A new era for women

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WOMANKIND

A NEW ERA FOR WOMEN

Hope theory

Your fashion personality

Self-discovery journaling

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Big Ben and Houses of Parliament on the Thames River in Westminster, London

23

Peak times

ANTONIA CASE

Editor-in-Chief, *Womankind magazine*

"As soon as I saw the house, I knew my life would be changed forever," she says. The country farmhouse in England is bought and a new path is forged. This is an example of an unexpected find which spins life on a new axis.

It's these moments in life that we crave. The unexpected good news, the fortunate find, a sudden shift in perspective that makes everything clear and our future somehow predictable. "I know who I am, my purpose, and my path!" We read the biographies of such people who have an epiphany, and wish the same would happen to us.

As romantic as this sounds, life is rarely this simple and peak experiences rarely come from out of nowhere like a bolt of lightning. Rather, as American psychologist Abraham Maslow describes, if we are to have 'peak experiences' in life we need to practise them. Maslow, who loved listening to Romantic composers and watching birds, trained his patients to stare intently at a flower, believing that "the sacred is in the ordinary, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbours, friends, and family, in one's backyard."

While modern life directs us to seek 'peak experiences' online, in shopping, eating, and holidaying about, or finding the perfect renovation project, we might be better served to adopt the English idiom to "stop and smell the roses". It's sound advice.

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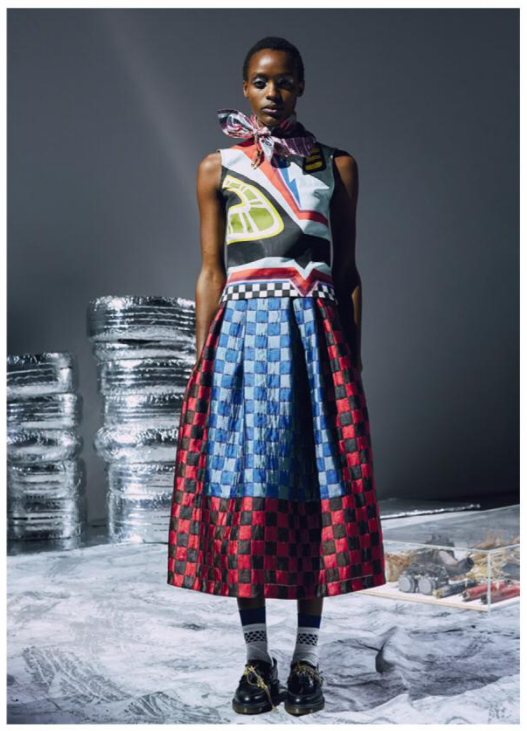

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WOMANKIND
MAGAZINE

Editor's letter, from launch issue of Womankind magazine

Manifesto

What is a 'good life'?
What makes a life worth living?

It's the one question that we'd all like to know the answer to, so we could just get on with it - the living part, that is. If we knew what the 'good life' entailed then we could shun the rest, and just concentrate on the important bits. But society has a tendency to derail us. We're repeatedly told that the good life is about making loads of money, having a successful career and buying as much as we can possibly shovel into our houses and garages. Some are convinced that they need to be famous and get their name up in lights for the good life to kick in. It's worth remembering that the phase of flight for the *Kunanyia stephaniae* butterfly lasts a mere 14 days, long enough for her to find a mate, have a family and watch the cycle of life turn again. Unlike the butterfly, we are blessed with time. Time is on our side. In the course of a lifetime, we can move mountains. So, what are we waiting for? We're proud to announce the launch of *Womankind* magazine, the first women's magazine to shun the things that the mainstream media tell us make for a good life. We like to think that we can aim higher.

WOMANKIND

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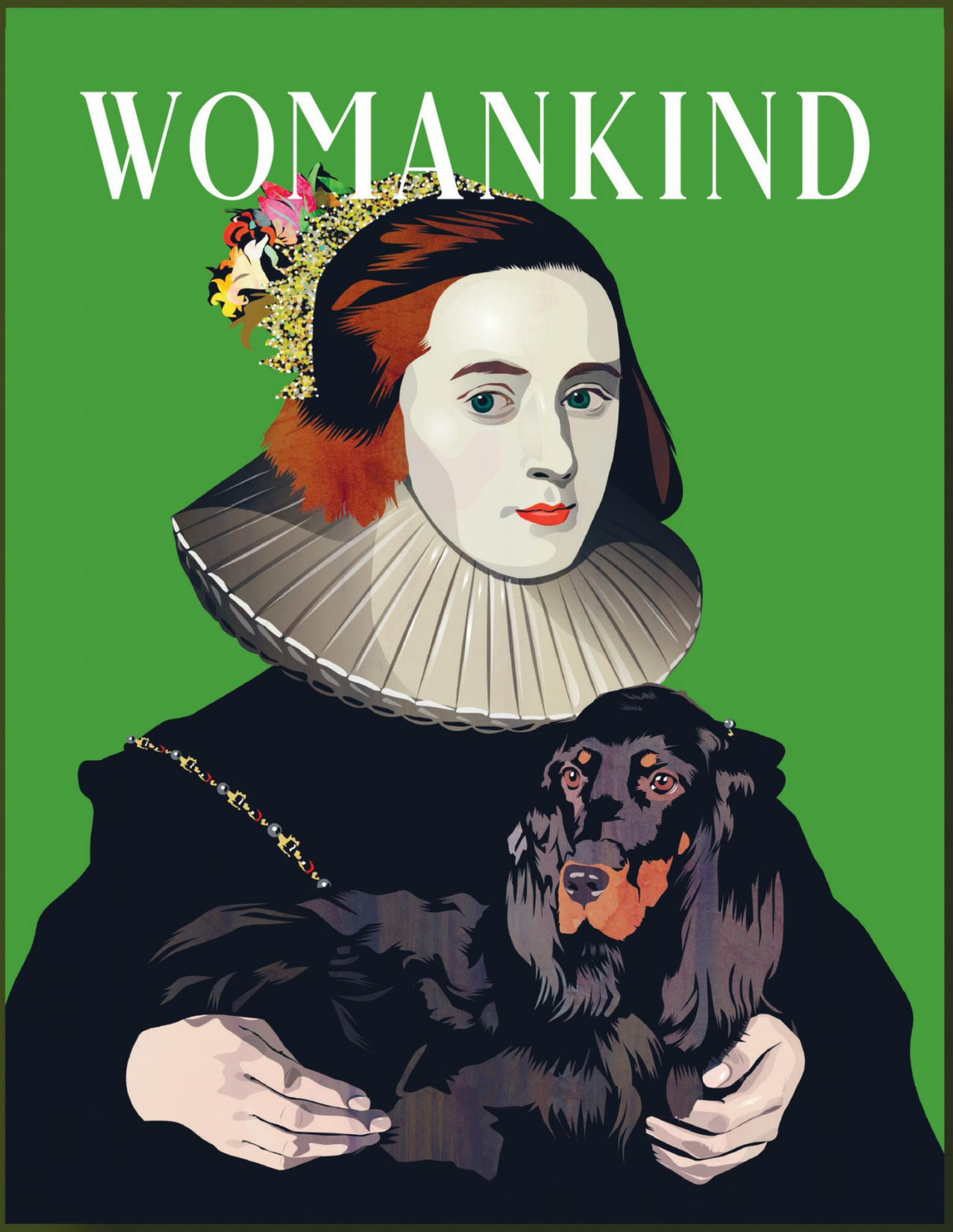

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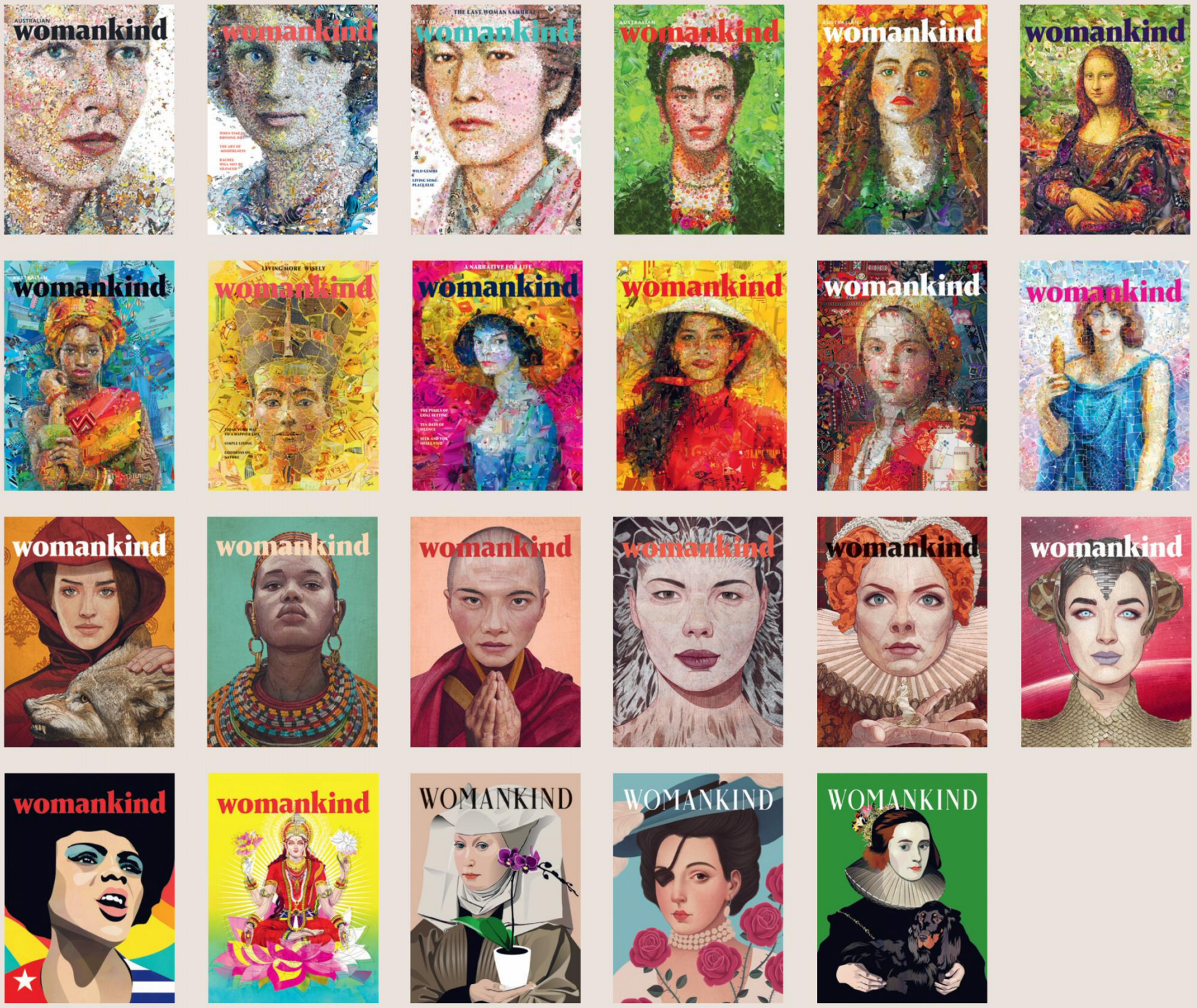

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Hope theory

When bad things happen, hope is sometimes all we're left with, and sometimes it doesn't feel like much. Hope, after all, is merely a feeling, there's nothing guaranteed about hope. You can't hang on to 'hope' like you can hold on to a positive diagnosis, a sunny forecast, or plain good news. For some, hope can feel rather pathetic, as though one should be bravely facing the worst not just 'hoping' for things to turn out alright.

But, according to American psychologist Charles Snyder, hope is an essential emotion we should be cultivating in our day-to-day lives. Snyder's 'Hope Theory' posits that people with higher levels of hope create better outcomes across the board. An athlete training for a competition should be 'hopeful' of winning; a student working on an essay should be 'hopeful' of good grades. But you might be thinking: what's the point in just hoping for good things to happen? Well, according to psychologists Kevin Rand and Jennifer Cheavens, there is a very good reason why: "Higher hope corresponds with superior academic and athletic performance, greater physical and psychological wellbeing, and enhanced interpersonal relationships." Hope, the psychologists say, is the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways. In other words, being hopeful makes us think about what we want, how we can make it happen, and what we should do when something or someone gets in our way.

I'll be there, by George Underwood

"Contrary to popular belief, intelligence and ability are not the only determinants of students' classroom successes," writes Snyder in his paper *Hope and Academic Success in College*. There are plenty of clever college students who fail, drop out, and get poor grades. Snyder found that "high hope" college students are more likely to graduate than their "low hope" peers; low hope students were also more likely to be dismissed. Hence, we can see that 'hope' is more than just wishful thinking. In fact, for Snyder hope is not even regarded as an emotion at all but is a "cognitive motivational system".

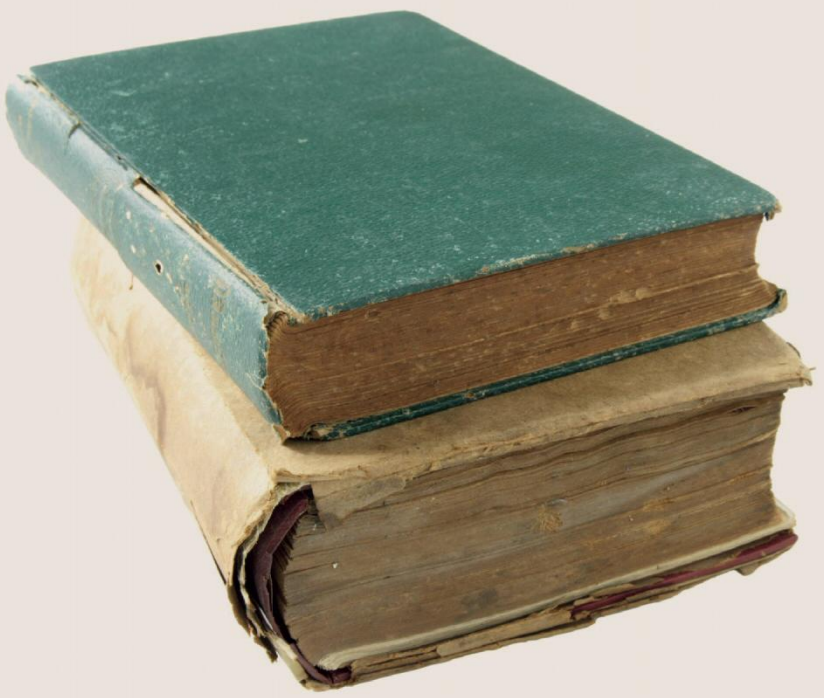
"Hope is potent," writes Heather Fiske in her book, *Hope in Action*. When social workers treat patients suffering from trauma, grief, chronic anxiety, and other ills, hope, singles out Fiske, is the "foundation for therapeutic change". Fiske adds that hope is "one of the most powerful common factors in successful treatments." Even if it's transitory, hope predicts recovery, and is "associated with the capacity for learning new behaviours, skills, or ways of thinking".

Hope is a lens through which we can view our lives, the future, its challenges, upsets, difficulties, and opportunities. If anything, as Snyder suggests, hope is like a rainbow, a prism of multi-coloured light; it lights our spirits and makes us think of what is possible.

SELF-DISCOVERY JOURNALING

"But to be quite oneself one must first waste a little time."
— **Elizabeth Bowen**

"Know thyself," is the English translation of an ancient Greek aphorism, carved into stone at the entrance to the temple of Apollo at Delphi, Greece. *Know thyself* is one of 100 maxims displayed on the temple walls - *Shun murder*, *Crown your ancestors* and *Control the eye* among others. The saying may have been made famous by Greek philosopher Socrates, but *how* one is supposed to know oneself isn't so well-known. One method of self-analysis used by psychotherapists is journaling, randomly scribbling down whatever comes to mind. As a daily practice, journaling might involve writing about the milk you forgot to pick up, a lonely woman you spotted on a street corner, or the places you hope to visit one day. While all this scribbling may not amount to much, over time,



and with patience, you may begin to notice a pattern to your ideas, a link between your grievances, or a tone and colour to your thoughts. It's what you do today, and how you live your life in this very moment, that's fast unfurling your future; and writing about it, jotting it all down, in some sense, allows you to see, and know yourself. Not only who you are, but more interestingly, who you will become.

