a little uneasy, but I talk to them and

'I'm the only sievewright working this way in the UK, maybe the world'

they see what I'm doing and often seem to find the process quite soothing. Maybe it's the sound of the burner – sometimes they even fall asleep.

Steve Overthrow, 35, sievewright

I used to restore classic cars, but when the business relocated to Oxfordshire in 2017, I had a young family and didn't want to move with it. I was a member of the Heritage Crafts Association and about a week before my redundancy I was reading through the red list of endangered crafts in their newsletter, which listed sieve and riddle-making as "extinct". I thought, "I could do with a good sieve." I'd left my metal one out in the garden over winter and ruined it. I wondered if I could find out how to make my own.

The most useful source I found was a three-minute slideshow online, which showed Mike Turnock at work. Mike had been a sievewright for more than 30 years when he retired in 2010 and had learned the craft from his father. I watched it over and over, trying to work out the process and what tools were being used. I even tried to track Mike down, without success.

I made my first sieve in 2018 and posted a photo of it on Facebook. As a result, Mike Turnock's sister contacted me and put us in touch. It turned out that when he'd retired, he'd moved to

Bridport, which is only an hour's drive from me. He gave me all the information I needed – stuff it would have taken years to learn the hard way.

I experimented with beech, oak and sycamore before finally settling on ash – I love its willingness to bend and have overcome its tendency to split by oiling it carefully.

In the olden days, the finest riddles had a mesh of an eighth of an inch. I haven't quite managed that yet, but I am down to a quarter of an inch. It's incredibly fiddly work. Apparently, Mike could make a riddle in 23 minutes – I've still no idea how he did it.

People buy my sieves and riddles for all sorts of reasons. I've had bakers, shrimpers, cocklers and mussel-pickers, potters and ceramicists and some foundries have ordered them, too. I had a couple of textile workers buy one for straining and drying out their fabric, fruit-pressers, pasta-makers and coffee-roasters...

Bringing a traditional craft back from extinction does feel like a bit of a responsibility – I'm the only sievewright working this way in the UK now, and maybe the world. But when the time comes, I do plan to pass the business on. My boys are still only five and three, so it's far too early to know if they might be interested – if not, I'll just have to find someone else.

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Matt Robinson, 25, sailmaker

I grew up in London, right next to the Thames, and was about seven when my family moved to the Isle of Wight. I'd been working for a few years as a watersports instructor when I saw a job advertised at Ratsey & Laphorn, a sailmaking company in Cowes. I knew my way around a boat and a bit about fixing them up, but had no experience at all of making sails. Happily, my enthusiasm was enough to gain me an apprenticeship under master sailmaker Gary Pragnell.

The loft we work in is an unusual space – we work either at a bench or standing in a pit sunk into the floor, so we can pull our work towards us. My first week was a big eye-opener. At that time I'd never even used a sewing machine. But from day one I had new jargon and concepts flying at me all the time, which I had to learn and understand. I started on the smallest machine and learned all the different types of stitching I'd need to know, gradually working my way up to the heavy-duty industrial ones that work using compressed air. That took up the first couple of months, before I started learning traditional hand-sewing, which I'm still mastering now.

Ratsey is the world's oldest sailmaker and has been operating on the Isle of Wight since 1790, handing the craft

down generation by generation from master to apprentice. At one time it was the island's single biggest employer and also had lofts in Gosport and New York.

While I'm sewing, I find myself imagining my finished sails out on the water. During events, such as Cowes Classics Week, I get to see them in action. I'll spot Ratsey sails everywhere and be able to identify which are my work and which are Gary's. I've worked on sails for everything from a child's dinghy the size of a bathtub to a 100ft schooner, so the variety also helps keep me on my toes.

One of my favourite parts of the job is hand-stitching the leather around the corners of the sail. It's great to just sit at

'After it's been used, our seed and petal paper can be planted'

'I've worked on sails for everything from a dinghy to a 100ft schooner': (from left) Matt Robinson; and Zoe Collis works her paper press



my bench and see all the hard work I've done on that sail finally coming together – the last job of all is always sewing on the Ratsey logo, so I get a great sense of satisfaction doing that, too.

Zoe Collis, 24, papermaker

Papermaking is deceptively complicated – at every stage in the process something can go wrong. I joined as an apprentice at 19 and I've been learning the craft ever since, everything from preparing the paper recipe to mixing the pulp and forming sheets.

When I first joined Two Rivers Paper as an apprentice it was based in an ancient watermill on Exmoor. For a while it was my job to open the sluiceway every morning to start the waterwheel running – a really charming way to begin the day.

Our paper is made from cotton and linen rag using water power. Materials such as hemp, esparto grass and flower

seeds can be added to the mix to provide paper with a range of characteristics. Seed and petal paper has been popular recently. After it's been used – often for RSVPs or tags for bouquets – this can be planted, allowing the seeds to germinate and give the paper a second life.

Until a few years ago, this ancient craft wasn't remotely on my radar. After school, I did a foundation diploma in arts, media and design and I knew I wanted a hands-on, unconventional job, but I wasn't sure what – until someone put me in touch with Two Rivers.

At the start of my apprenticeship, I helped develop a type of paper for a customer who was going to the Galapagos Islands to swim with turtles and she wanted to paint underwater. It was quite a challenge, but I came up with something that worked well for her – essentially a type of waterproof paper. Although how she managed to paint in scuba gear I'll never know. ■

Food & drink

Nigel Slater

🐦 @NigelSlater



Salute the summer with light puddings and fruit ices

Photographs JONATHAN LOVEKIN

Summer puddings are a doddle: ripe peaches torn apart and dropped into glasses of chilled muscat; strawberries, halved and tossed with passionfruit juice; melon sprinkled with mint-infused sugar. But the cook in me wants to slice and stir and bake, to feel the rhythm of a calm but busy kitchen even on a warm summer day, which is why there was both cake and a homemade fruit ice on the table this week: a sticky, lightly spiced cake with summer fruits – apricots sautéed with butter and honey; and a frozen dessert of yoghurt and summer berries.

The cake was a classic gingerbread without the treacle notes of dark muscovado and molasses, brought to the table with vanilla custard. For those

whose interest runs to something tart and refreshing, there is a frozen yoghurt the colour of a traditional summer pudding.

And that classic recipe, with its layer of berries and juice-soaked bread will be around this year as usual, but the mixture of redcurrants, blackcurrants and raspberries will also be in a bowl for breakfast, used to flavour ice-cream and stirred into meringue and cream as a bells-and-whistles dessert. Any extra juice left over is very good in a glass of prosecco – a scarlet-hued mimosa.

The strawberries have been exceptional this year. I served them tossed in a sauce of crushed raspberries with a splash of framboise. (Note to self, I need more miniatures of liqueurs for such

occasions.) I will not cook a strawberry, but they are dazzling on a crème patisserie-filled tart and better still in a pastry case filled with a mixture of strained yoghurt, icing sugar with the merest shake of orange flower water.

Raspberries rarely benefit from the meddling of a cook, but this week I used them, crushed and stirred into a bowl of stewed apple, as the filling for a fruit tart. The surface was crowned with more berries, arranged very neatly.

Sticky apricot, honey and ginger cake

Very much a dessert rather than tea-time cake, this is a treat cut into rounds rather than slices and served in a dish with chilled custard and warm apricots. *Serves 12*

For the apricots:

apricots 500g, stoned and halved

honey 1 tbsp

butter 50g

For the cake:

self-raising flour 250g

ground ginger 2 level tsp

mixed spice ½ tsp

ground cinnamon ½ tsp

bicarbonate of soda 1 tsp

salt a pinch

lemon zest of 1

honey 200ml

butter 125g

light muscovado 125g

eggs 2, large

milk 240ml

To serve:

chilled custard 500ml

You will need a square cake tin measuring about 22cm, lined with baking parchment.

Halve and stone the apricots. Warm the butter in a shallow, nonstick pan, then add the fruit and leave to cook for 7-10 minutes over a low to moderate heat, until soft. Towards the end of their cooking time, add the spoonful of honey. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Set the oven at 180C/gas mark 4. Sift the flour with the ground ginger, mixed spice, cinnamon, bicarbonate of soda and salt. Add the lemon zest. Pour the honey into a small saucepan, add the butter and the sugar and warm over a moderate heat until the butter has melted. When the mixture has simmered for a minute remove from the heat. ➤



Chill out: summer fruit frozen yoghurt. Facing page: sticky apricot, honey and ginger cake



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16:02



Food & drink

Nigel Slater

Any extra berry juice left over is very good in a glass of prosecco – it makes a scarlet-hued mimosa

➤ Break the eggs into a bowl, add the milk and beat lightly to combine. Pour the butter and honey mixture into the flour and spices and stir gently until no flour is visible. Mix in the milk and eggs.

Fold in half of the cooked apricots and scrape the mixture into the lined cake tin. The apricots should slide to the bottom. Put the cake in the oven and bake for 35-40 minutes, until spongy to the touch. Leave to cool in the tin.

To make the icing, put the icing sugar into a bowl, then beat in the lemon juice, either with a fork or using a small hand whisk. Take it steady, only using enough to make an icing thick enough that it takes a while to fall from the spoon.

Remove the cake from its tin and peel back the parchment. Just before serving, warm the reserved apricots in a small pan and cut the cake into 16 equal pieces. Place two pieces on each serving dish and some of the reserved apricots. Serve with cream or thoroughly chilled custard.