"A writer - and, I believe, generally all persons - must think that whatever happens to him or her is a resource. All things have been given to us for a purpose, and an artist must feel this more intensely. All that happens to us, including our humiliations, our misfortunes, our embarrassments, all is given to us as raw material, as clay, so that we may shape our art."

— **Jorge Luis Borges**

Fashioning your image

What are you wearing today? Take a look. And then take a look at your immediate surroundings. You are an actor on stage, standing within a setting - and what you wear, the setting, props, your gestures and speech are all interpreted by others around you, just like in a play. The audience is watching you perform, and they will use these inputs to form a narrative about you.

In the 1956 sociology book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*, Erving Goffman put forward the idea that we guide and control the impression others have of us in everyday life, much like an actor on stage. And we do this through a range of inputs. Are you wearing a fancy green business suit, or gym pants and t-shirt? Are you standing within a minimalist room with a green pot plant and a hessian mat, or are you sitting on an old sofa on a dusty porch with a cat at your feet? Either way, others around you are forming a judgement about you, even before you say your first lines.

In his theories on the arts of impression management, Goffman explains that there is a front stage where we act in front of others, and a back stage, where we prepare for our role, or even set it aside for a while. In preparation for the front stage, we may fix or change our appearance, setting, and manner; we may clean up our stuff, put on make-up, brush our hair, calm ourselves, place a vase of flowers on the shelf, and then once ready, we enter the front stage once more, to appear before an audience who form an opinion about us. As actors, we try to maintain some consistency in our role; hence it's unlikely we'll whip off our gym gear and throw on a superhero outfit instead; so as to maintain our role, and so not to confuse the audience, our social status will be more-or-less consistent whether we're engaged in work, play, sport, family, or social functions. In 2000, scholars Alison Guy and Maura Banim interviewed women on why they wore what they wore. The women in the study were asked to keep a clothing diary log, and answer questions such as "what clothing means to me." Cupboards were thrown open to reveal their current clothing style. The researchers discovered that women typically use clothing to bridge the gap between who they are right now, and the person they hope to be in the future. Other clothing fell into the category of "the woman I fear I could be" - clothes that resulted in a negative self-expression. The final category was "the woman I am most of the time". *Caveat emptor*.

Hair Peace, by George Underwood

Cotswald cottages in Bilbury, England

"Thinking is generally thought of as doing nothing in a production-oriented society, and doing nothing is hard to do. It's best done by disguising it as doing something, and the something closest to doing nothing is walking."

— **Rebecca Solnit**

AIMLESS WALKING

While it may appear to some as a waste of time, French literary critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve thought the act of walking with no destination in mind, and for no particular purpose, was the "very opposite of doing nothing". In fact, aimless walking in 19th century Paris was so respected, those who engaged in it even had a name: *flâneur*. To aimlessly walk the streets of Paris, doing little more than observing the crowd, frequenting the boulevards, cafés, parks, and arcades, for no other purpose than to frequent them, was elevated to an art form. In his book *Midlife, A Philosophical Guide*, Kieran Setiya describes the accomplishment of reaching middle age. "I feel the finitude of life: the years are numbered, time is moving fast," he writes. Happily married with a child, a tenured professor in philosophy, Setiya unexpectedly found himself at a loss. "I felt a sense of repetition and futility, of projects completed just to be replaced by more," he writes. The mid-life crisis is well documented; to relieve the boredom of middle age some people overhaul the lot - career, house, car, wife, or husband, all tossed out in a maddening purge. But as Setiya discovers through the work of 19th century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, throwing out to start anew puts the mid-lifer at the beginning of the road again - a sudden novice, a mid-life failure. Since success and accomplishment are pushed out to some future time, suffering is inevitable. But to continue treading the mid-life path as before, reeks of normalcy. What to do? Setiya's answer is to take up the mindset of the flâneur. The answer lies in aimless pursuits, like walking to nowhere, pursued for its own sake, with no other intent. "Think of listening to music, parenting, or spending time with friends. They are things you can stop doing, but you cannot finish or complete them. Their temporality is not that of a project with an ultimate goal, but of a limitless process," he writes.

The power of pets

Should I buy a gym membership or a dog? While the two choices seem utterly unrelated, research suggests that owning a dog will probably make you fitter, seeing you exercise about 30 minutes more a day compared to non-dog owners, regardless of the weather. In fact, even on cold, wet, and dark days, if you own a dog you're likely to get out and about more than non-dog owners will manage even on a perfectly sunny day. Researchers from Cambridge University and the University of East Anglia studied 3,123 people from Norfolk between the ages of 49 and 91, noting that dog ownership might be a better option than even a gym membership for people lacking the motivation to exercise. "Physical activity interventions typically try and support people to be active by focusing on the benefits to themselves, but dog walking is also driven by the needs of the animal," noted project leader Professor Andy Jones. In other words, while we all know that exercise is great for us, it's not so easy to find the time; but the forlorn face of 'Tucker' is motivation enough to get us out the door. The study found that dog owners even exercised more than people who signed up to group exercise classes. Apparently, dogs are helpful companions for not just exercising, but other studies on pet ownership show that owning a dog can boost feel-good chemicals oxytocin and endorphins, can lower blood pressure, reduce risk of coronary artery disease, and even surround us with wonderfully diverse bacteria that can prevent us from getting sick. Dog ownership in Britain has apparently hit a new record at nine million dogs, according to the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association, with 26 per cent of households now keeping a least one dog. The friendly Labrador Retriever is the most popular breed, followed by the French Bulldog and Cocker Spaniel. The black and tan Gordon Setter dog, our chosen animal for this England issue of *Womankind*, is a large dog in the setter family that also includes the Irish Setter and the England Setter.

"Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

— Epicurus

THE BRONTË SISTERS

"Crying does not indicate that you are weak. Since birth, it has always been a sign that you are alive."

— **Charlotte Brontë**

When Patrick Brontë died at age 84, he outlived his wife and six children by decades. Born 'Brunty', Patrick changed his surname in adulthood to the more intriguing 'Brontë' complete with the diaeresis over the letter 'e'. The motivation, thought his biographer, was to associate himself with the Duke of Brontë, who he also liked to emulate by way of dress. The name change served his daughters well, three of whom became famous writers, Emily Brontë, the author of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë, who wrote *Jane Eyre*, and Anne Brontë, the lesser known of the threesome but no less talented, who wrote *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Anne was just three months old when the family moved into Haworth Parsonage in West Yorkshire, her mother dying from uterine cancer just 17 months after relocating. Lacking the money to send his daughters to more illustrious schools, Patrick enrolled his eldest Maria, as well as Elizabeth, Charlotte, and Emily in the Clergy Daughters' School at Lancashire, only to see them sent back a year later - his eldest Maria, age 11, dead from tuberculosis, and his second eldest, Elizabeth, suffering the same fate two weeks after returning home. Charlotte, Emily, and Anne stayed home at the parsonage, surrounded by windswept moors, studying and reading literature, inspired by Patrick's extensive library. Here, the young writers wrote their famous works, only for their literary output to be prematurely cut short by the same illness that took their sisters: tuberculosis. Emily died first, at age 30, and *Wuthering Heights* was her only novel. Less than six months later, Anne died, age 29. Charlotte completed *Shirley: A Tale* in the parsonage with her father, now blind. She died six years after Anne's death, at age 38, due to complications from pregnancy.

Anne, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, By Patrick Branwell Brontë

“Some people are moulded by their aspirations, others by their hostilities.”

Elizabeth Bowen,
The Death of the Heart

Illustration by Monica Barengo

WOMANKIND

Artist

English artist George Underwood waits for his canvasses to reveal themselves, an imaginary process that forever surprises.

Philosophical musings

Artwork
GEORGE
UNDERWOOD

Walk on By, by George Underwood

Amethyst, by George Underwood

I was born in Bromley, Kent, South East of London in 1947. I was the youngest with two sisters, Christine and Patricia, five and 14 years older than me. My father was a wholesale greengrocer and my mother was a lovely lady who worked hard creating a happy family.

One of my earliest memories was seeing my eldest sister, Tricia, drawing a face which she was copying from a fashion magazine. I thought then that I wanted to draw and be good at it. When I was about nine, I remember seeing Salvador Dalí's painting *Slave Market With The Disappearing Bust Of Voltaire*. It was then that I realised that painting has no boundaries and is capable of transmitting strong emotions.

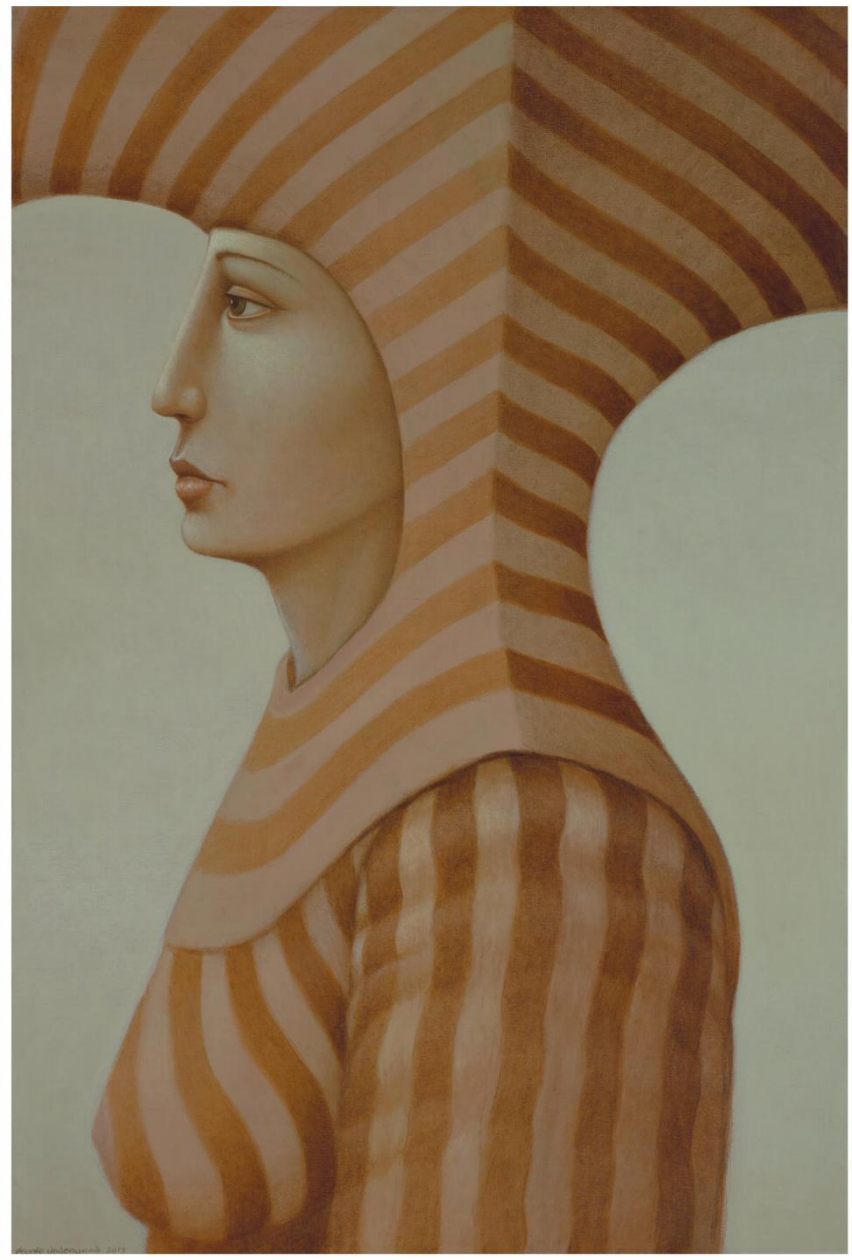
My paternal grandmother kept sheets of blank paper at her house for me to draw on. She encouraged me from a very early age and said I wasn't going to be a greengrocer but a famous artist. She died when I was 10, so this was when I was very young. You don't forget stuff like that.

In 1956, aged nine, I joined the 18th Bromley Cub Scouts. On that day I met someone who was about to become my lifelong friend. His name was David Robert Jones. He later changed it to David Bowie. We shared a love of popular music which at that time was making a seismic shift. Rock and Roll was being born.

We would talk for hours about all sorts of things - science fiction, art, fashion, but mostly music and everything

Leader, by George Underwood

Noble, by George Underwood



Prime, by George Underwood

American. In 1959 we went to the same secondary school - Bromley Technical School for Boys. In the third year, we were fortunate to be streamed into an art course. It was there in 1962 that the 'eye' thing happened. I have told this story so many times now, so I won't elaborate. It was about a girl that David and I both fancied. He made me so angry by lying to me and I hit him in the eye.

His eye was damaged more than I intended and after an operation his left pupil didn't dilate any more. It also changed the colour, so his left eye looked quite different from the right eye. However, it didn't affect our friendship thank goodness and David later told me that I had done him a favour. Phew!

Getting back to my painting process, I have loads of sketchbooks that are full of ideas. I use these sketches which range from scribbles to quite tight drawings as my stimulus for the finished painting. I have done paintings in a random fashion in the past, but I find this process takes too long. Time is important. Especially when you get to my age.

I am alone in my studio when I work. I sometimes listen to music and sometimes I like silence. It just depends on how I am feeling that day. My wife Birgit is very good at pinpointing things in a painting that she either likes or thinks need more attention. She is my best critic and the only person who sees my painting in progress. Actually, that's not quite true as my daughter Mia, her two daughters Lilly and Eva, plus my son Tas, his wife Claudia and daughter Elsa all like to see what I am doing when they visit.

People often ask me where I get my ideas from. The only way I can answer that is from my experience of looking and remembering. I am a hunter-gatherer when it comes to stimulus.

I can't think of any advice given to me by another artist - although my advice would be to always be true to yourself. I know it's a bit of a cliché, but it works.

The Chieftain, by George Underwood

The Philosopher's Wife, by George Underwood

Lady with Diamond Tunic, by George Underwood

Woman with Striped Sleeves, by George Underwood

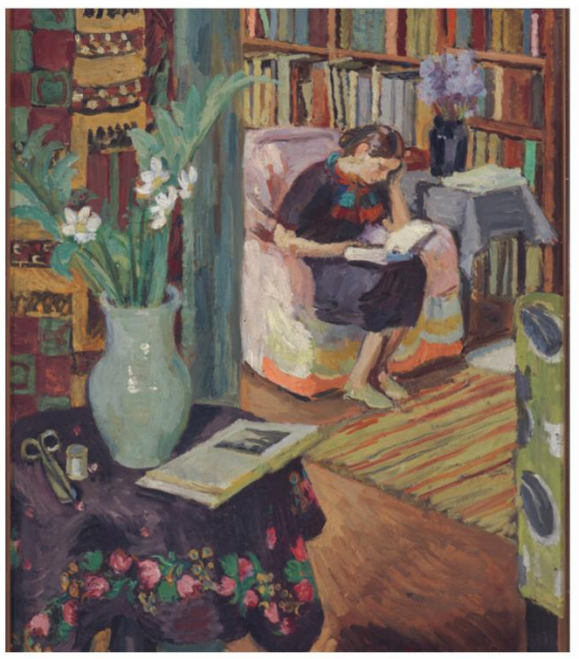
White Magic Woman, by George Underwood

Charleston Studio Charleston Dining Room © Penelope Fewster

“When I am a famous painter…”

Vanessa Bell was one of those people who seems to have tried to cut her life from the whole cloth - integrating art, design, motherhood, running a household, and nurturing a coterie of artists and influential thinkers, while at the same time staying true to progressive unorthodox principles and a life of artistic self-determination.

Elder sister of the better-known Virginia Woolf and their two brothers Thoby and Adrian, Vanessa Bell was long used to shouldering the burden of caring for others. At the age of 16, when her mother died, she’d taken on the running the household for her father and siblings, and had already earned the rather sarcastic nickname, from Virginia, of “The Saint”. The name stuck, and she remained The Saint when the girls and Thoby moved to a new, brighter house in Gordon Square in Bloomsbury after the death of their autocratic and strict father, the ‘eminent man of letters’ Sir Leslie Stephen.