Summer fruit frozen yoghurt

Use fresh blackcurrants in season, but this also works very well with frozen.

blackcurrants 125g
raspberries 200g
water 50ml
icing sugar 5 tbsp
natural yoghurt 500g

Remove the blackcurrants from their stems and put them in a small pan with the raspberries and water. Bring to the boil, then lower the heat and leave to simmer for 5 minutes or so until the fruit has burst and the juices are bubbling. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

Beat the icing sugar into the yoghurt, then stir in the cold fruits and their juice. Pour into an ice-cream machine and churn until almost frozen. Transfer to a chilled container and store in the freezer.

To make the ice-cream without a machine, mix together the sweetened yoghurt and chilled fruits and stir thoroughly. Transfer to a covered plastic storage box and place in the freezer for 2 hours. Remove the lid and stir to mix the frozen edges into the middle, then return to the freezer for an hour. Repeat this several times till the mixture is almost frozen. ■



Nigel's midweek dinner

Pea and wasabi fritters, herb sauce

Photograph
JONATHAN LOVEKIN

The recipe

Cook 500g of **peas** for 4-5 minutes in boiling, lightly salted water. Drain in a colander and leave to cool under cold running water. Tip the peas into a food processor, add 40g of **butter** and process to a thick, smooth paste. Do not overprocess. Transfer to a mixing bowl and chill.

Once the mixture is cold, beat 2 **egg yolks** lightly and stir in thoroughly, then mix in 5 tbsp of fine, dry **breadcrumbs** and 1 small tsp of **wasabi paste**.

Put a couple of large handfuls of dried breadcrumbs – about 70g – in a shallow dish. In a second dish, beat 2 **eggs** – just enough to mix the whites and yolks. Shape the pea mixture into six small, round cakes (easiest done with lightly floured hands), then press them, one at a time, first into the beaten egg, then into the breadcrumbs and place them on a tray or baking sheet. Chill for 20 minutes.

Make a herb sauce by stirring together 1 heaped tbsp each of chopped **mint**,

parsley and **basil** with 200ml of plain, unstrained **yoghurt**. Add a small, finely mashed clove of **garlic** and a twist of **black pepper**.

Warm a thin layer of **olive** or **groundnut oil** in a shallow pan that doesn't stick, then lower in the pea cakes and cook for 4 or 5 minutes over a moderate heat, until the crumbs outside are crisp and golden. Serve immediately, while still hot, with the herb sauce. Makes 6-9, depending on their size. *Serves 2-3*

◆ You really don't need much wasabi paste here. The point is to lend a little warmth to the peas, so I start with no more than a teaspoon. Used with care, wasabi is a gentle and welcome seasoning, but can easily overpower the sweet peas, so I proceed with caution.

◆ You could omit the wasabi and stir in a handful of the chopped mint, parsley and basil instead. ■

Food & drink

Jay Rayner



Twitter @jayrayner1

Tucking into great food by the harbour in Margate, it's hard not to marvel that all is as it should be

Sargasso

Margate Harbour Arm, Stone Pier, Margate CT9 1AP (01843 229270; sargasso.bar)
Small plates **£7-£11**
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It is the simplest of dishes: half a dozen fat Calabrian anchovies, the colour of well-varnished teal, lie in a pool of deep green olive oil, dotted with sparkling droplets of what turns out to be lemon juice. On the face of it, very little has happened to get this to our table. Some seriously good anchovies, meaty, salty and powerful specimens with

a lingering depth of flavour, have simply been taken from their resting place, dressed and sent on their way. But there is so much more going on here; something that goes to the very heart of the best restaurants. It is an expression of exquisitely good taste. Sargasso, in Margate, is sodden with the stuff.

It will not be everybody's idea of good taste. Some will look at the squat, old red-brick building it calls home, and roll their eyes. They'll dismiss as ugly this low-slung bunder of a block hunkered by the sea wall along the harbour arm as it reaches out into the water. If they are of a rectally challenged demographic and familiar with certain over-the-counter ointments, they may whine about the hard, spindly stools that you are invited to sit upon while you eat at the counter, or at the high window tables. This general eye-rolling could be extended to the monogrammed plates, the restaurant's name realised in a blood-red font that recalls the late 60s futurism of *Joe 90*. And let's not forget the record player and the collection of 70s jazz funk vinyl cuts by the likes of Idris Mohammed and George Duke, which play upon it. The album cover is always displayed behind the bar so you know exactly what you are listening to while you eat.

If all of this does not sound like your plate of Calabrian anchovies, do not come here. You should not take the high-speed train from London's St Pancras, as I did, for an early supper. Go elsewhere. The rest of you, get in. Sargasso, which is the second restaurant from chef Ed Wilson and the team behind Brawn on London's Columbia Road, makes the very best things look very simple. The menu, divided between half a dozen small plates and a similar number of larger offerings, manages to reflect perfectly its hard-scrabble coastal setting.

Some of it, like those glorious anchovies, to be eaten with the springiest of hard-crustured sourdoughs, is merely about the ingredients. Don't forget to mop. There are others that have demanded more thought. Whipped cod's roe, a wistful fondant-fancy pink, has been piped in buxom whorls across a thick piece of oily toast. Across that is a lawn of well-dressed peppery watercress. It is topped with a boiled egg, allowed to come to room temperature, but still with a sunset of runny yolk that



Whipped cod's roe, a wistful fondant-fancy pink, has been piped in buxom whorls across a thick piece of oily toast

Sea change: (clockwise from left) cod roe on toast, the dining room with its harbour view; crab and wild fennel; Calabrian anchovies; clams; and parmesan fritters

pours out across it when you cut in. It feels like both serious attention to detail and huge care for £8.

From that fishy side of the ledger comes a salad of crab, with finely shredded wild fennel, chives and other green herbs on a thick pond of sauce thickened with brown crab meat. You could, of course, merely stand outside on the harbour arm, and sniff the air here as the tide pulls out; take in the gull-clawed wind, rich with the saline pong of exposed seaweed and old boat diesel. Or you could sit in here, at a high top, staring out at the view and eat a sweet and funky expression of it. The joy, of course, is that by taking the walk to Sargasso you get a combination of the two. Add a bowl of their clams, with thick, soft slices of garlic and handfuls of coriander. Correctly, they bring a spoon so you can finish the ripe, snout-thumping broth like it's a soup.

There are other great things. Because it is the season, there is asparagus, served warm with a glass dish of lemony melted butter. Friggitelli peppers, Padrón's longer Italian cousins, are given a little heat

to help them wizen and soften, then dressed with flakes of sea salt and chilli. Parmesan fritters are squash-ball-sized béchamel croquettes, with centres of pure molten cheesiness, served hot from the fryer under a micro-planed drift of the best parmesan. It is finger food, designed by someone who believes a plate should be cleared. I get the message. I clear the plate down to that shiny monogram.

Much of the wine list, which is as careful and intriguing a selection as at Brawn, is available by the glass and carafe. Behind the bar is a collection of spirits, including Aperol Spritz and Fernet-Branca; things that you might think are a good idea after a few carafes of the gentler wines. You're an adult; make your own bloody choices. There are also piles of cookbooks, titles by Nuno Mendes, José Pizarro and, most pleasingly of all, Keith Floyd (on Italy). It's that good taste thing all over again.

Somewhere in a review of a restaurant in Margate there are meant to be a couple of paragraphs musing on a seaside town with a reputation for scruffiness, now undergoing gentrification. It's such an obvious point it's barely worth making beyond saying that yes, the coin arcades are still here on the front, and so is the Turner Contemporary. There are bucket-and-spade shops, and ironic takes on the bucket-and-spade culture. And there's Sargasso, which in July shifts from opening on a Thursday to opening on a Wednesday. Perhaps across the summer they'll be able to open throughout the week. I do hope so.

Sometimes, when I tell people I play jazz piano, they tell me they hate jazz, as though it's a mark of some form of clever, reverse sophistication. They often seem surprised when I tell them that's fine. I feel absolutely no need to argue the case or convert them. They are the ones who are missing out. Their loss. I really do feel the same way about Sargasso. I can predict the reactions against it from those who flare their nostrils at what they regard as posturing. All that means is that they won't get to eat those anchovies or that crab salad, in that building with those sounds and that view. At the end, with a final smart nod to the bucket-and-spade culture of Margate, there is soft-serve ice-cream, either with strawberry sauce or chocolate and hazelnuts. It suggests a less than vigorous interest in desserts by the kitchen here, but after such a great meal, they can be forgiven. ■

Notes on chocolate

It's a crime not to visit this Leeds chocolatier, says Annalisa Barbieri



I have been dumped on the edge of an industrial estate, just on the outskirts of the city, looking for what seems to be Leeds's only artisan chocolatier – **Lauden Chocolate**. This, I think, is how niche crime thrillers start. But I find Lauden's unit and no blood is shed. I meet Stephen Trigg, who has built up, with his wife, Sun, a very successful chocolate business, supplying big, Michelin-starred restaurants and British Airways first-class passengers.

Stephen is the UK Chocolate Master and later on this year will represent the UK and Ireland in the Chocolate Master final. He seems perfectly happy, but it's deeply selfish, I say, not to have a city-centre shop in Victoria Quarter or the Corn Exchange.

I sample a lot of his chocolate. The filled chocolates, from £7,

are, no surprise, masterful and beautiful. There are a lot of fruit-flavoured centres that even I, fruit-centre averse, think are divine (orange was my fave). Then, I fall in love with a Diplomatico Rum and Vanilla bonbon from the rum and whisky pairing range, from £7.

There is a jar of caramelised blonde hazelnuts in the collection, £11.90, which will be a must for any nut lover's stocking (182 days to go). The chocolate spread, £7.95, is grownup, dark and hazelnut-heavy with a final sing of salt.

Lauden also does a healthy snacking bar containing whey protein (a vegan version also available), £4, rich in Medjool dates and nuts. The balance is perfect and it is absolutely best-ever superb.



Wines of the week

Summer is the best time to get acquainted with grenache blanc.
By David Williams

🐦 @Daveydaibach

Field of the Bee
France 2021
£16, The Sampler

I've been fully converted to the joys of grenache (or garnacha, as it's known in Spain), thanks largely to a new wave of red wines made from the variety in a light, soft, red-fruited,

intensely drinkable style. Domaine of the Bee makes one of the best of this breed I've tasted recently: a gloriously rosehip-tangy, raspberry-racy coulis gently infused with wild rosemary and thyme that goes by the name of The Bee Side 2021 (£19.50, domaineofthebee.com). The Bee team make several other impressive garnacha (and carignan) red wines in a plusher, deeper style, but they also do very good things with grenache noir's white cousins: grenache blanc and grenache gris in the drowsily honey, honeysuckle and peach-scented high-summer cuvée of Field of the Bee.

The Search, Grenache Blanc
France 2021
£9.99, Waitrose

Given that the blanc is a mutation of the noir original, it's not surprising that the places good at making grenache reds tend to be where grenache blanc thrives. In the home of

the world's most sought-after grenache-based reds, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, for example, grenache blanc is the mainstay of the white blends. With their heady, full-bodied allure, the exquisite combination of both the ripe summer fruit and spring blossom of an apricot orchard, they can be as beguiling and evocative as the reds. Grenache blanc is also increasingly popular in blends in South Africa, where the Rhône is a source of inspiration for winemakers working in the Cape's warmer regions. The Search's Rhône-ish blend is lively, peachy, yet fresh – and excellent value.

El Garbi Blanco
Spain 2020
£20, Rise and Vine

The rough equivalent of Châteauneuf-du-Pape in Spain is Priorat in Catalonia. Here, too, you'll find garnacha blanca (or garnatxa blanca) as the most significant white variety,

blended, again like Châteauneuf, with a handful of other varieties in the region's relatively small but beguiling selection of white wines. Terroir al Limit Historic Blanc 2019 (£25.50, nattyboywines.co.uk) is one of my favourites, a full-flavoured dry white in which garnacha blanca is pepped up with a little macabeu and that takes you directly to the herb fragrance of a Mediterranean hillside. For a sense of what garnacha blanca can do on its own, however, another Catalan region, Terra Alta, has made the variety something of a speciality, with the rich peach and creaminess given freshness by a cool underlying stoniness.



Walk this way

**Kit yourself out
in bold activewear,
grab a backpack
and head for the hills**

Fashion editor **HELEN SEAMONS**
Photographs **PAUL FARRELL**





This page **T shirt**
The North Face, and
backpack Epperson
Mountaineering
(both from mrporter.
com) **Shorts** Gramicci
(matchesfashion.com)
Socks sockshop.co.uk
Sandals Timberland
(schuh.co.uk)

Facing page **Hat**
And Wander, **jumper**
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wear.co.uk

Advertisement

Now’s the time to tackle your iPad (or Android tablet)

Tablets – iPads and Android tablets – can be great once you know how to use them. It’s amazing all the things they can do.

And possibly the best thing tablets can do for you is help you keep in touch with family and friends. I don’t just mean letting you send emails instead of writing paper letters, though that can be handy.

In just a few taps of the screen you could be talking to them as if they were sat right there beside you.

But when you buy a tablet, there’s something missing.

It’s not the charger (hopefully!).

It’s not a case, though it’s usually a good idea to buy one to protect your new tablet.

It’s a manual – something to show you how to use the thing. The manufacturers seem to assume that you’ll just know how to use it, as if by magic. It’s “intuitive,” they say.

Well, it can be. In parts. But there are other things you simply need to know how to do. It’s not obvious

that you have to swipe from the top of the screen, pull up from the bottom or tap with two fingers instead of one.

Who would know you had to use two fingers and pull them apart on the screen or rotate them... or that they’d bury the option you want behind three little dots?

Things like that you just can’t know – someone has to explain it to you.

But if you do ever find a book about it or get someone to tell you, they always seem to assume you already know how to do it. Daft, really – you wouldn’t be asking if you did. But they whizz through it so fast you can’t possibly take it in. Not to mention the steps they leave out because “everyone knows that”!

That’s where a set of books from a small, employee-owned company based in Cumbria comes in. They’re called The Helpful Book Company and lots of their customers say they certainly live up to their name! They’ve published *iPads One Step at a Time* and *Android Tablets One Step at a Time* – and these books have

proved hugely popular with all sorts of people who have a tablet – but who aren’t experts at using it.

Whether you’re frustrated with the very basics, want to know what else it can do for you or wish you knew how to do some of the slightly fancier things, this book might be just what you need.

“Plain English without the confusing jargon & gobbledegook”

It explains everything nice and simply, in plain English, without all the confusing jargon and gobbledegook. And it has lots of pictures showing exactly what to do – where to tap the screen and so on.

The company have already published books about computers and smartphones that have helped



These helpful books mean there’s nothing to fear about using tablets – from sending a quick email to video calling your family and friends.

thousands of people. But they actually started much smaller – the author wrote some notes to help his Mum and Dad on their PC and realised that other people might find them useful too.

Several thousand happy people later, he decided to bring out a book on tablets as well – and if you’ve ever been frustrated with your

tablet, it’s worth finding out more.

As a small independent publisher, the books aren’t in the shops or available on Amazon, but you can get a free information pack telling you about what’s covered in the books, who they’re suitable for and how to get hold of them from the company –

Just ring 01229 777606

Calling all iPad or Android Tablet owners...

If you ever find your tablet frustrating, aren’t quite sure how to do things or just think you might not be getting all you should from it, read on...

Tablets are becoming hugely popular. And no wonder – You can sit in a comfy armchair and browse the web or even video call (Skype or FaceTime) your friends and family who live just down the road or even around the world.

They’re easier to use than PCs in lots of ways, too.

But there’s a catch. In fact, two.

Catch number 1:

They’re different from PCs. So if you already know how to use a PC, you have to start again.

Catch number 2 (the big one!):

There are lots of important features that are “hidden”. There’s no button for them, saying “click here”. And you simply can’t work it out. You need to know to slide the screen from the left, or drag the thingy-me-bob to the right.

Someone needs to tell you these things – it’s just not possible to work it out as you wouldn’t even know they’re there!

If I ran the world...

If I ran the world, these devices would come with a proper manual. But when they do come with a manual, it’s on the device, so you can only get at it if you already know how to use the thing! And when you do get at it, it’s usually written assuming you already know how to use it – which makes it a bit pointless.

That’s why I’ve written these books: *iPads One Step at a Time* and *Android Tablets One Step at a Time* (ideal for all Android tablets).

Plain English – that’s not all...

They explain how to use the device, in plain simple language, with pictures of the screen showing exactly where to tap or slide your fingers. No jargon!

Only Half the Story...

That’s only half the story, but I don’t have room to explain what I mean by that here. So I’ve put together full information on the books – who they’re for, what they cover and so on.

What’s more, the books also come with a small free gift – no room to explain that here, either!

“Better than WHSmith’s Best”?

As soon as these books came out, I started getting comments like:

Thank you for producing such a superb book – it is really helping me.

I had bought one (a book) in W H Smiths a short while ago and couldn’t get on with it at all! – J.S.

and I am delighted with the new book on tablets, so many things I didn’t understand before, being of the “retired brigade” it’s a great help. – Doreen Wadsworth

Don’t buy now, do this instead

Anyway, I’m not trying to convince you to buy them now. Instead, why not let me send you full information about the books and how they might help you? It’s free and gives you the whole story. (And don’t worry, we won’t pass your address to anyone else!)

Quick and Easy to Get Yours

Why not ring or write off for the full information now? There’s no obligation at all and we won’t share your details with anyone – we’ll just pop an information pack in the post to you straightaway.

Ring Emma, Jade, Alicia, Karen or Steph on **01229 777606** or post the coupon below to us at **The Helpful Book Co, 13B Devonshire Road Estate, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4JS.** Or email OB0622@helpfulbooks.co.uk with your name and postal address.

You don’t even need to know which type of tablet you have: the infopack will explain how to tell.



Using a tablet can be easy... once you’ve been shown how properly

There’s no obligation, no cost. You have nothing to lose so why not do it now, while you think of it? Best not risk losing the details – give us a call (weekdays 8am-5.30pm, Sat 9am-3pm), or drop us an email or fill in the details on the coupon below.