Interior with the artist’s daughter (c 1935–1936), by Vanessa Bell, The Charleston trust

Artist

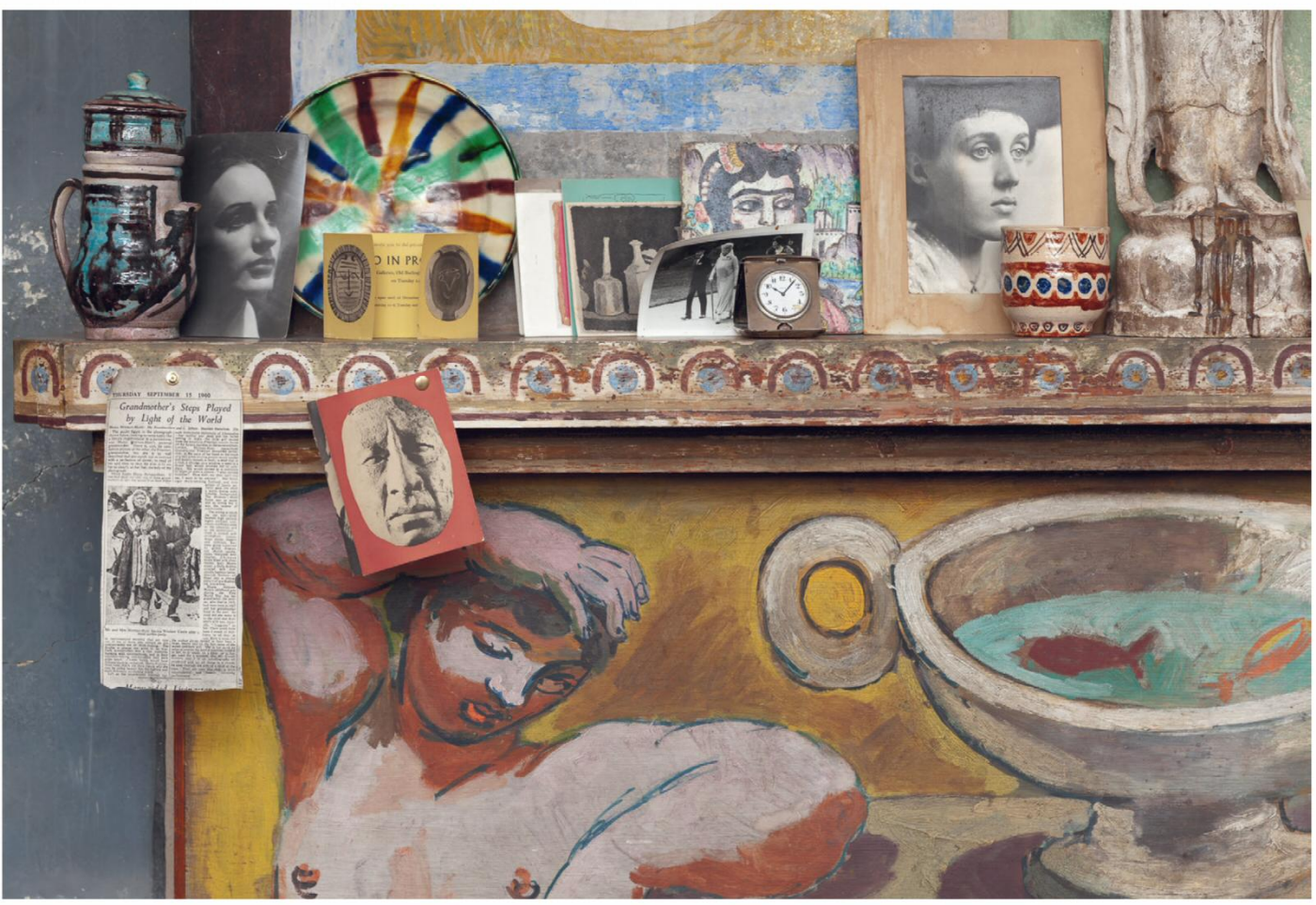
Artist Vanessa Bell, who played a pivotal role in the artistic and literary movement known as the Bloomsbury Group, is only now gaining the prominence she deserves. Her legacy is memorialised in recent gallery retrospectives, but it is also palpably evident in a country house in Firle, Sussex, called Charleston.

Vanessa Bell and the world of Charleston

Words
CATE KENNEDY

Photography
PENELOPE FEWSTER, JON SANTA CRUZ, THE CHARLESTON TRUST

Still life of pears and everlasting flowers c.1945, by Vanessa Bell. The Charleston Trust

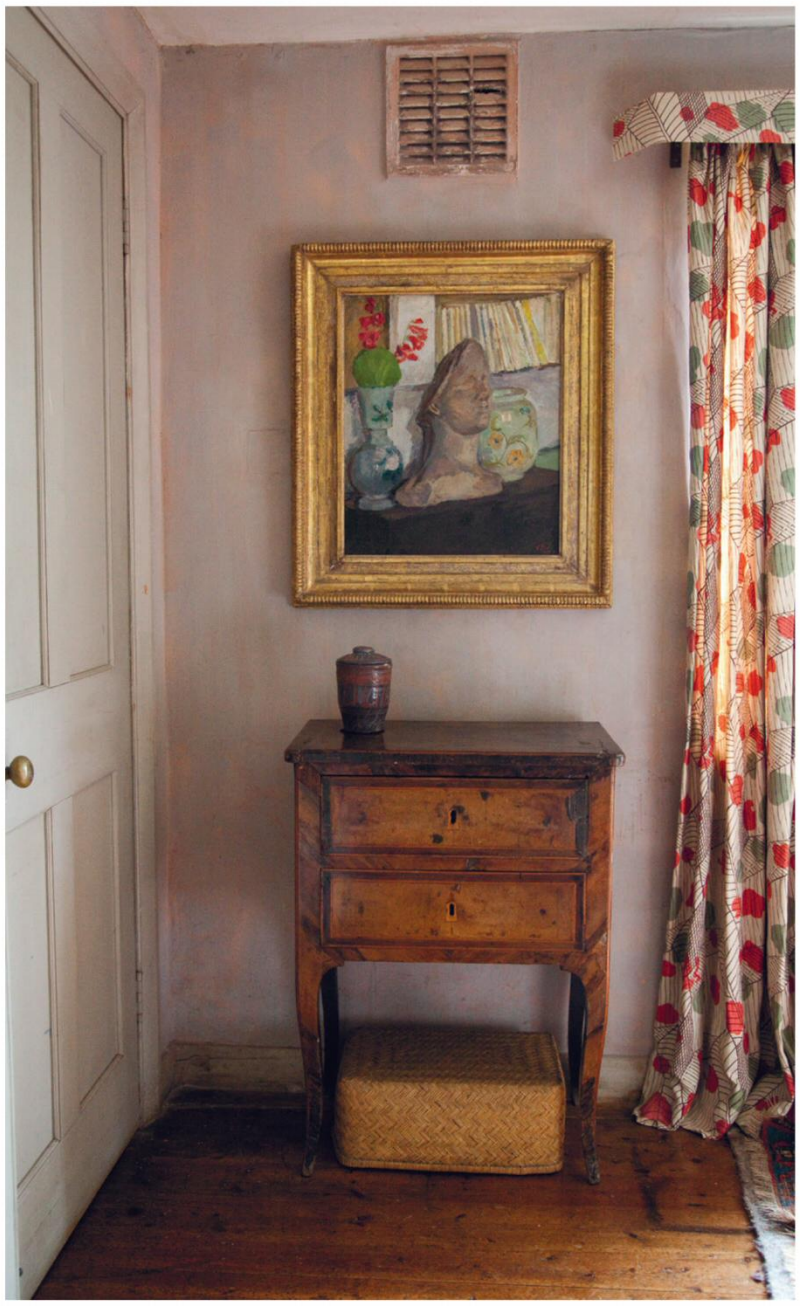


Charleston Studio, Charleston Dining Room © Penelope Fewster

"It was exhilarating to have left the house in which had been so much gloom and depression," Vanessa wrote later, "to have come to those white walls, large windows opening onto trees and lawns, to have one's own room, be master of one's own time." The seeds of the Bloomsbury Group were planted when the sisters became hostesses for parties and 'daring conversation' when Thoby brought home from Cambridge an influential group of young men avidly engaged in arts, literature, and radical politics.

Vanessa began painting in earnest and in 1905 initiated the Friday Club, a prominent band of artists and exhibitors. In 1910, she was mesmerised by the work of Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso, whose work shocked most Edwardian viewers. "Here was a sudden pointing to a possible path, a sudden liberation and encouragement to feel for oneself," she wrote after seeing England's first Post Impressionist exhibition, which featured their work. "Perhaps no one but a painter can understand it... but it was as if one might say things one had always felt instead of trying to say things that other people told one to feel."

Vanessa Bell's bedroom © Penelope Fewster



Charleston Garden Room Charleston Dining Room © Penelope Fewster

Vanessa had married the art critic Clive Bell, but Bloomsbury was all about free love, as Dorothy Parker wittily noted when she said of the group: "They live in squares, paint in circles and love in triangles." Bell fathered her two sons and then engineered a double betrayal by having an affair with Virginia, and the couple split.

Vanessa certainly didn't mope. She moved from London to the country house of Charleston in Sussex in 1916 to continue to pursue the kind of determinedly bohemiam artistic life she'd been instrumental in setting up in Bloomsbury. Her sister had seen the house in the area after renting another country estate herself nearby.

"Leonard went over it, and says it's a most delightful house," Virginia wrote to her sister Vanessa. "It has a charming garden, with a pond, and fruit trees, and vegetables, all now run rather wild, but you could make it lovely."

Perhaps Vanessa saw, in this opportunity, a possible path and a sudden liberation. In any case, she didn't go alone. With her was her lover, the artist Duncan Grant, Grant's bisexual lover David "Bunny" Garnett, Vanessa's two sons Julian and Quentin, a nurse, a maid, a cook, and a dog. The move from London was partly precipitated by Grant and Garnett finding some labouring work on a nearby farm, which exempted them from military service in World War One; they were avowed pacifists and conscientious objectors.

"It will be an odd life, but... it ought to be a good one for painting," said Vanessa at the prospect of the move, and how right she was.

Vanessa's relationship with her husband, although they separated, seemed to remain amicable and he continued to support his sons. Perhaps he even paid the rent on Charleston. And perhaps there weren't the strict bond and tenancy laws which now penalise renters from making so much as a nail hole in the wall of their rental property without permission, because it wasn't long after Vanessa and Grant moved into the old boarding house that they painted over the floral wallpaper with whitewash and set to work on making the house a flourishing and rather fantastical work of art in its own right.

They never technically owned Charleston, but in the 64-year

Charleston Library Charleston Dining Room © Jon Santa Cruz

course of their tenancy, when they used the house both full-time and as a summer home, they made huge alterations and renovations, installed a walled garden, turned the chicken house into a studio, and basically created what is today the only intact Bloomsbury-style interior still remaining. Remodellings in the house, which has become Bloomsbury's defining legacy, were taken on with impulsive spontaneity.

In childhood, Vanessa and Virginia had made a sibling pact: Vanessa would be a famous artist and Virginia would be a writer. "Until she was fifteen indeed, she was outwardly sober and austere, the most trustworthy, and always the eldest; sometimes she would lament her responsibilities," wrote Virginia later. "But beneath the serious surface, there burnt also the passion for art... Once I saw her scrawl on a black door a great maze of lines, with white chalk. 'When I am a famous painter' - she began, and then turned shy and rubbed it out in her capable way."

There was no such shyness once Vanessa gave her fresh, joyous style free reign at Charleston. She seems to have greeted every new blank surface with relish, painting not just on canvasses but on fireplace surrounds, window embrasures, door panels, tabletops, walls, and furniture. Influenced by Fauvism and Cubism, her work was later categorised as English Post-Impressionism, a style which in her hands is not only uninhibited and harmonious but sensuous and spontaneous, reminiscent of Modigliani as well as Matisse. She stencilled wallpaper and designed and printed fabrics, which she then made into curtains, cushions, and bedspreads. She decorated pots and tiles and worked on commission designs for textiles, crockery and ceramics.

The house, now a museum and gallery open to the public, is an extraordinary mélange of stencilled and painted surfaces, frescoes, post-impressionistic murals, and figurative memorial tiles (including one to Henry, that original dog) nestled in bucolic cottage gardens full of statues, mosaic pavements, and tile-edged pools.

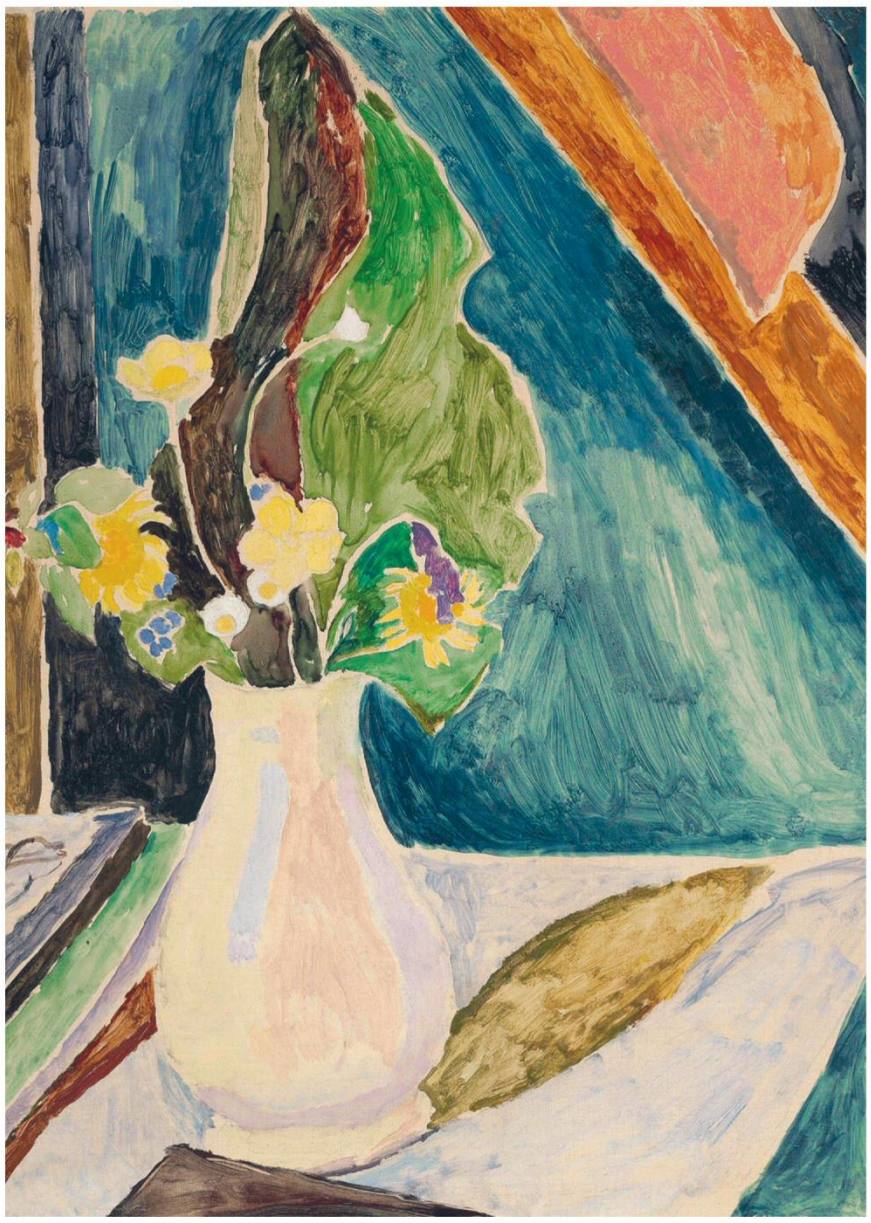
At the centre of all the comings and goings and writing and painting was Vanessa, seemingly drawing endless inspiration from it all and making a house with no hot water and no central heating into a warm, welcoming sanctuary for visiting artists, writers, and intellectuals, as well as for her own family.

"The house seems full of young people in very high spirits," she wrote in 1936, "laughing a great deal at their own jokes... lying about in the garden which is simply a dithering blaze of flowers and butterflies and apples."