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Above **Fleece** Outerknown,
and **shorts** Norbit by
Hiroshi Nozawa (both
from mrporter.com) **Socks**
sockshop.co.uk **Boots**
russellandbromley.co.uk

Below **Hat** and **shirt** both
toa.st **Trousers** Eye/
Loewe/Nature (loewe.com)
Socks Anonymous
Ism (mrporter.com)
Sandals birkenstock.com



Right **Fleece** Isabel
Marant (mytheresa.
com) **Trousers**
Beams Plus, and
backpack Epperson
Mountaineering
(both from mrporter.
com) **Socks**
uniqlo.com **Sandals**
birkenstock.com

Below **Windbreaker**
driesvannoten.com



Grooming Federico
Ghezzi at One
Represents using
Boy de Chanel and
No 1 de Chanel
Model Majok Manyuat
at Supa Model
Management
Fashion assistant
Peter Bevan
**Photographer's
assistant** Molly Farrell

The edit Summer heels

Strappy or studded, wedged or blocky... Elevate your look with an elegant sandal in a vibrant colour

Fashion editor **JO JONES**



Clover £299, uk.maje.com



Studded £35, riverisland.com



Natania £275, aeyde.com



Pink £35, shop.mango.com



Blow
the
budget

Frida £375, malonesouliers.com



Headspin £175, russellandbromley.co.uk



Carina £250, Reformation (net-a-porter.com)



Strappy £95, stories.com



Editor's
choice

Green £150, arket.com



Yellow £249, uk.sandro-paris.com



Valerie £165, Esska (anthropologie.com)



Knot £110, boden.co.uk



High
street
hero

Platform £45, marksandspencer.com

Beauty Funmi Fetto

@FunmiFetto



Pair green and pink for a fun festival look

Even at the height of festival season, it takes a certain kind of boldness to wear this Versace SS22 beauty look. But the exaggerated, cartoonish eye is actually beside the point. The real beauty is the magic that happens when you team green and pink. This dream combo works on everything – fashion, interiors, makeup... So if you fancy upping the ante with a hint of colour, but find an elaborate winged eye a bit much, relax. A slick of (muted) green liner on your waterline with a youth-exuding pink gloss on the lips will do just fine.

1. **Armani Beauty Neo Nude Tinted Moisturiser** £34 johnlewis.com
2. **Pat McGrath Labs Divine Blush Duo Collection** £45 selfridges.com
3. **Byredo Kumato Colour Stick** £28 byredo.com
4. **Lancome Le 8 Hypnose Mascara** £32 lancome.co.uk
5. **Jones Road Cool Gloss in Pastel Pink** £20 jonesroadbeauty.com



On my radar

Glow toner, great eye cream and a skin protector

Pores for thought

An acid free, vegan offering that evens out pores and boosts hydration – as opposed to stripping – leaving skin glowy and balanced. **Charlotte Tilbury Glow Toner**, £40, charlotte-tilbury.com



Eyes right

Eye creams are notoriously inefficient. This, however, is proven to dramatically improve puffiness, dark circles and stimulate collagen production. And it's refillable. **Emma Lewisham Skin Reset Eye Creme**, £70, net-a-porter.com



Strength test

This bestseller has been reformulated to do an even better job of strengthening the skin barrier, protecting against aggressors and countering irritation. **Origins Mega Mushroom Treatment Lotion**, £33, origins.co.uk



I can't do without...

The first step to great hair is a healthy scalp

THOM Scalp Serum by Cyndia Harvey
£46
thishairofmine.world



I'd take a guess that most people outside the fashion and beauty industry have not heard of Cyndia Harvey. So allow me to introduce her. She is a hairstylist who spent her early years under the guidance of the veteran hair stylist Sam McKnight. She now works with some of the world's biggest publications and brands – Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci... you get the gist. She's a big deal. Alas, her expertise wasn't available to us mere mortals. But now that she's launched her own brand, it is.

This Hair Of Mine (aka THOM) is a luxe brand for texture rich, Afro hair. The brand has a 'scalp first' ethos – ie, for healthy hair you need a healthy scalp. Hence the first product is a Scalp Serum. While inspired by the traditional scalp moisturising ritual long present in the Black hair communities, this formulation has taken it to the next level. It includes pea peptide to stimulate the hair follicle for growth, boreal algae to detox the scalp, fruit enzymes to gently exfoliate, apple stem cells to soothe and a botanical blend of moringa, baobab and squalane to hydrate. The texture is light and non-sticky, the medicated scent barely perceptible – making it a joy to use. And while it targets textured hair, I'd say everyone could benefit from this. For all the hair products we use, if the scalp isn't in good condition, you're wasting your money.

The sweet taste of success

As a teenager, Amarachi Clarke overcame huge hurdles to follow her passion for football. Now, she's applying the same determination to her bean-to-bar chocolate business. By Rosie Mullender

When Amarachi Clarke set out to be one of a handful of bean-to-bar chocolate makers in the UK, she faced a wave of criticism for her alternative approach.

"Chocolate has historically been made with white refined sugar," says Clarke, 38. "I decided I was going to shake things up, and started using coconut sugar and lucuma – a superfood fruit – as a sweetener instead."

The result was Lucocoa, started in the bedroom of her flat, and now a successful craft chocolate-making business with a factory and shop in Bermondsey, south-east London, and a website (lucocoachocolate.com) for online sales. Clarke's chocolate is made by hand from rare cocoa bean varieties from Haiti, Belize, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, and promises an ethical supply chain.

"There was a small group of self-appointed bean-to-bar chocolate bastions [for whom] what I was doing was a big change," says Clarke. "Bloggers would write: 'Chocolate should be made with white sugar! Why this?' and I was excluded from events. It felt like I was going up against a brick wall, that I needed to ask permission just to work in that industry."

Clarke pressed on, and in the eight years since she had the spark of the idea to make her own style of chocolate, Lucocoa has won four Great Taste Awards, and is stocked in high-end retailers.

Clarke's beginnings weren't what you might expect for a chocolate maker: a political activist with a degree in computer science, she was working at a global aid organisation when she injured her foot running the 2014 San Francisco Women's Marathon.

"I was interested in healing in the most natural way possible, and had heard that chocolate had all these amazing properties," she says. However, after doing some digging into the best chocolate to buy, she discovered that unethical labour practices were sometimes involved with chocolate production.

"I decided that the best solution was to start my own chocolate business, and prove you can have a sustainable supply chain that's ethical, good quality, and shows exactly what chocolate should taste like."

Clarke experimented at home with various cocoa beans, learning the process of roasting them at different temperatures, grinding them, and winnowing the shells using the only tools she had to hand at the time. "I did a lot of experimenting, using a rolling pin to grind the beans and a hair

dryer for winnowing," she says. "My friends and family tried my early recipe, and I'm not sure they were all that impressed! But I was determined to teach myself how to make chocolate properly."

Clarke attributes the sense of drive and purpose that led to the birth of Lucocoa to a childhood spent fighting for her place on the football field.

"I've always loved football, and have played since I was five," she says. "But when I got older, things got really hard. Women's football was something you had to fight to make happen – even just to play in the school playground."

"At school, the only matches they allowed girls to play in were five-a-sides on fun days – I remember one time, we had to dress up as

'Being a woman, playing football, it all gives you thicker skin'

the Spice Girls just to get a game. On another occasion, I went with some male friends for a kickabout down the park, and we started playing with a group of boys. One of them clearly didn't want me there, and he attacked me on the pitch. I ended up in A&E, and I've still got the scar on my chin.

"Things only really changed when I got to university and played for Southam, the local team. It was incredible – for the first time, I was on a team where people were as passionate about football as I was. But being a woman, playing football, being where people don't want you to be: it all gives you thicker skin. It makes you want to see things through to the end."

"Football gave me the strength to persevere. When I turned my back on my critics, the business started to fly. I launched Lucocoa at a chocolate show, and when we sold out, I realised I might be on to something."

Clarke took a market stall on Brick Lane, east London, followed by a move to Forest Gate, where she converted an outbuilding into a chocolate factory and became a full-time chocolate maker. Finally, her growing business landed at Spa Terminus, a food production and retail site in Bermondsey.

"We opened our factory and shop in February 2020 – just before lockdown,"

says Clarke. "It turned out to be good for us, because food businesses were allowed to keep trading – we grew 400% during the pandemic. People weren't carrying cash, so the idea that you could just bring out your [smart]watch or card [to pay] was a lifesaver."

She continues to take payments online and via a connected terminal when making sales in person. "We take Visa and other digital payments, and we need that help. It's really important in terms of our success."

She adds that digital payments helped level the playing field when it came to being a stallholder competing with big businesses.

Now shops have reopened, the small businesses of Spa Terminus continue to look out for each other to help the area thrive.

"My neighbours are a jam factory, a butcher, and a granola factory," says Clarke. "The businesses here buy from and support each other, too. The granola company will take some of our leftover chocolate to make limited-edition granola, while our binman takes our discarded cocoa bean shells for his allotment, giving us vegetables in return. It's a great community."

Although Clarke had to fight to win her place among the UK's chocolate makers with her alternative approach, her determination has helped her emerge with her ethics intact, and business booming.

"Playing football taught me that you should always do the thing you love. There will always be people around who don't want you to do a thing, or have a lot to say about what you're doing."

"But then you keep going and eventually think: 'Well I've just run past you, haven't I?'"

WHEN MORE OF US PLAY, ALL OF US WIN

Competition is at its best when everyone truly has the chance to take part. That's why Visa is a proud sponsor of UEFA Women's EURO 2022. And its support goes beyond the pitch, with technology and tools to help turn small ideas into big businesses, wherever they are. To find out more about how Visa is championing access and inclusion visit: theguardian.com/all-win

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Amarachi Clarke at
Lucocoa's chocolate factory
in Bermondsey, London:
'Playing football taught me
that you should always do
the thing you love'



Words SARA DAL ZOTTO
Photographs ALESSANDRA IANNIELLO

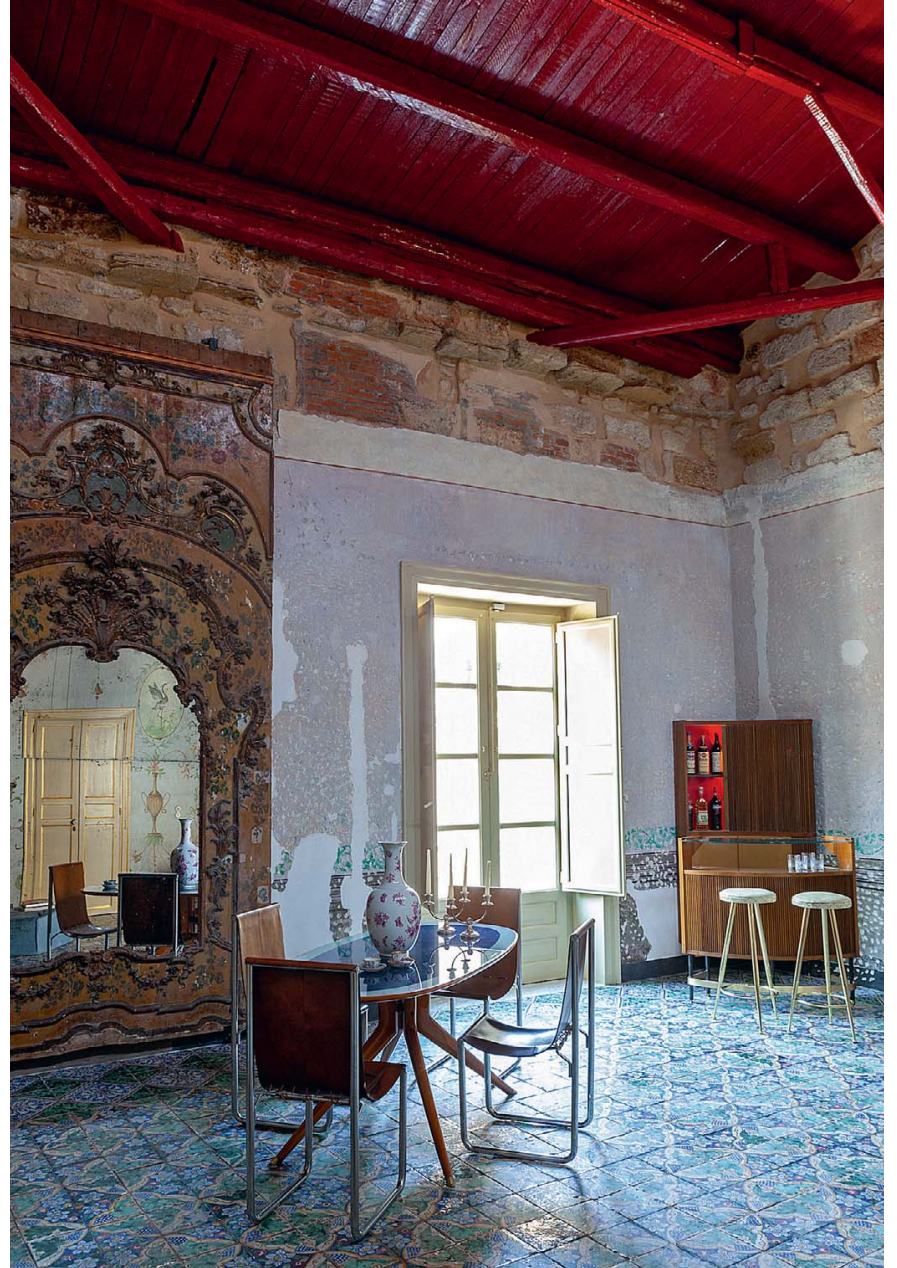


Hidden gems

Frescos and floors are set off by modern pieces in a restored palace in Palermo

Gold standard: (from left) 18th-century majolica floors, a purple Maarten Kusters sofa and giant mirrors attached to 17th-century doors, and a well-stocked bar surrounded by ornate frescos





When Dario Longo, a lawyer based in Milan, wanted to return to his hometown of Palermo he spent a long time searching for the right place. “I wanted to make peace with this beautiful, but hectic city with its hidden treasures,” he says.

“I bought this house in 2013, after a long search,” he explains. “I was looking for an authentic historical building, but most of the old palaces I visited had been heavily refurbished so had lost most of their soul. When I saw this place I realised it was exactly what I was looking for.”

His beautiful home in the Kalsa neighbourhood of the city spreads across two levels, from the second floor of a historical palace with origins dating back to the end of the 1500s, to a third floor he created from the original attic and terraces. But the authenticity he wanted came at a price: “The palazzo was in a state of disarray,” he says. It was also tied up in litigation – but none of that scared him away. He dived in – and has no regrets.

Longo describes this enormous house as “a succession of four large ballrooms, one after the other, and a very small private quarter with only two bedrooms and one bathroom”. He’s kept that original layout, except for squeezing in three additional bathrooms.

While the structural work was carried out by architects from Palermo, Longo curated the interior himself, with the assistance of restorer Davide Sansone. “At some point in the last century, probably in the 1950s, in an attempt to modernise the property, the owner covered all the



frescos and the *lambris* (panelling) with plaster and paint, except for the vaulted ceiling of one of the main rooms,” he says. “One of the things that made me buy this place was that frescoed vaulted ceiling. But I certainly did not expect that we would discover frescos and lambris in the walls and ceilings in, literally, every single room of the house!”

The monumental job of unearthing and restoring hundreds of square metres of frescos has kept Sansone busy for the past three years – and is expected to continue for a couple more. “To remind us of all this effort, we have left just one wall without restoring it and have painted it in blue, in the dining room,” Longo



‘When I saw this place I realised it was exactly what I was looking for’: (from top left) a chandelier and restored frescos; a huge armoire contrasts with modern furniture; the ‘blue wall’; owner Dario Longo

St George while tube chandelier lamps by Michael Anastassiades hang above a Tulip Saarinen dining table with a marble top, and a collection of antique soup pots is arranged on one wall. The doors are the original ones from the 1600s, restored.

In the centre of the kitchen is a blacksmith’s workbench to which Longo added a marble top. Antique dishes on the walls contrast with a modern steel kitchen and an Ikea oak worktop.

In the blue bathroom, once an alcove for a noblewoman who lived in the palace, the original floor and wall decorations have been renovated and the modern sink placed on a vintage toilet cabinet so as not to ruin the wall decorations. A mahogany bookcase dates from the end of the 19th century.

In what Longo calls the hall of mirrors, he installed 18th-century majolica floors from Santo Stefano di Camastra in Sicily. The central sofa is by Dutch designer Maarten Kusters for Italian company Edra, while the two giant mirrors have been mounted on 17th-century doors recovered from a disused building.

“For this house I’ve simply followed its nature,” says Longo, “choosing antique items, design elements and adding my findings, both from flea markets in Palermo and from the internet.” Searching for the right pieces has been like a game, he says. A game that led to an unexpected but gracious mix of styles. ■

says. “That blue wall is a reminder of how easy it is to cover the beauty of the past with paint and how difficult and time-consuming it is to bring that beauty back.”

In the hall with the untouched fresco, Longo added a large Murano chandelier from the 20th century, found in a Venetian villa. “I’ve paired modernism with typical Sicilian antiquities,” he says, “like the little sofa from the 1700s, which I had covered with Japanese fabric from a shop in Milan.” Alongside, sits a precious 18th-century Chinese vase under Oriental-style wall decorations and a restored velvet 1950s sofa and armchair.

The brass chairs in the dining room were found in London at Rockett

Gardens James Wong

🐦 @Botanygeek



Passionflowers you'll want to fall in love with

With an estimated 400,000 plant species on Earth, one of the best things about working in horticulture is that there are always, always new things to learn. Even when you have a genus so close to your heart that you think you know it inside out. Thanks to the ingenuity and dedication of breeders quietly working away in the background, sometimes you suddenly discover there are loads of new options that seem to have burst into bloom while your back was turned. One of the most wonderful examples of this is in the world of hardy passionflowers.

During my fieldwork for my masters in the high Ecuadorian Andes, I fell hopelessly in love with passionflowers. From the enormous pink pendant blooms of *Passiflora mollissima* that scrambled up forest trees to attract iridescent hummingbirds that dart about their canopies, to the deliciously tart *P. edulis* that grows in great bowers over seemingly every fruit and veg garden, I adored them all.

Having seen so many shrugging off almost nightly frosts in high altitude villages, on returning to the UK I became desperate to see which cultivars were available here beyond the standard *P. caerulea* that has dominated the British market for well over a century. I tried half a dozen forms, including officially the world's hardiest species from North America, *P. incarnata*, and soon realised there was a reason so few were available for outdoor growing here in Blighty.

Most, despite coping with frequent light frosts in perpetually cool, mild



climates, can't handle the prolonged cold for months on end that we get in Britain. The few that can need such rousing hot summers to trigger them out of winter dormancy, they never have a chance to get going in our maritime climate.

Flash forward 20 years, after having long given up on my dream, I was frankly overjoyed to discover a host of new cultivars have been developed. With a few of these reliably hardy to about -8C, this makes them viable options for most British gardeners – and what dazzling forms they come in, too.

When I first spotted the giant lavender petals of 'Betty Myles Young' in my mate Rob's garden, on blooms around twice the size of the standard *P. caerulea*, I found it hard to believe they were not artificial. With petals swept elegantly back, as happens in many wild, Andean forms, it just screams "long lost jungle". This is just one creation by the incredibly talented British breeder Myles Stewart Irvine, who also developed the astonishing 'Snow Queen', with a frilly crown of modified petals at its centre, which makes it look like a fascinator of the type you might see in a ballroom scene aboard a sci-fi film space ship.