Vanessa seems to have juggled the ongoing responsibilities and possible tensions created by her unconventional life with aplomb. She had enormous devotion for Grant and the Bloomsbury coterie, who all used the house over the years to pursue their own work and amorous adventures. It's a complicated map of pansexual activity, but those who think polyamory is a bold new millennial adventure might be as shocked as staid Edwardian London to learn of its complicated details, and the topic

Still life of plums c.1945, V.B. The Charleston Trust

Still Life Wild Flowers, c.1915, Vanessa Bell, Private Collection



has been periodically the subject of several films and BBC series. In a nutshell, Vanessa Bell walked the walk. She didn't just welcome her husband Clive's new mistress; she painted her a headboard for her bed as a gift. She decorated and furnished a suite of rooms for Clive when he came to live for a spell at Charleston. She made herself a separate bedroom in the larder off the kitchen to accommodate the succession of new love interests in Duncan's life, giving the good rooms to the guests. (It seems it was only when Angelica, the daughter she had with Grant, married David Garnett, his original lover, that the belief in free love faltered and the familial love triangle must surely have started to fray.)

She poured herself into designing and decorating the spaces around her at Charleston, often painting straight over wallpapers, damp spots and all, mixing and applying paint quickly without a thought for permanence - a tendency which has made restoration quite a problem for the curatorial staff at Charleston. The Bloomsbury movement has become largely associated with a literary tradition, thanks to the work of Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury associates such as E. M. Forster and T. S. Eliot, and the output of Leonard and Virginia's Hogarth Press.

Charleston, though, illustrates the Bloomsbury ethos of blurring the boundaries between 'fine' arts and 'applied' arts - it's all part and parcel of the same impetus.

Charleston Dining Room © Penelope Fewster

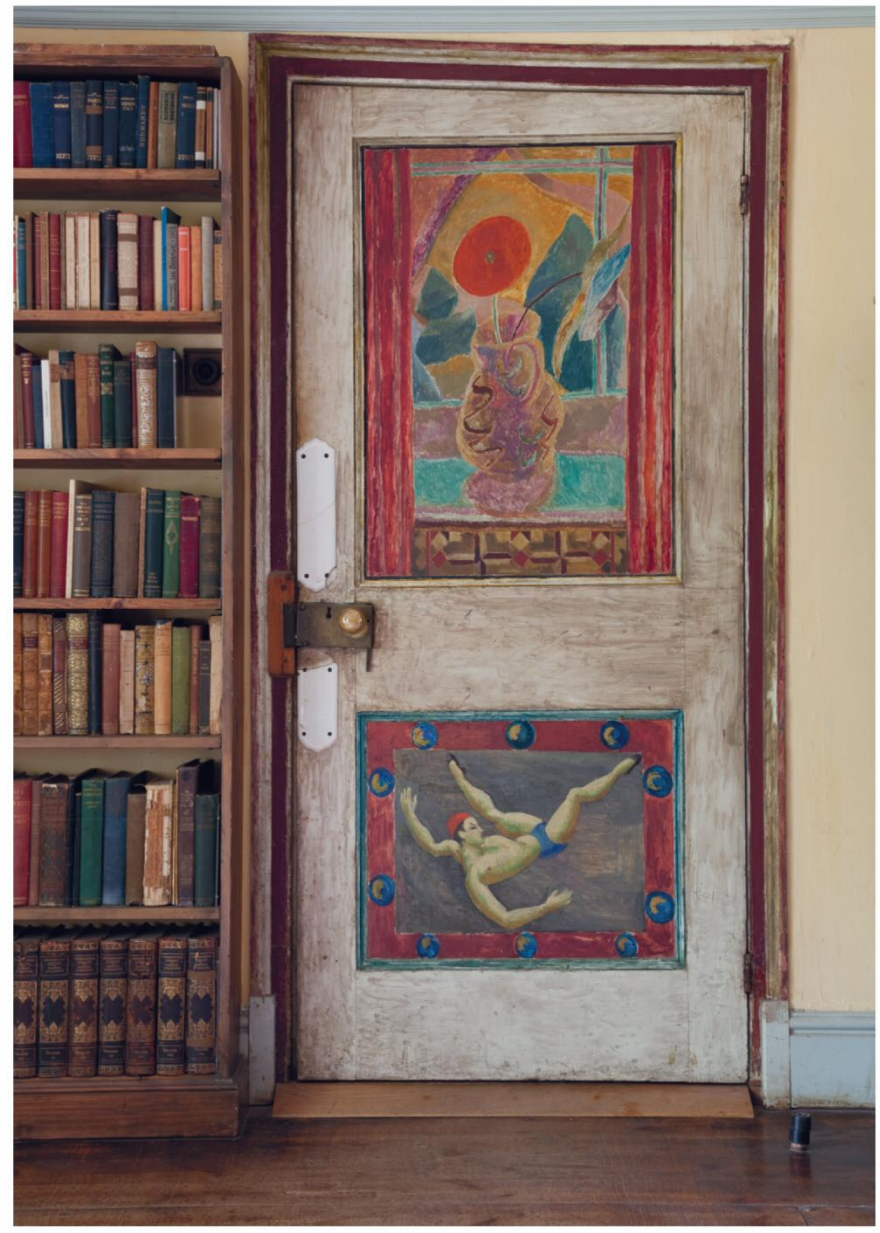
Clive Bell's Bedroom © Penelope Fewster

Vanessa seemed to never stop transforming the house. When the design on her dining room table wore through with the endless amounts of meals served on it, she simply painted another design over the top. Her son Quentin Bell remembers stencilling and handpainting the wallpaper together with his mother while hearing the distant yet ominous cannons of the German offensive across the Channel during the war.

Vanessa made an artform, too, of congenial and stimulating hospitality. One of her early lovers, the eminent art critic Roger Fry, remained a lifelong friend and admirer. "You go straight for things that are worthwhile," he wrote to her once. "You get all the things you need for your own development... you have a genius in your life as well as your work."

For Vanessa, this was the distinction that blurred - 'life' and 'work' did not have to be separate entities: she simply made everything around her into art, creating not just canvasses but whole interior decors for fun, inspiration, and solace.

Vanessa Bell died at Charleston in 1961, aged 81. After transforming the house and garden, giving birth to her daughter there, and providing endless conviviality and sanctuary to artists and craftspeople of all skills and persuasions, it seems fitting that she also passed away in the house, surrounded by the riotous decorative beauty she herself had created.



Clive Bell's Study © Penelope Fewster

Letters from England:

Amy Bradshaw

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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Portraits

Amy Bradshaw has discovered that having a meaningful job you love is worth all the money in the world.

Words
AMY BRADSHAW

Interview & photography
LIZ BROWN

I was born in Nottingham; the youngest of two children. My dad was a lorry driver and my mum was a cleaner, working wherever she could to make ends meet. Without affordable childcare, my parents often had no option but to take me to work with them. Some of my earliest memories are of riding in my dad's truck as he went to his deliveries, eating meat sandwiches packed for us by my mum. My brother was six years older than me, and a huge influence as I grew up. I would sit outside his bedroom listening to Madness, Adam Ant, Nirvana, and Prince blaring through his door. I have a lot to thank him for in terms of musical education! We still share the same music taste now. My grandparents would visit us every week and we'd always have the same dinner: minced beef and potatoes. Occasionally my parents would go out for the evening, Dad dressing in a shirt and tie even for an evening at the pub. We had a very simple but happy time.

When I was 11, my dad was promoted and asked to move to a new depot over an hour away. Rather than commute, it was decided that we would all relocate. My brother, then aged 17, chose not to come with us; he was already settled with school and friends and didn't want to lose that. I understand why he made that decision, but I missed him terribly. I struggled with the upheaval - the schooling system I moved into was different to the one in Nottingham, so the kids had already been together for several years and formed tight friendship groups and cliques. I was the 'new girl' for years, struggling to find a place and often teased by bullies. Things changed when we all moved to high school, and I found the strength to stick up for myself against the bullies. My school experiences definitely shaped me as a person and forced me to develop some resilience.

I had some difficult encounters with boys when I was younger. I was 14 when I got my first boyfriend, who was a couple of years older. A group of us went home for lunch during school one day and I ended up being talked into going upstairs with him. I didn't fully understand this at the time, but the experience wasn't wholly consensual. I was so naive then; I felt awful afterwards, but it also seemed to set the tone for the next few years of my relationships. It took me a while to realise that if I said "no", it should mean "no". Things changed when I had an ectopic pregnancy at the age of 16. It was a horrific experience, not just because of the physical pain but as I felt I'd let myself and my parents down. It changed me enormously though; I made the decision then that not only would I stop allowing myself to be taken advantage of, but also if I ever had daughters I would do my best to ensure they didn't end up in similar situations to me. I try to speak to my children in an age-appropriate way, but without sugar-coating anything. I don't want my girls to make the same mistakes

that I have - I want them to be more prepared than I was for some of the things that could happen, now or as they get older.

I have always wanted to be a mum - I've been drawn to babies and children since I was a child myself. I loved nannying, and adored being able to care for other people's children. However, the experience of mothering my own children has exceeded everything I expected. I would have liked to have had more children, but my age and health means that we decided to stop after having two. My weight has been an issue for me all my life, but having the girls has made me more conscious of the way I talk about myself, and the image of myself I present to them. I'd like to get healthier and fitter and lose some weight for them, but I also want to teach them about being kinder to themselves and each other than I have been.

I met my partner through a mutual friend, although we later realised we'd been to school together. He is very different from the majority of my previous boyfriends. After feeling as though I didn't matter in other relationships, he has given me the confidence to be myself. Having had some questionable past partners only makes me appreciate him even more. He doesn't seem to have any intention of ever wanting to get married, even though we've been together for almost two decades! It does bother me - I'd love my dad to be able to walk me down

the aisle, and for my mum to have the experience of helping me get ready. It's something I've always dreamed about. I have a friend whose dad passed away before her wedding, so she never shared that experience with him. I worry about that sometimes.

Since having children, I'd like more security and stability for them, too. When we registered their births, I opted to give them their father's surname as a way to make him feel included, and as I assumed we would definitely get married at some point in the future. Now, my eldest child is almost nine years old and she has started to ask why her surname differs from mine. Her teacher mentioned to us that she tends to use both names at school. I recently decided that we should change their surnames via deed poll, and double barrel them. Maybe one day we will get married - but at least if not, the children will feel like they have a strong connection to us both. It can be awkward having to explain why my surname is different to theirs when I take them to medical appointments and other meetings. I would still love to get married; I've asked him several times, and while I've never had an outright "no", I feel it's unlikely. Friends have even tried to help with the situation by offering their businesses as reception venues or giving him jewellery store vouchers for Christmas! The more I try and convince him, the more stubborn he gets, so for now we are just concentrating on getting things sorted for our children.

I've worked in many different places: restaurants, bars, factories, I've packed cat food, groomed dogs, and nannied for three different families with lots of children. At the moment, I work as a carer for the elderly, visiting them in their own homes and helping them to retain a little bit of independence. I've been a carer for several years now, and I think it's my favourite job, far above all the others. It gave me a lot of flexibility during my pregnancies and in the early days of going back to work as a mother of two, and meant that I didn't have to worry too much about childcare costs. I love my job - it's really nice to be able to make people smile and make their lives a little bit easier. Quite often I'm the only person my clients may see or speak to all day. One of the most rewarding parts of the job is looking after somebody when they are at the end of their life; making them comfortable, clean, and cared for. It's a very humbling time. I feel as though I keep a part of every client I've cared for. They've all changed me in some way. My job may not come with a company car, or give me a big bank balance, but it's so rewarding that I can't imagine doing anything else.

Looking back, I've had quite a similar job pattern to my mum, doing different things to get by. It's only recently that I've felt I'm in a job I really love and am committed to. I do hope that my children find this kind of career direction sooner than I did. There's only one person in my family who has gone to university, but we've all managed. I don't think a formal education is the only way to be successful in work or life. I'll back the girls in whatever career paths they decide to choose.

We don't have a large income; sometimes we are both paid late, and things can be difficult during those weeks. I tell my partner that there's no point in getting upset over our situation, as we aren't in a position to change it. We have each other, a roof over our heads and, more often than not, food in our cupboards. We've got some incredible friends and family too, as lots of them are in the same kind of position as us. If it's a tight week, someone might bring extra groceries for us or offer to help with childcare, so I can take an extra shift. I feel very lucky to live in such a community. After living off a part-time wage for several years now, it also makes me question whether I want to work full-time again even when both children are at school. It feels far more important to have a good work-life balance and enjoy being able to spend time with my children at home too. Realistically, I'm not sure if we'll ever be in a position to buy our own house. We rent, but I think it's still our home and we've got lots of memories here. I know there are people in far worse situations than us.

Letters from England:

Sarah Whitehead

Portraits

Life has a habit of surprising us, but Sarah Whitehead has learnt that we can always strive to make the most out of every situation.

Words
SARAH WHITEHEAD

Interview & photography
LIZ BROWN

I grew up in Birmingham and am a 'Brummy' born and bred. My family were very religious, and I went to church twice every Sunday, for Sunday school and then again for mass. I can't put my finger on exactly why, but I have never been very religious myself. I spent a lot of my teen years rebelling against this lifestyle.

I struggled with my weight and body confidence from quite an early age and was bullied due to my size during high school. I became the class clown - I loved being funny and quickly learned that making people laugh was a good way to distract them from my weight, and stop them from picking on me. I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I left school. I had a boyfriend who was five years older than me and although we'd been together for a few years, towards the end of school things changed between us. I had lost a lot of weight, and he didn't like the extra attention that I was receiving due to my new appearance. He became very controlling and quite violent, forcing me to cut myself off from my friends. I realised that the only way to get away from him was to leave Birmingham - so I applied to University and left to begin my training as a nurse.

I spent the first few months as a student enjoying a typical party lifestyle, and it was there that I met my husband, during a night out. The evening we met, he told me that his ex-partner had walked out on him, leaving him a single dad to their two very young children and the threat that if he didn't look after them, she would put them into care. He had no family around to help him, and he couldn't work as they were both so young and the cost of childcare was very high. He was also eleven years older than me, but none of this mattered. I knew from the very first time we met that he was the one for me. Everyone - even my university lecturers - told me that "it won't last". They assumed I was too young and immature to have taken on such responsibility and couldn't believe I was a step mum at the tender age of 19. For years, our lives were very difficult. We lived on my miniscule student nurse bursary, and Simon's benefits payments, often unable to heat our house and making a single chicken last for several days. The children's mother was a constant source of stress and worry, as she dropped in and out of the children's lives when it suited her. She would ignore them if she saw us in the street, but still make empty promises to them when she visited. From a very early stage, they began to call me "mummy" and their biological mum by her name. She physically assaulted me, and tried to defraud us of money, leaving her with a criminal record. Eventually, she decided that she didn't want to see the children at all anymore. It's been almost twenty years since they spent time with her.

After enduring, and surviving, such hard times, we decided to get

married and have a daughter of our own. With children now in school, we were both able to work more and managed to buy our own home. I started to move from being a hospital theatre nurse into medical aesthetics, training in botox and fillers and eventually working for a private aesthetics clinic.

Life was much sweeter, but I had started to battle with my weight again, gaining a lot during and after my pregnancy. I knew that I had to do something radical before I slipped back into depression, so I started to run, competing in half marathons, and joining a bootcamp. A friend suggested that we start our own fitness business - and so we did, creating a specialist bootcamp designed just for women. I took on more training, throwing myself fully into my health and fitness role. I am so proud of what we managed to achieve - we helped thousands of women change their lifestyles, lose weight, and get fit, with many of our success stories featuring in the national press. From struggling with my own weight for so many years, I couldn't believe how far I had come.

Eventually, the time felt right to move back into aesthetics, and I now train other nurses as well as dentists and doctors on all aspects of this field of medicine. A new career move came with another house move too, as we decided to look for our 'forever' home. We found it - in a tiny rural village with just 300 residents, on the edge of Derbyshire's Peak District. There are no road markings, no streetlights, no shops and not even a pub - just a one-thousand-year-old church and lots of quaint houses. I absolutely adore it. I call it my bubble as it feels so far removed from the rest of the world.