Myles also magicked up 'Damsel's Delight'. This looks like a jacked-up version of the classic *P. caerulea*, with much larger blooms and far more intense colours, as if retouched by too many Instagram filters. If you are looking for a summer climber to transport you to the tropics, I beg you to treat a spare sunny wall to one of these. ■

A taste of the Andes: (from left) the hardy *P. mollissima*; and the more familiar form of passionflower



Plot 29

A special delivery of seeds brings thoughts of hope and peace.

By Allan Jenkins

The seed packages have arrived from Ukraine. Two deliveries to two addresses, work and home, to give them every chance. Many packets from organicseeds. top, in the centre of the war-torn country. Of course I over-ordered, but I feel a need to support them.

There's our favourite Painted Mountain corn to replace the Mexican blue maize shoots the pigeons have already eaten. I will sow some at home in pots as well as in a small block on the site. There are two packets

of classic Grandpa Ott morning glory seed, though I am yet unsure where it will grow. There's a classic calendula and frilly Giant Sungold sunflowers for the allotment bees and me.

Two huge packets of mammoth dill are currently challenging me. They're the summer scent and taste of Henriette's Danish childhood. Some I will take to the beach house and try to figure out later where best to sow them. Plus, there are another three types of amaranth (Fox



Treasure trove: seeds from Ukraine, a chance to grow – and to offer solidarity

Tails, Popping, Elena's Rojo) to supplement the saved seed we have.

It wasn't as though we really need the seed. It is much more that somehow growing their organic open-pollinated crops seems a (very) small act of solidarity.

There is, of course, no air mail now out of Ukraine, so if you order be prepared to wait a while for your delivery (mine took close to two months). Note: much of the seed comes with an advisory on shelf life (tomatoes, cucumbers:

five years, the Ukrainian pumpkin: 10).

Also, be ready to receive more seed than you ordered. Both packs came with gifts. I am currently battling with finding a home for Ukrainian heritage pumpkin, cucumber and courgette. There are worse problems. Particularly in Ukraine. I count my packets and blessings.

Allan Jenkins's Plot 29 (4th Estate, £9.99) is out now. Order it for £8.49 from guardianbookshop.com



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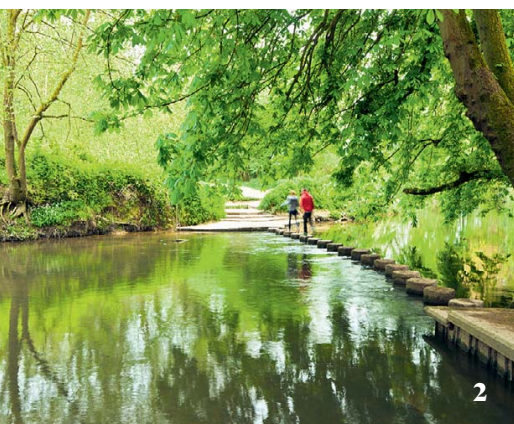
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1 Rewilding retreat, Cairngorms
Discover the richness of Scotland's wildlife on a week-long tour, focusing on the rewilding programmes that are opening up across the Highlands. The trip offers the chance to see red kites – recently reintroduced to the region – bottlenose dolphins and ospreys, as well as watching pine martens from a private hide. Visits to remote crofts include talks on rewilding and time with a ranger at the Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve, home to white-tailed eagles and red deer. The trip can also be booked as a private tour. *The six-night trip costs £1,395pp, including accommodation, all meals and a guide; wildernessscotland.com*



Call of the wild

Get close to nature on one of these top 10 UK wildlife weekends

Words ANNABELLE THORPE



2 Minibeast trips, Surrey
The Field Studies Council specialises in natural history days and experiences for schools, and also offers structured family holidays, based in FSC accommodation. Their three-night Minibeasts, Mice and the Mole weekend gives kids the chance to go river-dipping, set traps for small mammals (before releasing them), with plenty of time to explore the beautiful countryside around Box Hill. *A three-night break, departing on 28 October, costs £130 for adults/£100 for children, including all meals and activities; field-studies-council.org*

3 Dolphin tours, Cardigan Bay
Home to one of the largest dolphin populations in Europe, the 60-mile stretch of Cardigan Bay is populated by 250 of the aquatic mammals. Bay to Remember runs dolphin-watching trips from April to October, from a quick one-hour trip to a more in-depth two-hour experience that offers the best chance of seeing dolphins. Longer trips take in Cemaes Head, home to a grey seal population, and all offer the chance to see the guillemots, razorbills and cormorants that nest above the bay. Stay at the nearby Red Lion, which has simple but comfortable rooms from £80 B&B (redlioncardigan.co.uk). *One-hour dolphin trips from £26pp; baytoremember.co.uk*

4 Seal spotting, Farne Islands, Northumberland
One of the most wildlife-rich corners of England, this small group of islands off the Northumberland coast is home to thousands of grey seals and seabirds, with dolphins skimming through the surrounding waters. Billy Shiel's Boat Trips offers a variety of experiences, from 90-minute seal-spotting excursions to longer cruises, taking in the smaller islands, including the mythical Lindisfarne. Stay at the Joiners Arms in Newton-by-the-Sea, which has opulent doubles from £190 B&B (joiners-arms.com). *Seal cruises £20pp (farne-islands.com)*



5 Badger watching, Dorset
Notoriously difficult to spot, a badger seen in the wild is an unforgettable experience. Two hides at Badger Watch Dorset offer one of the best chances of seeing one. Each hide can be booked privately for up to eight people, from 6.30pm until midnight. Alongside badgers, the hides offer a good chance of seeing foxes, deer and rabbits. Stay in nearby Dorchester, where the King's Arms offers chic rooms from £105 B&B (thekingsarmsdorchester.com). *Hides cost £80 (1-4 people); £120 (5-8 people); badgerwatchdorset.co.uk*

6 Bird watching, Norfolk
The skies over Norfolk teem with birdlife from August through to November, when the autumn migrations see dozens of species, from sandpipers and egret to ibis and owls, pass over the coastline. Norfolk Birding offers a three-night birdwatching break each month, with accommodation in a traditional farmhouse and trips each day to different areas of the county. Walks take in the salt marshes and sand dunes. *A three-night birding weekend costs £390pp based on two sharing; norfolkbirding.com*

7 Red Stag Safari, Exmoor, Devon
See one of nature's most majestic species roaming free across open moorland on a half-day safari to some of the wildest, most stunning parts

of Exmoor. The safari offers the chance to see both red deer stags and other species from the comfort of a Land Rover. Book room at the Exmoor Forest Inn, where the cosy dining room offers produce from the pub's own farm. Doubles from £113 B&B (exmoorforestinn.com). *Red Stag Safari £75pp; redstagsafari.co.uk*

8 Seabirds and whales, Yorkshire
Once famous for its whaling fleet, the Yorkshire coast is one of the best places in England to spot Minke whales. Yorkshire Coast Nature runs day-long guided boat tours from Staithes, combining time on shore to familiarise the group with the variety of local sea birds, with up to six hours on the water, spotting whales, bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise. The Royal George is a classic fisherman's pub, with three comfortable rooms from £100 B&B (theroyalgeorgestaithes.co.uk). *Day trips £90pp; yorkshirecoastnature.co.uk*

9 Wild Islay kayaking, Hebrides
Islay is as famous for its wildlife as its whisky, due to its varied habitat of wet grassland, moorland, bog and lochs. One of the best ways to explore the coastline is by kayak. Kayak Wild Islay offers three-hour or full-day guided trips, taking in hidden coves, long sandy beaches and hidden ancient sites. Stay at Glenegedale House,



an award-winning B&B with rooms from £210 B&B (glenegedalehouse.co.uk). *Full day kayaking £80pp/half-day £60pp; kayakwildislay.co.uk*

10 Puffins, Skomer Island
Skomer Island, off the coast of Pembrokeshire, is the perfect place to spot the Atlantic Puffins – they arrive in April to nest and are here until the end of July. Seacoast Safaris offers a range of trips and there are boats available for private charter. The Bull in Beaumaris is a classic coaching inn with chic rooms from £121 B&B (bullsheadinn.co.uk). *A two-hour Puffin Island & Menai Strait cruise costs £38pp; seacoastsafaris.co.uk. ■*

Don't let envy spoil the successes of your friends. Celebrate them with the Arabic word 'mashallah'

Words YASMINA FLOYER

I don't feel envy very often and that isn't because I don't know anyone who is worthy of it. The people in my life are nothing short of brilliant. My friends and family are talented writers whose books and magazines I display proudly on my shelves. They are erudite psychologists, driven designers, artists and poets whose work moves me deeply. It is easy to celebrate their most recent successes, to which I say, "Mashallah."

Being raised Muslim, mashallah is an Arabic phrase that I use often, if not daily. Most commonly spelt as mashallah or mashaAllah, the most accurate way of representing the phrase in transliteration is ma sha Allah, which means, "What God has willed has happened." In many cultures it is believed that saying mashallah protects a person against the evil-eye. Another way of looking at it is that it shifts the focus from potential envy to admiration, gratitude and respect.

"Language and emotion are intrinsically linked," explains psychologist Dr Emma Hepburn. "There is evidence that having more finely tuned emotion words to describe our feelings is beneficial to us. The language we use, to both ourselves and others, both verbally and written, can impact how we feel. Kind words can calm and regulate us, while harsh words can create a threat response."