We keep chickens and spend most of our time in the garden. I feel like I've won the lottery, living in my dream home, and celebrating almost 23 years with the man of my dreams and our three incredible children, who I am so proud of.

Life so far has been a rollercoaster, with plenty of bumps along the way, but I think this has driven us to pursue the life we always wanted. We have both worked so hard to get where we are now. It's been a real team effort. I feel that it's now time for me to have a bit of freedom and do more of the things I want. But I wouldn't change the journey here for anything.

Letters from England:

Maliha Abidi

Portraits

Pakistini-born Maliha Abidi studies neuroscience, writes books, illustrates, takes photographs, and travels. She wants to teach other women that the possibilities are endless.

Words
MALIHA ABIDI

Interview & photography
LIZ BROWN

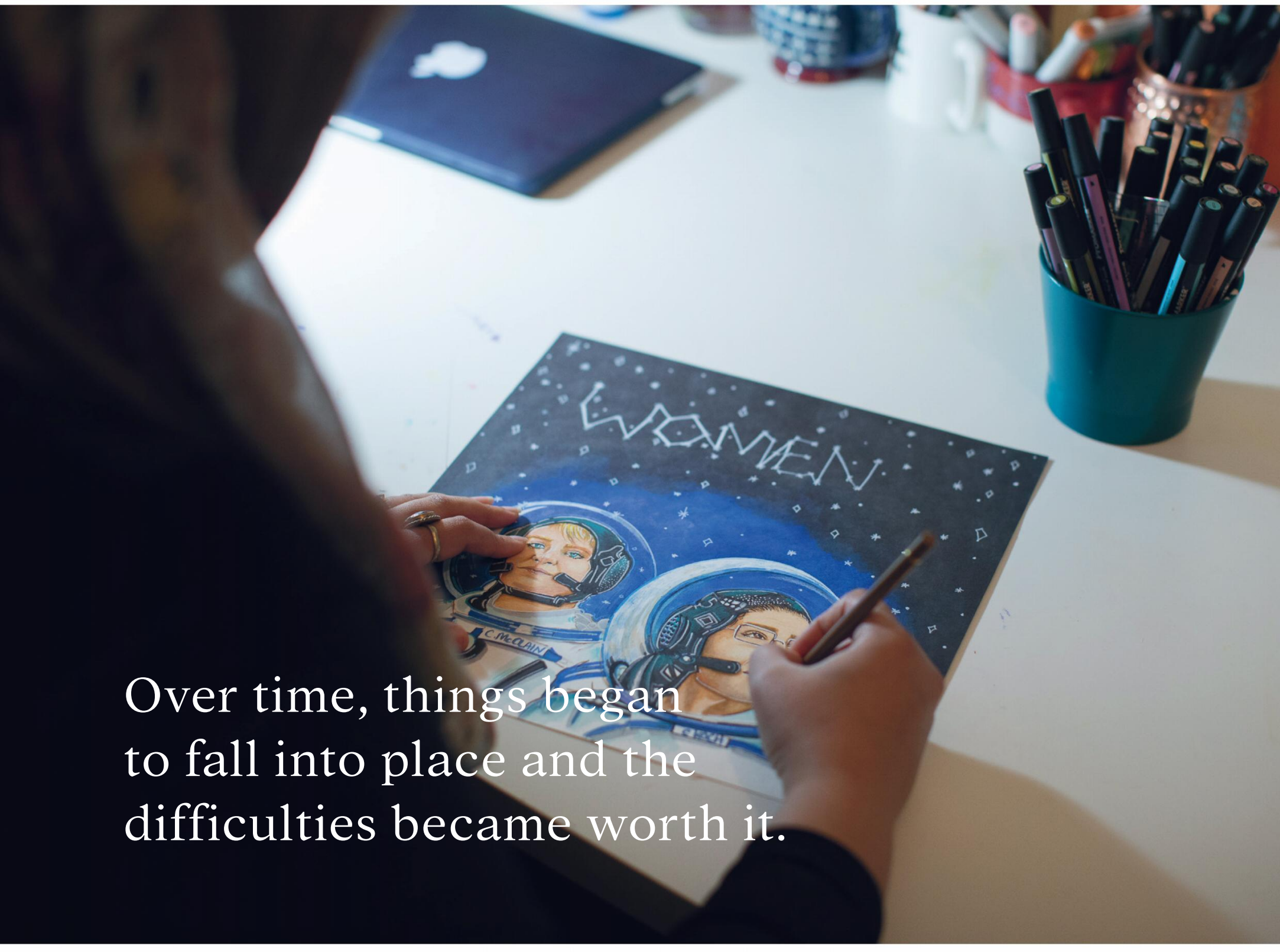
I was born in Karachi, the biggest city in Pakistan. It's a real city - huge and vibrant and cosmopolitan. I was an only child raised by my father and his side of the family and honestly, I just had the most amazing childhood. I was so close to my family - my uncle, aunt, my grandparents - and my dad. I was very privileged, and they gave me a wonderfully nurturing environment. I've been doing art for as long as I can remember, and they were very supportive of that, not in a 'kiddy' way by saying, "Oh, you're colouring like every other child," but in a way that showed they were genuinely interested in what I wanted to create. My childhood life in Pakistan was, to me, perfect. I've been close to my dad since I was very young, which is quite unusual in my culture. A lot of men can be quite distant emotionally. My dad and I have a great relationship and he's never dismissed my emotions or feelings. He's extremely sensitive towards me and I've always known I could go to him if I needed support. He has never judged my choices or questioned my decisions. He trusts me to follow my own path, but this has caused problems for him within our wider family - many people believe that he allows me too much freedom by allowing me to travel and so on. His parenting rule is: "You don't need to ask me for permission, just tell me."

My dad is an engineer, but he never tried to push me into any specific career. In Pakistan and south Asia generally, there is a saying: "You can become a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer - or a failure." There are a lot of engineers and doctors in my family, but he never made me feel pressured to follow the same path. He was a huge support when I wrote my book, from the beginning. He would suggest people to me, calling me and saying, "I've had an idea, I think you should include this person in your book." If I've had a difficult day or I'm unhappy with one of my drawings, I know I can always ask him for honest advice or feedback. My husband is similar.

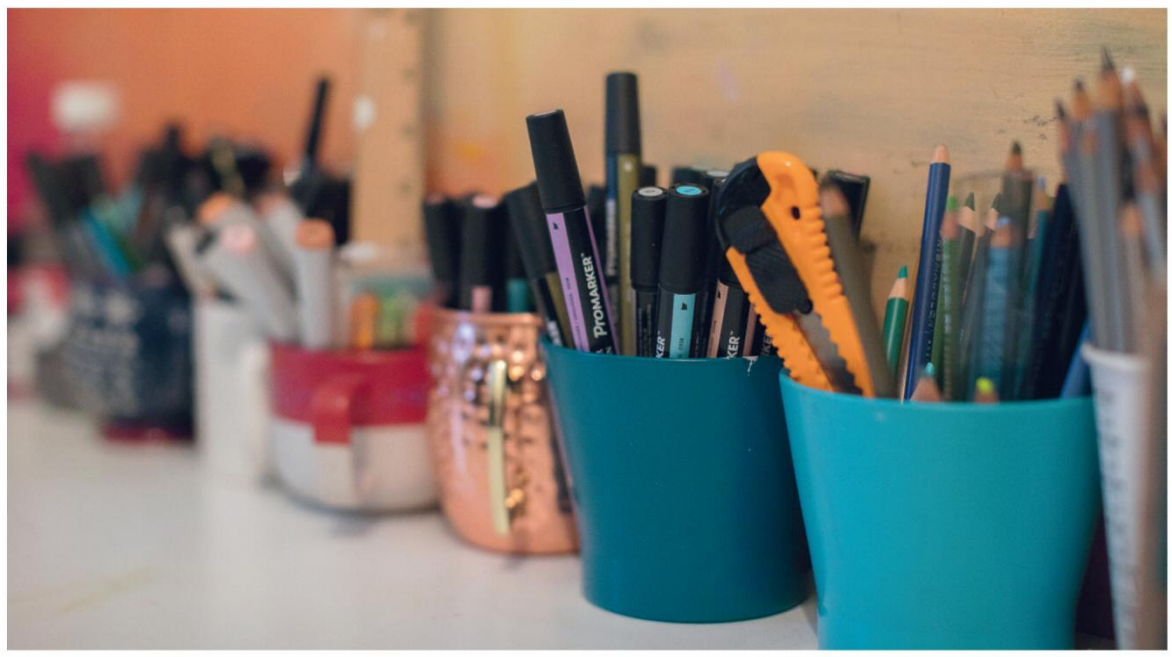
My family moved to the US when I was 14, to California. High school was a lot of fun, and I was very lucky that I never really experienced any racism or bullying. No one ever said, "Oh look, there's the new Muslim girl." It was a great experience, but I missed Pakistan and being surrounded by my extended family. I feel that some of those darker times were what helped the artist in me - the loneliness made me turn to art even more. When I was 15, I spent a lot of time in the high school library, just drawing by myself. The librarian saw my work and asked, "Do you want to be an art teacher here?" I surprised myself by saying, "Yes!" I ended high school by mentoring students and helping them develop their own creativity. My last class had almost 40 students, all from San Diego.

Being in America is what pushed me to travel. At high school I joined the Model United Nations, which took me to China and (thanks to missing a flight connection!), Japan. After that I just caught the travel bug - I'm currently on 24 countries with many more planned. My time in the US shaped me as a person. I feel that during my time in Pakistan I was just a kid: hyper, bubbly, happy all the time. When I moved, it pushed me to grow up and discover my adult self.

I started working when I was 16, just part-time jobs as well as taking art commissions and working as a photographer. It meant that I always had money, and I started using it to travel. While I was applying to college, my university counsellor asked me, "Don't you have a permanent address right now, don't you live with either of your parents?" and I realised that I didn't - I had just been staying with friends, or in hotels or hostels. It was quite a shock to me that I was technically deemed 'homeless'. When I called my dad to talk about how lost I felt, he was so understanding. I chose not to continue with college in the US, and he simply told people, "She's travelling instead - she can learn that way too." He has a lot of confidence and trust in me and has always allowed and encouraged me to enjoy my freedom… but he has a great sense of humour towards my achievements too. He keeps telling me, "I don't know who all these people are who are buying your book!"



Over time, things began to fall into place and the difficulties became worth it.



I thought that moving to the UK would be exactly the same as America. There, I had such an easy life; after I moved from San Diego to San Francisco I was working two jobs but making a good living. My college fees were taken care of, and the relatively high minimum wage in San Francisco allowed me to make a steady income. When I moved to the UK, I struggled to find work for the first 10 months. Having worked since the age of 16, it was a shock that I couldn't just walk into a store and ask for a job like I had in America! I learned about agencies and zero-hour contracts. I was offered a place at the University of Sussex, but the fees for international students were astronomical. I cried a lot during that time, worried that I wouldn't be able to go to uni, would never be able to find a job. I had assumed that life in Britain would be easy, but it was far from it. My first year of university fees would have been enough to buy a nice house in Pakistan. However, over time, things began to fall into place and the difficulties became worth it… after a few years I am now eligible to pay domestic university fees, which are much more affordable. I managed to find a job, and I'm becoming known within the art community here as well as selling prints and taking commissioned work. And the cost of flights… I couldn't believe that I could fly almost anywhere in Europe for such low prices! I only live a couple of short train stops from one of the major London airports, so I'm able to scratch my travel itch regularly. It just took some time to adjust to such a new place. Although I don't think I will ever be used to the weather!

My degree is in neuroscience. If I could plan the perfect future it would be starting a non-profit organisation for women in Pakistan. Art therapy will form a huge part of this, but I'll be approaching it from a neuroscience and psychology point of view with an emphasis on mental health. There are so many women in Pakistan who lose themselves when they become housewives; they don't have outside hobbies or interests in the way that so many western women can. There is a lot of shame involved in making time for yourself - people will question why you are painting or drawing or reading, rather than getting on with chores and childcare. Women in Pakistan have started to recognise their own rights and ask questions - and importantly, men are being supportive of this. I would love to continue to initiate some social change there.

Noble Women

“Yes, this is what a hooligan looks like,” she used to smile, fully aware that she appeared completely genteel. It was a disguise, of course. The suffragettes were an army, and Emmeline Pankhurst was their commander in chief. They had one goal: votes for women.

Words
NIAMH BOYCE

Illustration
MERCEDES DEBELLARD

EMMELINE PANKHURST

“You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anyone else, you have to fill all the papers more than anyone else.” So said Emmeline Pankhurst to her audience in Hartford, Connecticut. It was November 1913, and she was on a lecture tour, discussing the women’s suffrage campaign back home in Britain. The American press were surprised that the notorious suffragette was so dainty. “Yes, this is what a hooligan looks like,” she used to smile, fully aware that she appeared completely genteel. It was a disguise, of course. The suffragettes were an army, and Emmeline Pankhurst was their commander in chief.

Emmeline had formed the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) in Manchester ten years before. At first, it consisted of just twenty women, including Emmeline’s daughters, Christabel, Sylvia, and Adela. They had one goal: votes for women, and adopted what Emmeline called “Salvation Army methods.” They travelled to fairs in the northern towns, speaking on street corners and outside factory gates. They had one test question when considering any action: ‘Will it help?’

They became known as “Suffragettes”, a term coined by the *Daily Mail* designed to belittle them. Instead of taking offence, they embraced the name. There was a measure of wit to many of their tactics that pleased the public. In 1906, the Pankhurst family moved to London. It was election time and WSPU (or the Manchester Militants as they were sometimes called) set about interrupting the candidate’s speeches - asking over and over again, “Will you give votes for women?” They used their voices, banners, and placards to be seen and heard.

Subverting the caricature of the aggressive suffragist, Emmeline fostered a smart style for WSPU members. They wore purple, white, and green to symbolise loyalty, purity and hope. Photographs show processions of elegant women in feathered hats and fur collars. Selfridges and Liberty sold suffragette tricolour ribbons, garments, and accessories. Membership grew and grew. It was fashionable to be a suffragette. West End stores took out half-page adverts in their magazine. Shoe manufacturers

advertised boots "suitable for marching, like those Emmeline and Sylvia wear". This was fashion as politics, style as recruitment.

Prime Minister Asquith refused to prioritise votes for women, even after receiving a deputation of all the suffrage societies. A disappointed WSPU responded by intensifying their heckling campaign. It earned them the name The Shrieking Sisterhood, but more importantly; newspapers were giving as many column inches to the suffragette's interruptions as the cabinet minister's speeches. Until then, newspapers had largely ignored the work of suffragists. *The Daily Mirror* decided that the WSPU were not notoriety hunters, featherheads, and flibbergibbets after all, for they had "made votes for women practical politics".

WSPU members found imaginative and newsworthy methods of making their cause known. They posted themselves as human letters to Downing Street. Decked in sumptuous gowns, they took a box in Convent Garden opposite King George, and during a performance of Jeanne d'Arc, whipped out a megaphone to inform the King that English women were fighting for liberty too - just as Joan of Arc had done! While MPs were taking tea on the Common's riverside terrace, the suffragettes rowed up in a boat wielding a banner advertising their next demonstration, then they held a second banner that said, "Ministers especially invited". Millicent Fawcett, of the National Union of Suffragists, admitted the Pankhurst's suffragettes had achieved more in 12 months than the other suffragists had in 12 years.

In 1908, Emmeline planned a peaceful rally for Hyde Park, to show Asquith that Women's Suffrage had public support. It was estimated that half a million people showed up. *The Daily News* commented - "Some who had evidently come to jeer, stayed to cheer." Asquith did not cheer. A staunch anti-suffragist, he wasn't budging on the issue of Women's Votes.

Every time they were thwarted, the WSPU revised their tactics. That October, they printed handbills that said - "help the suffragettes to rush the House of Commons on the 13th of Oct." Emmeline, Christabel and Flora Drummond were quickly arrested for likely breach of the peace. During her trial, Emmeline told the court: "We are not here because we're law breakers; we are here in our efforts to become lawmakers." In the meantime, 60,000 suffragettes tried with little success to get past the 5,000 police officers guarding the House of Commons.

Not everyone was pleased with WSPU's campaign. Because of their

Suffragettes went out and smashed West End shop windows, using hammers.

tactics, women were now excluded from public meetings unless a man guaranteed their good behaviour. Prime Minister Asquith needed a police escort for protection. A secret group known as the YHB - the Young Hot Bloods - were aligned with Christabel and assigned the more dangerous tasks. On occasion some of them broke the windows of the Home Office or pummelled the prime minister on the golf course - which were unauthorised actions. "We cannot always control our women," Emmeline admitted.

Marion Wallace Dunlop's hunger strike in 1909 had also been unsanctioned, but was quickly adopted in the hope of reducing prison sentences. The government would have to release the hunger strikers, unless they wanted them to die in Holloway, or so they thought. Instead a brutal regime of force-feeding was introduced. A tube was inserted into a woman's nostril while she was held down. Two yards of tubing was inserted to reach the stomach. Then a mixture made from milk and egg was funnelled through. It was painful, invasive and distressing. Doctors protested to the Prime Minister to no avail.

In 1910, a Conciliation Committee was established, which gave Emmeline hope that the vote for women was inevitable. MPs had committed to working on a Bill for Women's Suffrage. Militancy was to cease, she told the WSPU, victory was close.

Then to their disbelief, Asquith blocked the bill. On Friday 18th November, 300 women marched on the House of Commons to petition the Prime Minister. Mounted police broke into the procession. The police brutality that day earned it the name 'Black Friday'. They tore

Women were excluded from public meetings unless a man guaranteed their good behaviour. Prime Minister Asquith needed a police escort.

clothes, pulled hair, twisted breasts, flung women about and kneed their groins. One officer threw a woman into the crowd, shouting, "Do what you want with her."

Then Asquith introduced a surprise suffrage reform bill, for men. The newspapers noted that there hadn't even been the "ghost of a demand" for such a reform. Suffragettes went out and smashed West End shop windows, using hammers and stones. Four hundred windows were broken, and 150 women were taken to Holloway prison.

In February 1913, Chancellor Lloyd George's vacant house was bombed. "We have blown up the Chancellor of the Exchequers house… to wake him up," Emmeline announced. She was sentenced to three years. Though her health was frail, she went on hunger strike again. "Good will come of my going," she wrote but she did not die, instead she was given temporary release under the Cat and Mouse Act - a law introduced so hunger strikers could be released, and recaptured when their health recovered. Journalists recorded that she left prison "half alive".

In the years 1913 and 1914, the government concentrated their efforts on crushing the WSPU. Their HQ was raided, documents were seized, leaders were arrested. For their part, the Hot Young Bloods were active - railway carriages were blown up, Velázquez's Rokeby Venus was slashed in retaliation for the 'slow murder' of Emmeline Pankhurst.

Then Emily Wilding rushed in front of the King's horse at the Epsom Derby. It's thought nowadays that Emily was trying to attach a banner to the horse's bridle. At the time, it was believed she intentionally flung herself to her death, sacrificing her life for the cause. When she died four days later, 6,000 women followed her hearse.

In 1914, war was declared and Emmeline called a truce. "The hatchet is buried," she announced, "but we know where to find it." She was optimistic that suffrage was about to be granted. "Our battles are practically over; no future government will repeat the mistakes and the brutality of the Asquith ministry." She was correct. In 1918, with Lloyd George as Prime Minister, the Representation of People Act was passed. Women over the age of 30 were granted the vote. It was to mark the end of the Emmeline's campaign, for she travelled to Canada and worked there for a number of years before returning to London.

In 1928, two weeks after Emmeline Pankhurst died from influenza, The Equal Franchise Bill granted full suffrage to women over 21. Old comrades came to her funeral wearing the colours, badges, and medals of the WSPU. They weren't the only ones who fought for women's suffrage, but they made more noise than anyone else, were more obtrusive than anyone else, and filled the papers more than anyone else. Women had two choices, according to Emmeline Pankhurst, to "submit to an unjust state of affairs, or to rise up". She rose up.

Words & Fashion
SADIE WILLIAMS

Custom made

Fashion

London-born fashion designer Sadie Williams has been mixing and matching fabrics since childhood.

I'm a born and bred Londoner, from Ladbroke Grove. The first place I was ever allowed to go shopping without parents was Portobello Road Market.

Dad used to take me and my brother to Queens Park Rangers football matches near home and we would often go to Shepherd's Bush Market before or afterwards. I've always loved the eclectic mix of things there and finding cheap, tacky bits and bobs and finding a way to make them special.

My mum makes and sells lots of things from all over the world and has studied soft furnishings. She too used to take me down to Goldhawk Road as a kid when she needed to buy fabrics for clients or projects and so the guys in my favourite shops have all known me since I was little and always ask me and my mum how the other one is doing. I like the sense of community there and still go back, show them my work and what I've done with their fabrics!

My primary school had no uniform and I was allowed to dress myself, so from pretty young I was already enjoying and playing with clothes. I remember wearing a sarong once, but with a mini-skirt underneath because I wasn't sure if how I'd tied it up would stay put. Or wearing my fave velvet mini-dress even when it was too short, so putting Minnie Mouse boxers rather than knickers on underneath.

As a teenager I went to a boarding school in Sussex called Christ's Hospital, where we all wore a Tudor uniform. So, I think, that safe, slightly removed and odd environment for teenagers to grow up in

really let me have the confidence to experiment and play around with my clothes and style. I would make my outfits for school discos and I was always customising things by chopping them up, sewing on beads or sequins and stuff like that. I still feel like I am always decorating or playing with fabrics, taking simple or cheap things and trying to make them special and precious. I vividly remember receiving a turquoise Chinese dress for my second or third birthday, being on my parent's bed in the old house when I opened it, and absolutely loving it. Often as a kid I would take an interest in how people were dressing themselves. As I got a little older and was able to go down Portobello Road with friends, we would love to rummage through the vintage stalls, pick up bargains and fun extra bits like glitter gels and colourful nail varnishes.

My aunty and her partner both work in fashion so I grew up with a bit of an awareness of fashion, but also saw it as something that family and normal people do. My decision to study fashion came much later though. I was so into art and design at school, and so I studied art at Central Saint Martins, and I left after specialising in print design but I knew I wanted to do more than just print and had always loved clothes. So, I spent a year or so doing work experience in fashion and then decided to do a Bachelor in Fashion at Brighton. But it was while doing a Masters in Textiles for Fashion at Central Saint Martins where I felt I had really found my strength.

It helps for me to do moodboards and research deeply and extensively.

I was always customising things by chopping them up, sewing on beads or sequins and stuff like that.

Often to a theme. It's all in the edit. I feed in lots of inspirations but my strongest work comes when I really whittle it down and focus on a particular theme or mood, style or even a technique.

At Central Saint Martins, I kept my head down and didn't compare my work or progress, so the bonds I formed with my fellow students were really strong and we encouraged each other. I made a lot of work and a lot of mistakes and spent a lot of time experimenting, innovating, and developed massively.

There's not a set formula [to start a collection], but definitely not sketching. I accumulate my research and collage and mood-boards and source fabrics and begin doodling prints or playing around with fabrics. Then I'll move onto mocking up outfits with my fabric samples or collaging with paper. I share a studio in Seven Sisters - a big room divided by low walls and my big bookshelf.

I share with my boyfriend, artist Joe Cruz and my friends, the fashion designer Richard Malone and artist/illustrator Christiane Matz. Our room is in a bigger block with other designers and makers, including Tottenham Textiles who are literally just below us; so I'm often swapping and sharing kit, knowledge and equipment with them. My space has two big tables and two smaller desks, one of which is my heat press station. There are lots of rolls and boxes of fabrics and trims and art and textiles equipment and my entire archive of collections hangs high up along one wall too!

I never really had a fixed motto I live by... but things I often say and think are:

Stick to your guns.
Stay true to yourself.
It's all a learning curve.
You only live once.

“Books are the mirrors of the soul.”

Virginia Woolf,
Between the Acts

The therapy of kindness

BY JENNIFER KUNST

Too often, we measure our value by how busy or successful we are.

Recently, I passed a colleague in the hallway and greeted her by saying, "How are you?" She responded with a sigh and a smile, "Too busy. You know, it's just life in the modern world." Her honest comment jolted me awake, and led me to think more about the tremendous pressures of contemporary society.

Take, for example, this shift. A few decades ago, a common greeting in China was, "Have you eaten?" This was not an invitation to dinner, but a reflection of a value system - both care about food and concern about whether you have enough. As China catapulted into a modern market economy, the common greeting changed to, "Are you busy?" This shift echoes in the hallways of our work, family, and social circles throughout the world today. And, of course, the desired answer is, "Yes, thank you, I am very busy."

Too often, we measure our value by how busy or successful we are. But these are not true measures of *how* we are. The true measure of how we are is *who we are* - the kind of values we have and the kind of meaning we make of our lives. Ultimately, I believe, the measure of a person is the kind of heart that she has, the kind of love that she gives herself and gives to others.

Recently, I learned about the ancient Buddhist practice of 'lovingkindness'. I stumbled upon it while experimenting with an online meditation app. The simple 10-minute guided meditation was centred around offering these four benevolent intentions to oneself:

May I be happy;
May I be safe;
May I be healthy;
May I be at peace.

With each breath, I was invited to offer these blessings to myself, one by one. I repeated these four sayings, slowly, letting them sink into my softening heart. Then, I was invited to offer them to those I love, then to those in the circle around me, and then to those in the wide expanse of the world.

Illustration by Aida Novoa & Carlos Egan

May you be happy;
May you be safe;
May you be healthy;
May you be at peace.

This is a radical shift in orientation - fortunately, in an emotionally healthy direction! With this shift, the busy life fades into the background as a life of inner well-being emerges into the foreground. A negative slant is replaced by a positive aspiration. Values are transformed from doing to being. Achievement is replaced by loving kindness.

During the guided meditation, I found my mind wandering to a recent experience. This experience expanded my heart and my world, and I want to share it with you.

First, a bit of background. Three years ago, my husband and I adopted a dog from a local rescue organisation, a three-year old female Great Pyrenees. Beautiful Bella is a pure white gentle giant, bred to guard sheep in the Pyrenees mountains between Spain and France. Since there aren't too many sheep in Los Angeles, however, Bella's guarding is limited to barking in the air while lying on the living room sofa! As it turns out - and to our great surprise - Bella is gifted for an entirely different job.

We discovered Bella's gift by watching her interact with people during our neighbourhood walks. Bella wanted to say hello to everyone, both young and old. She set the nervous person at ease and delighted the dog lover to no end. Through these experiences, people repeatedly remarked that she would make a great therapy dog. At that point, we didn't know anything about animal-assisted therapy. So, we researched, we trained, we passed the test, and we began to visit local hospitals, psychiatric facilities, and nursing homes through a local volunteer animal assisted therapy program called *Love on 4 Paws*.

People are both amused and amazed that I work full-time as a psychotherapist and then choose to work more hours as a therapist on the weekends! But the truth is that Bella is the real therapist; I am simply her assistant, making sure that everyone is safe and that she is in position to do what she does best. She makes people feel better.

Animal-assisted therapy is an act of loving kindness. For a few moments, we touch the lives of people in their darkest hours. They are sick, hurting, frightened, and lonely, ever so lonely. Some will recover and go home, but some will need lifelong care.

The loving kindness meditation dovetailed with a particularly special therapy visit to a long-term nursing care facility. All the patients there are on respirators because they cannot breathe on their own. Some have been in an accident, others have had a stroke, and others have had serious health difficulties since birth. There are babies, children, and adults.

On this visit, as usual, we visited the rooms of child and adult patients. Bella was so tolerant as she let me position her to be petted, navigating around the medical equipment with lots of beeping sounds and concerning looking people. We had some extra time, so the escort brought us into a large indoor

play area. There were eight toddlers there, each with a mobile respirator and a caregiver helping them. Each had a spot to watch videos, play with blocks, or do physical therapy with a staff member. The feeling in the room was cheerful, quite unexpected given the grim circumstances. Now, what to do with Bella?

We did a few tricks: sit, shake, high five, and cross your paws like a lady. There was soft cheering from the staff and giggles from the kids. Over time, I manoeuvred Bella nearby each child, and the nurses rolled the portable respirators so that the children could get near enough to pet the dog. We worked together like this until each child had his or her turn, and then I asked Bella to lay in the middle of the room. She lay down on her side, breathed that deep sigh of contentment, and relaxed as I petted her for the remaining time. We weren't rushed and there was a sense of stillness as the visit unfolded. At one moment, I stepped back in my mind's eye to take in the scene. Here was my nearly 100-pound dog, white as snow, gentle as the breeze, lying in the middle of a room surrounded by these little ones and their caregivers. There was no fear. There was just her calm, healing presence. There was just love.

May I/you be happy.
May I/you be safe.
May I/you be healthy.
May I/you be at peace.

There is so much suffering in the world. So many lonely, frightened, unwell, heavy-hearted people, struggling in ways like these children and in smaller ways like us all. We cannot really *do* much about it. Our busy-ness and our accomplishments don't touch that kind of pain. As the American country artist, Martina McBride, sings, "Love's the only house big enough for all the pain in the world." When we are present to the pain - our pain as well as the pain of others - we bring a heart of loving kindness. That simple offering can make a difference, to the one who receives and also to the one who gives.

People repeatedly remarked that she would make a great therapy dog.

Dance

In her 20s, Lauren Cuthbertson, a principal dancer with The Royal Ballet in London, thought she'd never dance again. When she returned, she danced like never before.

Interviewee
LAUREN CUTHBERTSON

Interview by
STAV DIMITROPOULOS

Photography
BILL COOPER, DARREN GERRISH, TRISTRAM KENTON, HELEN MAY-BANKS

A ROYAL DANCE

The Sleeping Beauty. Lauren Cuthbertson as Princess Aurora ©ROH, Tristram Kenton, 2014

Lauren Cuthbertson. Photographed by Darren Gerrish, 2018.

Is the ballet world as cut-throat and competitive as suggested by films such as 'Swan Lake'?

When I watch *Swan Lake*, I have to remember it is a film. It is not a documentary. It is a thriller by a talented director. I think that's why audiences are drawn in. But in reality, ballet is no more competitive than other professions or fields in art. The film is a manufactured drama. It's what people want to believe about ballet dancers, but it's not accurate. Ballet is competitive, because ultimately you're wanting to achieve something, whatever your burning desire might be, but you also need to step back and watch other people have success too. In that way you can draw a lot from it - but it comes back to you when it is your moment. You have a richer experience. There will always be someone doing more turns, someone more musical, there will always be someone younger. This is life. If you get caught up in this, it is silly. Where are you in all of this? You just need to do your thing and work with your coaches and be generous. We are all in this together.

How do you stick to the disciplined and gruelling training regime?

Well, it's your job and you do what you need to do. You just get used to it. In some ways, it doesn't matter how you feel because, when I put my hands on the bar, I'm home. If I am away from the bar, I feel anxious. I'm always thinking that I'm not at the bar. When I'm at the bar, I always feel like I'm back in the right place.

Do you ever see ballet as a big sacrifice?

What I am struggling with is whether I am a woman who dances or a dancer who is a woman. I think at some point you just become one. You give up the fight and you just have to accept that this is where your life path has taken you. In many ways it's a special position to be in because I spend my days striving to do things I want to do. It feels a very indulgent, selfish way to live my life because I work so much on the details of myself. And I suppose, at some point, I want to think about other people and other things, and that's why I really enjoy it when I get the chance. I work with children's charities for dance [such as National Youth Ballet and London Children's Ballet] and I get so moved and inspired by seeing other dancers at the beginning of their journey. It doesn't matter if it will be their career or not, it is inspiring to see them do something they love and that makes them feel good. I get a huge sense of fulfilment out of that. It's important to shift the focus away from the self.

Are you suggesting that ballerinas are prone to becoming too self-absorbed?

You think about yourself all day. Even when you are with a new coach or someone else, it's really about you; coaches work with *you*. Of course, I look around and get inspired and energised by other people. But then you go back to work and you're working on yourself, like I mentioned earlier, I just work on myself. And, of course, that's a contribution to the world of art in some way, but I want to focus on someone else, something else as well. I think that's really my point. I definitely feel, and definitely as a woman, I want to do something for other people, because I feel I have a lot to give. I feel like I want to do more for others as well.