Perhaps in saying a phrase that actively seeks to protect the recipient from the threat of envy, I have been inadvertently protecting myself from allowing envy to get the better of me.

One of my earliest memories of feeling intensely envious of someone was during the winter when I was about eight years old. My best friend came to school wearing the most amazing cardigan. It was chunky and had little appliqué sheep and cows on the front, wool spun into green tufts for trees, and towards the shoulders were cream-coloured quilted clouds. Meanwhile, I had on the same thing I wore every day: a thin black acrylic jumper that no longer reached the knuckles of my bony wrists. I imagined how magnificent I'd feel enveloped in something as fabulous as a farm cardigan. I also imagined how it would feel to see my best friend accidentally spill the powder paints we were mixing together that day all over it. I imagined accidentally on purpose spilling the paint on to the cardigan myself, and for a moment that thought felt good. And then I remembered how she was the only person who bothered to make friends with me after weeks spent orbiting the perimeter of the playground. Hot shame coloured my cheeks red as I stirred my paint, because that is the colour of shame – the colour of blood.

The colour of envy is green. The green-eyed monster. The grass is always greener. Envy is considered a dark emotion. Not as sexy as anger can be made out to be, while melancholy and sadness can be fashioned towards



'Sit with darker feelings. They teach us something about what we really desire.' Yasmina Floyer

suggesting a depth of character. Envy, however, is something to be hidden within the shadow of ourselves. I think of the viral meme of Kermit the Frog standing opposite his doppelgänger cloaked in a hooded black robe. We are presented with the binary forces of good vs evil with the understanding that shadow Kermit represents all of our darkest thoughts and impulses, a mirror to regular Kermit's positive aspect. That the dialogue within these memes presents conflict emphasises this polarity. In my meme, the text above regular Kermit would read, "But she's my best friend." The text above Shadow Kermit would read, "Fuck

Having finely tuned words for feelings is beneficial for us

friendship, spill the paint." And Kermit, like my envy was back then, is the most vivid green. If anything had happened to the farm cardigan that day, I'd have felt personally responsible.

Navigating envy was far simpler in the pre-digital world of my childhood and adolescence. By the time I became a mother at

24, my peers were building their careers and grabbing life by the horns, all of which made me quit Facebook as quickly as I joined it. It was simply easier not to see the panoply of nights out, promotions and holidays that I was missing out on while I stayed home changing nappies. Filtered through the lens of my sleep-deprived, new-mother hormonal perspective, I knew I would have found it too much to bear seeing things that I wanted for myself, but, in that moment, had no way of having; too difficult not to feel a type of envy that would have winded me had I stayed online and gazed upon all of it.

The eye icon on my Instagram stories clocks up a tally of views whenever I post, reminding how the emergence of social media has added a real-time vector to our culture of hyperawareness. We are more aware than ever of seeing and being seen. Our eyes are pulled towards announcements, holiday snaps and successes like magpies drawn to shiny things so not only do we bear witness to the lives of those we physically interact with, we're now able to cast a figurative gaze upon the lives of those we have never met.

When I left Facebook as a new mother, I told people that it was because I am a private person. I'm too much of an introvert. I don't have time, what with the baby and

everything. I couldn't say that it was because logging on made me nauseous with envy. Jungian analyst Gail Collins-Webb tells me that, "Envy is one of the hardest emotions to talk about within analysis because it's closely associated with the emotion of shame, and shame goes to the heart of human suffering." She suggests that when experiencing envy, we should lean into it and allow it to instruct us: "Define what you're envious of. It's telling you something. For example, an introverted person may be very jealous of an extrovert's capacity to have lots of friends and create a network in a way that they're just not able to. When you're feeling envy towards somebody, what you're doing is projecting on to that person that they have this wonderful thing you want. And it's worth questioning, isn't it?"

Recently a close friend achieved something I count as one of my own personal goals. She is talented and hardworking and deserving of her success. For this reason, I find it easy to be happy for her without envy. "Mashallah, I am so happy for you," I said when she told me her good news, knowing that I too would love to achieve something like that one day. A while back, however, another friend achieved something that

I had yet to, didn't even have on my radar, and while I congratulated them, something about it bothered me. I had to admit that within the symphony of emotions I was experiencing, envy was the base note. I have never looked at this friend with envy before, yet this particular achievement brought up negative feelings. Collins-Webb tells me, "If you can follow your envy it can tell you what you want and it also tells you what your shadow is because you project it out."

When she says "shadow", she is referring to the darker aspects of our personality, which Carl Jung defined as our "shadow selves". He explains in his 1951 book, *Aion*, that, "To become conscious of [the shadow]... involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge." "Shadow work", then, is about acknowledging and learning from the unconscious, and the darker aspects of ourselves that we typically ignore and repress. It is about figuring out where they come from, because sitting with those feelings may teach us something about what we desire, or what we wish to change in our own lives.

When I interrogated my envy, I was able to trace it back to desire and a sense of injustice. I could recognise that the opportunity this friend had was the result of privilege and nepotism, so the feelings of envy began to dissipate. I also learned that I desired something like my friend had for myself, and not because they had it, but because I truly wanted it. Following my envy, then, led me towards a desire I didn't know I had and as a result set about working towards achieving what I wanted.

Clinical psychologist Dr Sabinah Janally says: "Words possess the power to crush or transform one's sense of self and perceived reality." I don't feel envy very often, but I realise that a large part of that comes from not avoiding it. To me, saying "mashallah" doesn't negate envy, it acknowledges that envy may well be present alongside acclaim and if I do find it sitting beside my praise and admiration, I encourage my gaze to turn inwards in order to see what it may be trying to show me. ■

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Séamas O'Reilly

Driving routes, planetary facts, giraffe diets... Our four-year-old is running rings around me

🐦 @shockproofbeats



My son turns four in a few days, and it feels big. Four years is a lot: the tenure of American presidents, the gap between World Cups and, to a lesser degree, European championships. Four years is the first age at which I have definite, clear memories of my own life. My first day in reception class, the smell of cheese sandwiches and hugging my teacher's shaking legs as my mum left the room. There's a vertiginous sense that the record button in his brain has well and truly switched on, and I should make a better effort not to say the wrong things.

He starts school in September so maybe it's best he doesn't go there thinking I'm actually the world's strongest man, that I used to work with three of the pups off *Paw Patrol*, or that giraffes look so weird because they're originally from Mars, but travelled all the way to Earth in search of their favourite food, burgers and chips.

Luckily, he's

working these things out for himself. The highlight of my day, every day, is his bedtime. This was once the time I read him stories and then had a short, sleepy chat before saying goodnight. Most nights we now just talk. It's an odd kind of chat, admittedly, since many of his tics are skimmed from conversational cues he's lifted from the adults around him. 'Daddy,' he'll ask, with an urgency hard for a four-year-old to justify while hugging his father in bed, 'what counties do you go through to get from Dublin to Derry?' I haven't begun to answer before he lists them off, fresh in his memory from the Counties of Ireland jigsaw he does several times a day and can now finish in around a minute. I've yet to do it in under three. 'That's if you're driving,' he assures me, with the corrective tone of a middle-aged civil servant, before listing the alternative counties bisected on the equivalent journey by train.

He peppers me with other questions and

corrections, mostly concerning space and dinosaurs and the impossibility of giraffes on Mars. I tell him maybe I've got it wrong and they live on Jupiter. He tells me you can't live on Jupiter because it's made of gas. A bead of sweat forms on my temple.

Every night he corrects me a little more than the last, and when he tires of it, he ends with the same question: 'What was your favourite part of the day?' This used to be my closing line, but recently he's started beating me to the punch. My answer always involves something we've done together: a walk in the park, making Play-Doh figures or doing farting noises with our mouths and blaming the resulting noises on his nana. These are all great options, but the real answer is right there and then: chewing the cud with him in a strange facsimile of adult conversation, forced to raise my game as an astounding, marvellous, terrifyingly near-four-year-old boy sleepily runs rings around his father.

Ask Philippa

How do I make friends so that my son has playmates?



🐦 @Philippa_Perry



Sunday with...

Broadcaster Clara Amfo on lazy breakfasts

Early riser? Even if I've had a big night, I get up around 7 or 8am. I'm an obsessive water drinker. My bladder is very healthy.

Breakfast? Usually porridge with cinnamon and agave or maple syrup. I've a mad sweet tooth. I'm based in east London and, if I'm feeling lazy, I order from Hash E8. They've got this pig sandwich with all the things you get from a well-looking-after pig in a bap.

What's next? Catching up on my stories: *Grey's Anatomy*, *Station 19*... anything Shonda Rhimes has made, I'll inject into my veins.

Do you exercise? There's nothing worse than a waste of a sunny day – it's all about that Vitamin D. I love local parks to do my main character walk. You listen to music and romanticise normal parts of the day as if you're in a movie.

Sunday soundtrack? I really like Rachel Chinouriri. And I'm forever a Janelle Monáe

fangirl. I've always loved their music, but one song, I Like That, is my own theme tune.

Sunday wardrobe? Jogging bottoms, sports bra and Air Max accessorised with a cute handbag. And I always have my hoops in.

Sundays growing up? Mum doing what she called 'plaiting your hair in a big way': traditional Ghanaian braiding. We'd have the telly on and I'd sit on the floor between her legs feeling safe and lovely.