How do you relate to your audience?

I've always been a dancer who wants to bring the audience into her world. But I'm not performing for them necessarily, if that makes sense. So, I'm not thinking about them. I'm not thinking about pleasing them. They come into the roles that I'm living on the stage. And if that

transports them from their day-day-day lives, then I feel like I've done my job. I'm part of a fleeting, intense relationship with the audience, and that's something the Royal Ballet is exceptional at doing. When you are in the moment, it is really, really special. I can't think of a word to describe it.

Growing up as a ballet student, were you a prodigy?

Oh, I would not use the word "prodigy". I think everyone around me knew that I was destined. Deep inside I always knew that I was going to be a ballerina, not because of arrogance, but I just knew that *that* was my destiny. What I did not realise was the time it would take. I think I was just naive. They say sometimes ignorance is bliss. I thought I would be a ballerina at age 13. I didn't realise how much hard work it was going to take, but this does not take away from the fact that I knew it was my destiny.

As a fledgling ballerina, was adolescence difficult?

Oh, no, I had the best years of my life when I was a teenager! I was growing up in an old hunting lodge in the middle of Richmond Park, with lots of other dancers who wanted to do the same thing. I was naughty and getting into trouble but having fun. I was doing what I wanted to do.

Between the ages of 25 and 30 you were forced to spend about three-and-a-half years off the stage, recovering from glandular fever and a foot injury. How did you find the mental and emotional stamina to get back on track?

I don't really like thinking about it, it's scary. But luckily, you know, the body and the mind are incredible. When I was really, really ill and I didn't know if I was going to dance again, I couldn't even think about dancing because this was obviously the way of protecting myself. That must be the human way of protecting yourself in that moment. But, on the contrary, when I came back - and I eventually did get back after a long time - I was dancing like I'd never danced in my life. I was dancing with no fear of dancing, with only joy.

Injury is perhaps a ballerina's greatest enemy. Do you have a plan B?

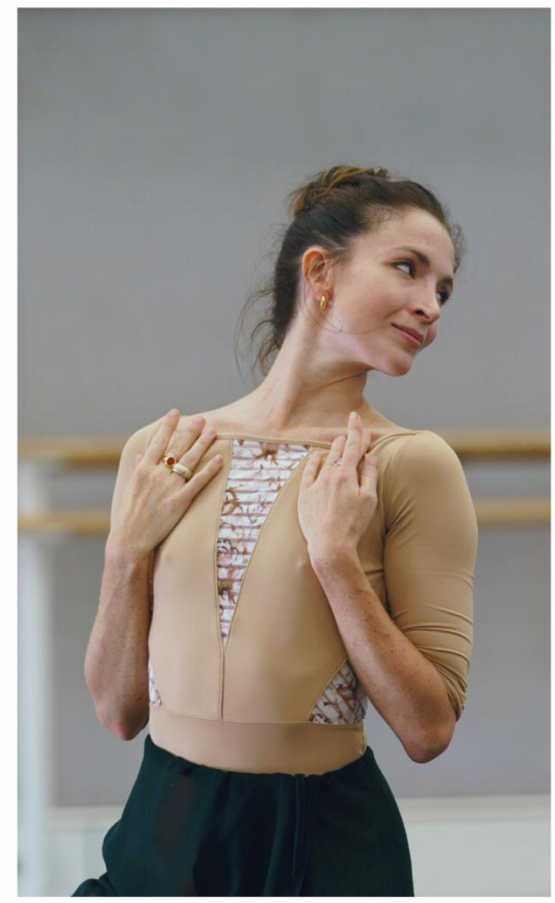
I have never looked at having a back-up plan and don't even see a life outside ballet. I can't explain it. I obviously know there'll be a day when I won't be walking through the stage door anymore.

Is there strong pressure to be particularly thin?

You have to eat otherwise you won't get through the day. Obviously, dance is an aesthetic art form. You want to feel lean, you don't want to hurt the men's backs. You want to feel light, because ballet is easier when you are light. It just is. But I don't think there is any major pressure to be abnormally thin. I think exercise does it all for you. When you're working hard and you're in the studio all day and you're doing a big classical ballet, you're in great shape. There's no more you need to do.

Is the world of ballet just for 'rich kids'?

I came from a working-class family. My family couldn't afford to pay the bills after a certain amount of time because ballet is so expensive. I didn't come with a silver spoon in my mouth. I don't come from a cultured family in that sense. But



Lauren Cuthbertson in rehearsal. ©ROH, 2018. Photographed by Bill Cooper.

I came from a family with two parents who supported me, especially my mum, who could see I had natural talent and she was going to do anything to make sure that I could follow my dream. Without that, without her, I wouldn't have had this opportunity.

Out of all the roles you have danced over the years, is there one you would describe as the highlight of your career?

A highlight for me was the first role I created. Maybe it's a special role for me because of that reason. Creating the role of Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* was definitely a huge highlight in my career. The feeling when the curtain went up on opening night was something I'd never felt before. I wondered how I was going to react to all the pressure. But I was experienced enough to have confidence in myself. I felt like everything came together in that moment. It was beautiful and intense. Also, *Sleeping Beauty* for me has always been the epitome of British ballet in terms of style.

Romeo and Juliet. Lauren Cuthbertson as Juliet and Matthew Ball as Romeo. ©ROH, 2019. Photographed by Helen Maybanks.

Lauren Cuthbertson in rehearsal. ©ROH, 2018. Photographed by Bill Cooper.

Romeo and Juliet. Lauren Cuthbertson as Juliet. ©ROH, 2019. Photographed by Helen Maybanks.

You need to control the controllable. You can't control everything in your life...

What are you dancing this season in London?

At the moment, it's mainly a rehearsal period for *Jacqueline du Pré*. When you're creating a piece, it takes all of your time. I just started *Sleeping Beauty* this week as well and am preparing for that. It's not my first time dancing Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, but, with something as beautiful as *Sleeping Beauty*, it's never less special because you have done it before. It takes a huge amount of dedicated rehearsal time to get ready for something like *Sleeping Beauty*. It's a ballet where, even when you're still recovering from the day before, you have to push yourself all over again; you have to build up such a massive amount of stamina, especially in act one. Until you have the stamina, you can't work on the refinement. You have to have the stamina, because then, once you have that, you can really work on finding your character, on applying the things that you would really like to apply.

What is your life motto?

One of the best things I've ever learnt was from the doctor who saved my ankle, and my career. The best phrase I heard him say was, "You need to control the controllable. You can't control everything in your life or other people's lives. It will never work for you in this way." Another thing I learned from him was that you can't beat biology. And this is, I think, a very important lesson.

“We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.”

Joseph Campbell

MIND THE GAP

The Day Dream, Dante Gabriel Rossetti

History

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a founding member of a secret society of art students who wanted to shake up the stultified British art scene.

The Tragic Affair of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris

Words
KATE FORSYTH

Artwork
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Jane Morris, photo by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1865

When I was nineteen years old, I was living in a student squat, sleeping on an old mattress on the floor, walking everywhere to save on the bus fare.

I was starved of beauty.

One day, I saw a poster of a painting hanging in a shop window that stopped me in my tracks. A woman with heavy dark hair and a sorrowful face, loosely dressed in blue-green silk, holding a pomegranate in her hand. The fruit had been split open to show the red pulp within. Behind her, a faint glimpse of light.

In the lower left-hand corner of the painting was a scroll inscribed with "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", a name I had never heard before. In the upper right corner was a square of poetry written in Italian. I recognised the name "Proserpina", the Greek form of Persephone. She was the goddess of spring, kidnapped by Hades and condemned to spend six months of the year in the underworld after eating just six pomegranate seeds. During her imprisonment, the whole world grew cold and barren. Winter clamped upon the Earth for the first time.

It was my favourite Greek myth.

The poster was on sale for twenty-five dollars. I opened my wallet and saw that I was one dollar short. It was all the money I had. If I spent

it, I would not be able to eat for a week. But I knew I ghad to have it. The man in the shop agreed to sell the poster to me. As he rolled it up, I said timidly, "She's very beautiful."

"Oh yes. She was famous for her face," he told me. "Rossetti painted her hundreds of times. They were madly in love, but she was married to one of his best friends and so they couldn't be together."

Beauty. Art. Myth. Poetry. Love. Heartbreak. It was all there, everything that most drew me, in that one richly coloured and mysterious painting. So began my lifelong fascination with the Pre-Raphaelites.

The woman with the sorrowful face was named Janey Burden, and she was born in a slum in Oxford. Her father was an ostler at an inn, her mother an illiterate laundress who signed her marriage certificate with an X. Janey lived with her parents and brother and sister in a single room not much bigger than the stalls where the horses were kept.

One evening in autumn 1857, to celebrate her eighteenth birthday, Janey and her sister Bessie went to see a travelling theatre group perform at the local gymnasium. There she caught the eye of an exotic-looking gentleman with ruffled dark curls and paint under his fingernails. His name was Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He was the eldest son of a fugitive Italian scholar, and the nephew of John Polidori, famous for being Lord Byron's doctor and author of the infamous novel *The Vampyre*. Gabriel (as he was called by his friends) wanted to be both a poet and an artist, and divided his time between writing, drawing, and roaming the streets looking for inspiration.

In 1848, he had been a founding member of a secret society of young art students who wanted to shake up the stultified British art scene. They called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for they loved old medieval paintings and wanted to restore that simplicity of line and richness of colour to their own work. Gabriel was their self-appointed leader, along with John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt.

Lizzie was an artist and poet too, and had been the only woman to have her work exhibited in the first Pre-Raphaelite exhibition earlier that year.

By 1857, the Brotherhood had fallen apart, but Gabriel had found a new circle of friends and admirers who had accompanied him to Oxford to paint some murals on the walls of Oxford Union's debating hall. Among this new brotherhood were Edward Burne-Jones (then plain old Ned Jones) and William Morris (nicknamed Topsy). Ned and Topsy were best friends who had defied their families to pursue their dreams of art. They hero-worshipped Gabriel and followed his lead in everything.

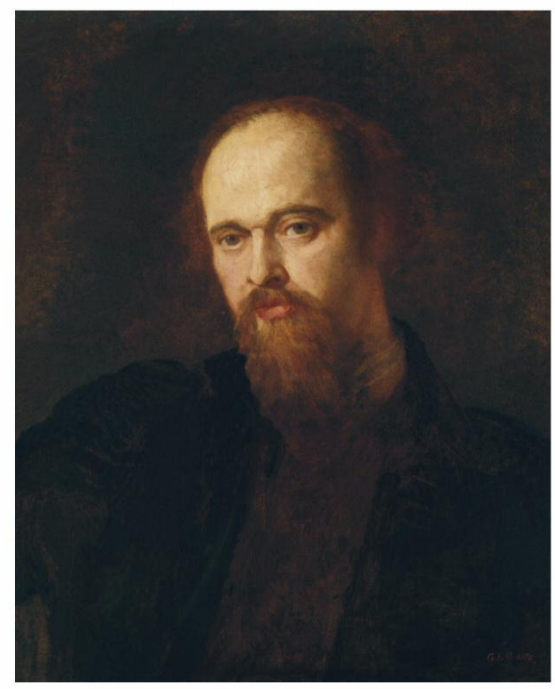
As soon as Gabriel saw Janey, he was struck by her bold and unconventional beauty. She was quite unlike the Victorian ideal of beauty, being tall as a man and slender as a willow wand, with heavy masses of dark hair, black brows, a bee-stung mouth, and a long strong nose. Her looks were so un-English that many would later speculate that she had Gypsy blood in her.

Gabriel approached her at the end of the performance and asked her to come and model for him. After some hesitation, Janey agreed.

Gabriel was ten years older than Janey - handsome, brilliant, and charming. It was little wonder that she should fall in love with him. But Gabriel was not free. He had been entangled in a long and tumultuous affair with another of his models for the past seven years. Her name was Lizzie Siddal, and she was delicate, highly-strung, and thought to be dying of consumption. In all likelihood, her malady was anorexia nervosa, bugt this was a psychological disorder that had not yet been identified or named, and so her frailty and refusal of food puzzled the many physicians who saw her.

Lizzie was an artist and poet too, and had been the only woman to have her work exhibited in the first Pre-Raphaelite exhibition earlier that year. Gabriel and Lizzie had become engaged a few years earlier, but somehow the marriage had never taken place. Hearing rumours about Gabriel and Janey, she wrote to him and begged him to come to her. Gabriel obeyed reluctantly. The Oxford set was broken up, the murals left unfinished.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, by George Frederic Watts, c. 1871



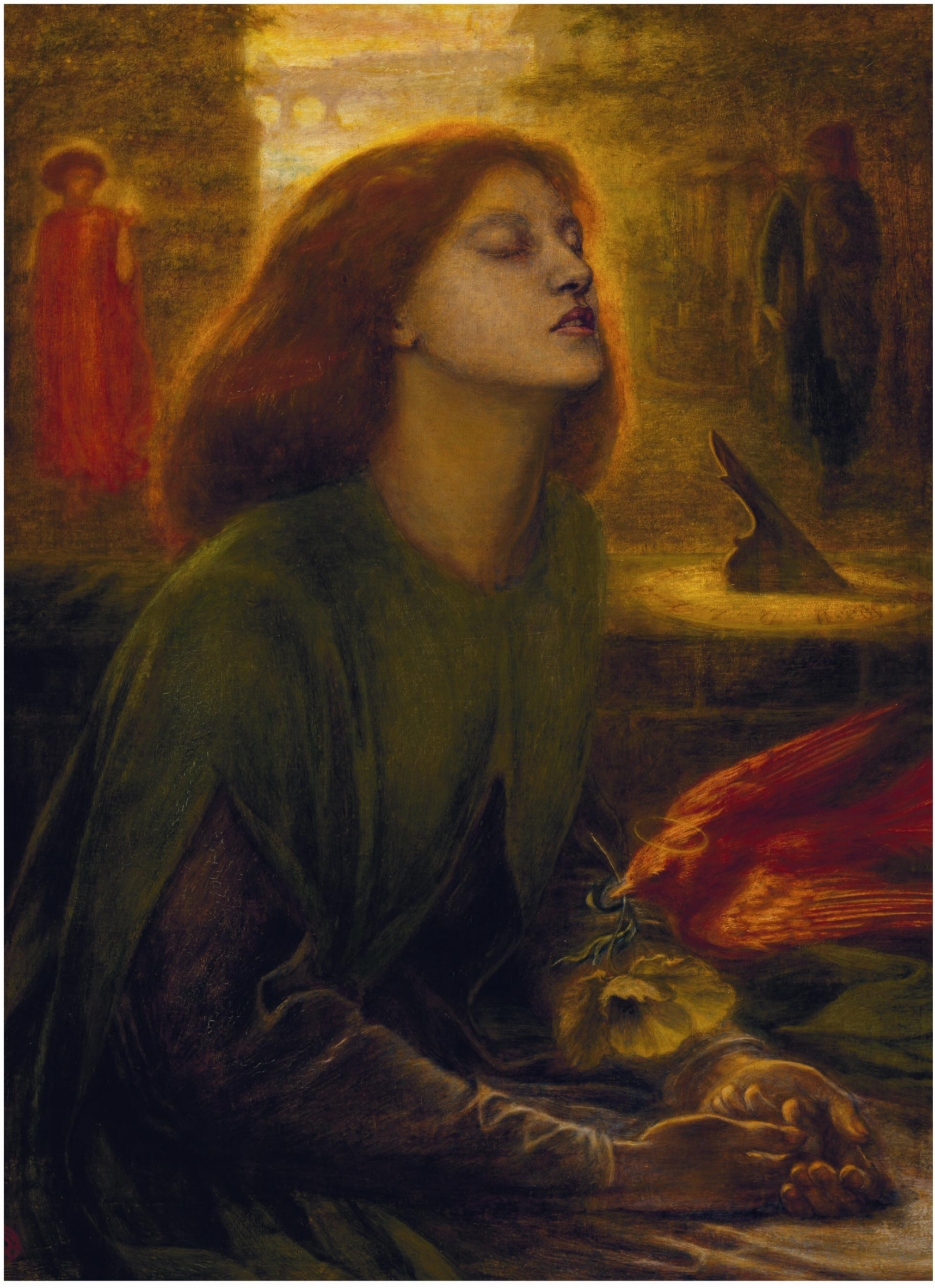
William Morris, however, stayed in Oxford. He was trying to paint Janey as the tragic queen Iseult. One day he wrote on the back of the canvas, "I cannot paint you but I love you."