Lights out? Between 10pm and 1am. If I need to get something done, particularly the tidying I procrastinate over, I'll whack on a podcast. *Why Won't You Date Me?* by comedian Nicole Byer is a great insight into what you should and maybe shouldn't do in amorous pursuits. Very funny. *Serial* freaked me out too much. True crime podcasts are fantastic, but send you to bed with anxiety. **Katherine Hassell**

Clara Amfo is the new ambassador for Pantene's Gold Series, specially created for Afro hair



The question I am a 32-year-old mum of a happy baby. I love him and I'm enjoying being on maternity leave. My husband is a lovely man who adores being a dad.

We have nice friends, but they are friends my husband has made. I go to the baby groups and I chat to people, but how do you actually make friends with someone? I was hoping our antenatal group would be a good place to make new friends, but it is a bit cliquey – it felt like being back in school. It felt competitive and we don't have much money for all the baby accessories, activities and classes. We went to a barbecue at one mum's house and it was a mansion and I'm embarrassed that our house is rented and small.

People have commented in the past that they don't know me, or it's a shame they never got to know me. At university, I focused on academic work rather than hanging out with people. Have I got some kind of undiagnosed problem? I'm worried that if I don't get into a group of mum friends, it will start to affect my child because he won't make toddler friends or go on play dates and I want to give him every chance of happiness.

Philippa's answer First, you *can* do relationships because you seem to have two good ones – with your baby and your husband. And you like his friends. It is quite possible you have mild autism, which may mean that bonding easily with people outside your immediate family doesn't seem to happen easily. And you do seem to prefer your own company rather than seeking out others. If you feel it is a problem you could go to your GP and ask for an autism assessment. A diagnosis of autism may help you access therapy or support groups.

One doesn't usually make good friends based on the size of the their house or how many baby accessories they have. I think spending time alone at university was probably a preference for you, rather than a need to study all the time. You talk about the mums' group being cliquey. That is the nature of all humans. Within a group, subgroups naturally form. In any school, any workplace, social group, and in large families, people will form subgroups. This isn't a bad thing or a good thing, it's just normal human behaviour. Getting closer to a person or a couple of people means a subgroup forms.

Mild autism may be the reason you are finding making friends difficult, but there might be other reasons. We can unconsciously develop strategies of how to be in the world in response to our early environment. Then the defences that helped us before become a hindrance and hold us back in new environments. What was self-preserving can become self-sabotaging. It could be that at some point during your development something was happening that made you, consciously or unconsciously, decide you were better off not making friends and you could manage without.

Be curious for your own sake about making new friends

I notice that, in your mind, the mums become the same school children who may once have excluded you. And yet you have been invited to the barbecue and it is you who is ruling the mum out because her house is too big. I wonder if you prefer your own company to that of other people and then try to rationalise it.

Part of the problem is that you want to make friends for your son's sake rather than for your own. I don't know if it's possible to form genuine connections and alliances if you are not doing it for the enjoyment and sense of kinship for yourself. Others have said it's a shame they had not got to know you, but you don't say whether this made you sad, too. Your son's relationship with you and your husband will be more of a blueprint for his subsequent relationships than your relationships to your peers – so don't worry on his behalf, he'll make his friends at nursery. It is for your own sake that you can be curious about why you might be difficult to get to know.

What can get in the way of connecting can be anxiety about how we come across. A way of circumnavigating that feeling is to supplant it by being interested instead in the person we've met. This means shifting your focus away from self-consciousness and towards them. When we manage this, it becomes easier to be delighted in someone rather than drained by them.

You can meet people and chat to them, but the real business of friendship happens after that, when you use your courage to open yourself up, share your vulnerabilities and take care of other people when they open up to you. I expect you have shared on this level with your husband and, if so, you can with others, too.

Recommended reading: *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* by Eric Berne – this is about learning what adaptations you may unconsciously have built up throughout your life and how much easier it is to connect after we have let these defences go.

Don't worry too much; one small step at a time. Concentrate on enjoying yourself, your family and your maternity leave. ■

✉ **Write to us:** If you have a question, send a brief email to askphilippa@observer.co.uk. To have your say on this week's column, go to observer.co.uk/ask-philippa



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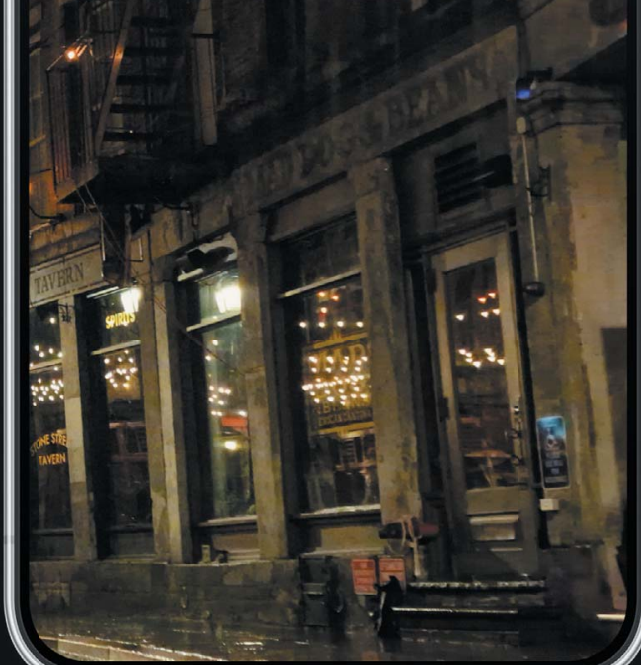
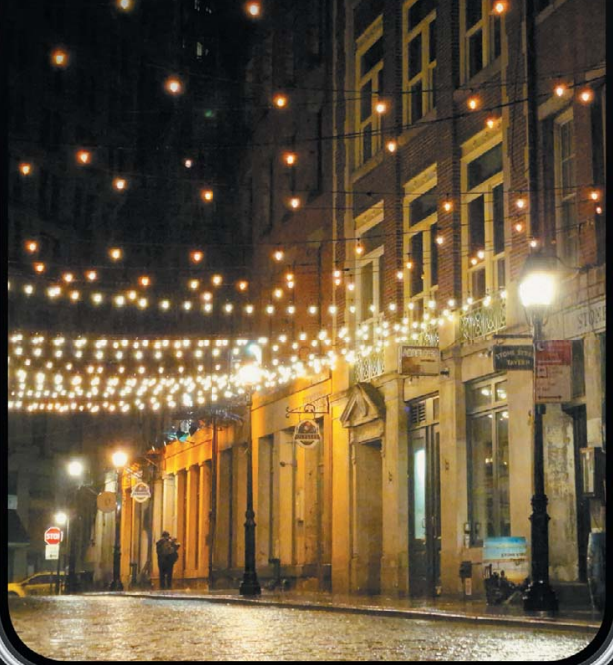
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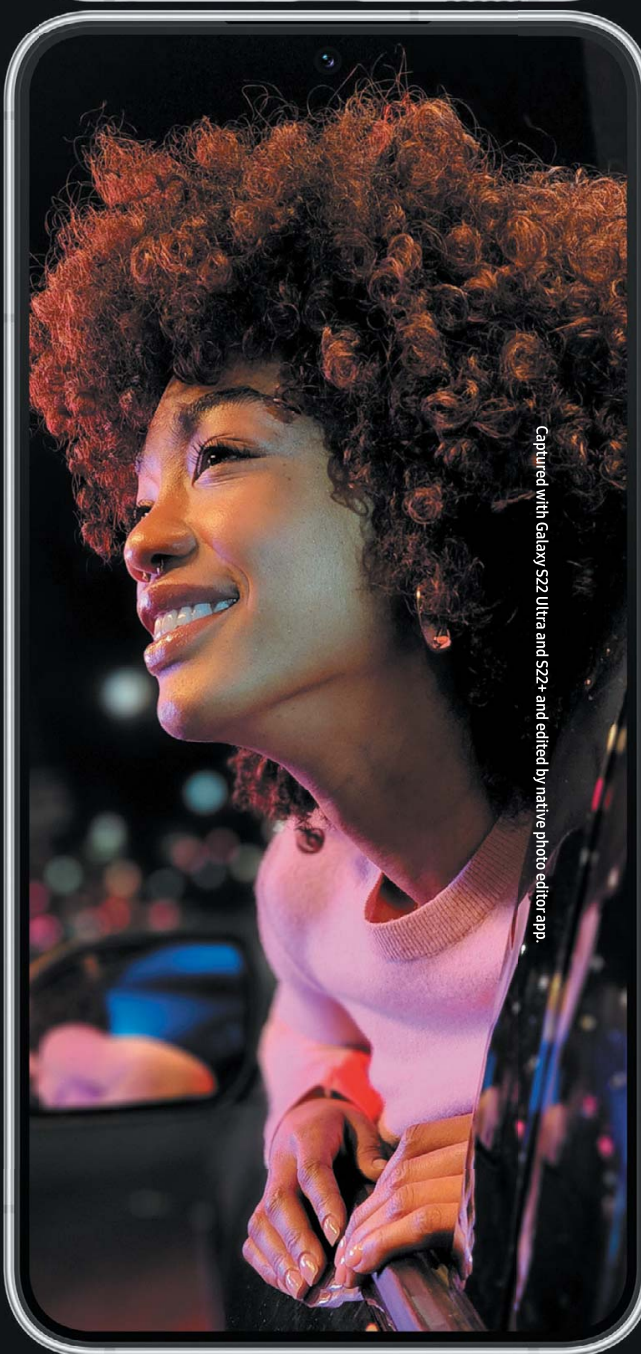
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