Topsy was stout and rather awkward, but he was also kind and rich. Janey was a slum girl who had been abandoned by her lover. His offer of marriage was not something she could easily refuse. They were married in 1859, after Janey had spent months being taught how to act like a lady.

A year later Gabriel married Lizzie, after promising her on her deathbed that they would be wed if only she would get better. They had been lovers for more than eleven years. A scant two weeks later, Ned married Georgie Macdonald, a sweet-faced 19-year-old who also had dreams of creating art.

Topsy built a grand Art & Crafts manor in the Kentish countryside called 'Red House', and the three couples spent many happy weekends painting murals, embroidering tapestries, and playing hide-and-seek by candlelight. Together they created the company that is now known as Morris & Co, creating

A *Christmas Carol*, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1867



Beata Beatrix, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, c. 1864-70

fabrics, wallpaper, stained glass, hand-painted tiles, and furniture.

The joyous times could not last, however. Janey gave birth to a healthy little girl in January 1861, but - a few months later - the Rossetti's daughter was stillborn. Lizzie sank deep into postnatal depression. One day Georgie and Ned found her rocking an empty cradle and singing lullabies to a baby who was not there.

Six months later, Lizzie died of a laudanum overdose. The inquest found her death to be by misadventure, but rumours have abounded ever since. Racked with grief and guilt, Gabriel buried his only manuscript of poems with her.

Haunted by her ghost, he began to hold séances in the hope of reaching her. He filled his house with a menagerie of exotic animals - including peacocks, owls, raccoons, and a wombat - and rarely left the house in sunlight. He drank too much and began to self-dose himself with chloral hydrate, a highly addictive sedative. Gabriel also painted his dead wife's face compulsively, most famously in the portrait entitled 'Beata Beatrix'. It showed Lizzie's pale face upturned in bliss, her flame-red hair turned into an aureole by the distant sunset, a red dove delivering a white poppy - the flower of death - into her waiting hands.

In the summer of 1865, Gabriel hosted a party at his grand house in Chelsea. Topsy and Janey were guests. Gabriel had not seen Janey since Lizzie's death. Struck anew by her wild, dark beauty, Gabriel asked her to sit for him once again. Janey agreed at once. He began to draw and paint her as obsessively as he had once drawn Lizzie. In 1868, he created a magnificent portrait of her in a blue silk dress, a red rose at her waist. The frame was engraved with the words: "Famous for her poet husband, and most famous for her face, finally let her be famous for my picture!"

By that time, Topsy had won great acclaim with his epic poem *The Earthly Paradise*. Jealous of his success and in love with his wife, Gabriel began to wish he had not been so impetuous in burying his own poetry in Lizzie's coffin. In October 1869 - seven years after her death - Gabriel secretly obtained a court order to have her dead body exhumed so he could retrieve his manuscript, riddled with wormholes and reeking of rot.

The Victorians had a morbid fascination with death, which they policed with rigid mourning rituals. The news of the exhumation caused a scandal, fuelled by the whispers of Gabriel and Janey's secret affair.

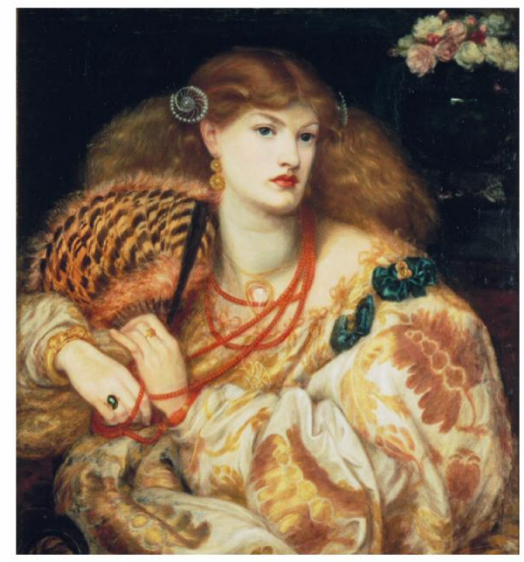
Cuckolded by his idol, betrayed by his wife, Topsy acted with his usual kindness and refusal to bow to convention. He took out a joint lease with Gabriel on a beautiful Elizabethan manor house on the River Thames in Kent, then travelled on his own to Iceland. Gabriel and Janey and her two daughters, Jenny and May, spent an idyllic summer at Kelmscott Manor, far from the outraged eyes of London society.

It was then that Gabriel began his portrait of Janey as Proserpina. In his eyes, she too was condemned to a loveless marriage, their world as bleak and barren as winter. Only in those few sweet heedless months of summer could they both escape and be free to love as they pleased.

It was there that he wrote the sonnet later inscribed upon the painting. It read, in part, "this… dire fruit which, tasted once, must thrall me here… Woe's me for thee, unhappy Proserpina."

As the long summer days drifted past, Gabriel wrote many love poems for Janey. He copied them into a small leather notebook for her, each word thrumming with longing and desire: "all sweet blooms of love/ To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang;/But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang… Only this laurel dreads no winter days/ Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise."

But the world could not be shut out. The scandal intensified, with Gabriel's art and poetry being excoriated in the press. Tortured



Monna Vanna, Dante Gabriel Rossetti,

by guilt, racked with nervousness, Gabriel had a nervous breakdown. In June 1872 - ten years after Lizzie's death - he tried to commit suicide with an overdose of laudanum. He was revived but was left paralysed down one side. His addiction to whisky, chloral, and laudanum grew fiercer. In 1876, unable to bear it any longer, Janey broke off their affair.

In 1882, Gabriel painted Janey as Proserpina for the eighth and final time, except that he gave her Lizzie's mane of fiery red hair.

A few days later, he died.

Janey lived for another thirty-odd years, spending much of her time in the old manor house on the river where she had been so happy so briefly.

She kept his notebook of love poems all her life.

Looking Back, by Bev Pettit

WOMANKIND

Photographers' Award XX

Portrait

We are pleased to announce the winning entry of *Womankind*'s Photographers' Award XX on the theme 'Portrait'. In first place is photographer Bev Pettit who beautifully captured legendary rug weaver and Navajo Elder, Suzie Yazzie, standing outside her childhood home in Utah, Arizona. In second place is Kristine Heykants who has photographed *Cousin Joan in Aunt Leona's Kitchen*. In third place is the exquisite *Sisters* by Françoise Holtzmacher. And in fourth place is *Hero*, by Maria Colaidis (the sitter's name is Hero Minogue). Finalists include the stunning *Ruth Baig*, by Kate Atkinson, *Night's Eyes*, by Lucy Cawood, and the dreamy *Anything Can Be*, by Jax Mennenoh.

Cousin Joan in Aunt Leona's Kitchen, by Kristine Heykants

Sisters, by Françoise Holtzmacher

Hero, by Maria Colaidis

Ruth Baig, by Kate Atkinson

Night's Eyes, by Lucy Cawood

Anything Can Be, by Jax Mennenoh

Literature

Aldous Huxley, the author of *Brave New World*, thought that the only hope for humanity is if enough of us undergo strenuous mystical training to become one with the divine.

The writer turned mystic

Words
JULES EVANS

Illustration
AIDA NOVOA &
CARLOS EGAN

When you think of the English, you don't usually think of 'ecstasy' - I mean ecstasy in the sense of surrendering control of your habitual self and feeling filled with a higher power or spirit. That doesn't sound very Downton Abbey.

And yet cultures are full of paradoxes. English culture - rational, empirical, commercial, and moderate - is also the culture that gave us Blake, the Beatles, Methodism, and acid house. Because we're so uptight, we need to really let go; sometimes.

No one illustrates this paradox in the English character better than Aldous Huxley, the author of *Brave New World*. He was a posh, cerebral, emotionally-repressed intellectual. And yet, ironically, this stiff upper lip Brit became a spiritual guru in California, and helped to shift western culture's attitude to ecstasy.

I've always felt a kinship with Aldous. Like him, I came from a privileged English background, and have struggled to escape its emotional inhibitions.

I went to the school where he was a pupil and then a teacher - Eton College (his pupils included a young George Orwell). Like many bored kids at boarding school, I plunged into experimentation with drugs, inspired by his book *The Doors of Perception*. While at Eton, I read his book *The Perennial Philosophy*, which introduced me to the world's great mystical teachers. I still have the copy I stole from the school library. Like Huxley, I then went to Oxford to study English literature, where my tutor was David Bradshaw, the world expert on Huxley.

But it was while researching my book that I really came to appreciate Huxley's genius. I was researching ecstatic experiences, and how people find them today, especially in Britain, which is one of the most secular countries in the world. I longed to find self-transcendence for myself - I felt stuck in my rational, uptight, male, upper-middle-class English self.

Huxley, I came to decide, is the greatest theorist we have of ecstatic experiences. And he was also driven by the same English urge to escape his inhibitions and take a 'holiday from the self'.

He was born in 1894 into intellectual aristocracy. His grandfather was Thomas Huxley, ally of Charles Darwin and one of the most famous scientists of the Victorian era. Thomas ruthlessly debunked the superstitions of Christianity and coined a word to describe his own beliefs - 'agnostic'. He thought science could be a new

religion, passing the virtues of truth and industry to the masses.

As a young man, Aldous imbibed his grandfather's materialism and scepticism, and took it to an extreme. His early novels put forward the philosophy that we live in a meaningless universe full of suffering and death, so we might as well have fun. One of his friends called him, at this stage in his life, a "prophet of meaninglessness". But there was something liberating about his hedonistic nihilism.

He was also a tremendous snob. While his grandfather campaigned for universal education, the young Aldous thought most humans were incapable of academic education, and mass democracy was based on the lie of equality. He worried that the 'mentally unfit' were outbreeding the intellectual elite (i.e. him and his friends), and he toyed with the sort of eugenic politics that he imagines in *Brave New World*.

The Huxley family by Lady Ottoline Morrell

This first phase of his life ended in 1930, when he had a breakdown. He could no longer endure a meaningless universe full of suffering. He was also traumatised - his mother died when he was 14, then his brother committed suicide when he was 20, and he'd buried the trauma beneath a carapace of cynicism and indifference. He was, in many ways, a victim of what one contemporary psychologist calls "boarding school syndrome" - in which young people sent away to boarding school learn to bury their pain and end up cut off from their emotions. I probably suffered from that too.

In the midst of his breakdown, he met an Irishman called Gerald Heard. He was the BBC's first dedicated science journalist, with a particular fondness for psychic research and Eastern spirituality.

Heard introduced Huxley to meditation and Huxley hung on to it like a drowning man. He wasn't the first intellectual of his generation to convert in the midst of a breakdown. But unlike others (C.S. Lewis, say, or W.H. Auden) he didn't convert to Christianity. Rather, he converted to a sort of empirical spirituality in which one self-experiments with spiritual techniques from several different religions.

Huxley announced his conversion to the perennial philosophy in his 1937 book *Ends and Means*. His contemporaries were shocked - the famous cynic Aldous Huxley, grandson of Thomas, had converted to mysticism? Even worse, he and Heard became leading pacifists in the anti-war movement. They suggested the only solution for society was mass psycho-spiritual training in small meditation groups. This seemed a ridiculous idea in the mid-1930s, as the world galloped towards another war.

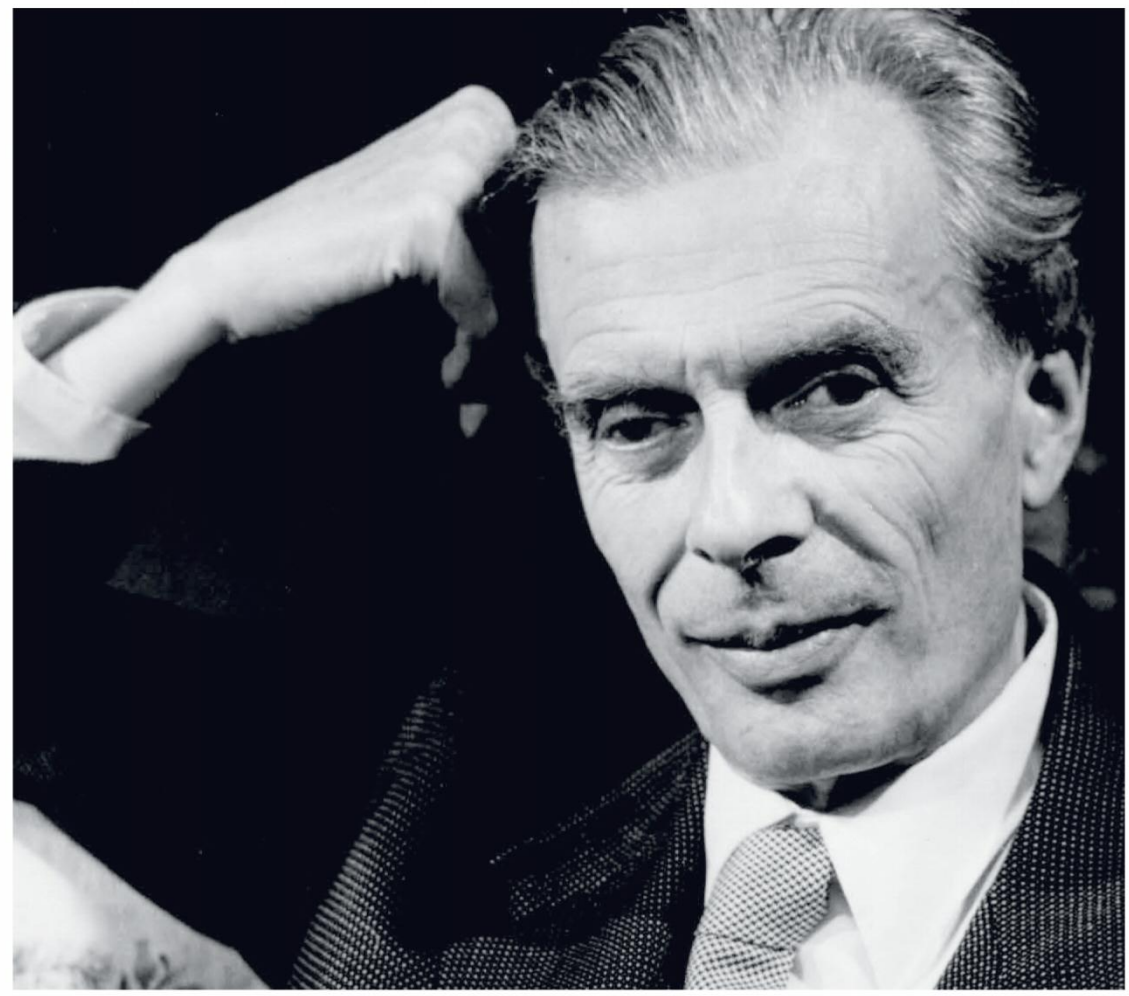
Huxley and Heard left the UK in 1937, and went to live in Hollywood. They were accompanied by Christopher Isherwood, the novelist and author of *Goodbye to Berlin*. Huxley and Isherwood tried their hands at movie script writing, with patchy success, and all three immersed themselves in the mystical philosophy of Vedanta. They were dubbed the "mystical expatriates of California" by another expat, Alan Watts.

All four were trying to escape the weight of Europe, the weight of history and empire. And they were all searching for an escape from their boarding-school Englishness, a way to live more spontaneously and ecstatically.

In the midst of World War II, Huxley retreated to the Mojave Desert and wrote *The Perennial Philosophy*. It's a work born from despair. The only hope for humanity, he suggests, is if enough of us undergo strenuous mystical training to become one with the divine. Some hope. He admitted, later in life, that he'd never had a mystical experience himself. He was still a very cerebral thinker, good at analysing and classifying mysticism, not so good at experiencing it.

That changed, somewhat, on Sunday May 3, 1953, when Huxley tried the psychedelic drug mescaline. He felt he finally got what the mystics were talking about. He wrote:

He admitted, later in life, that he'd never had a mystical experience himself.



Aldous Huxley

To be shaken out of the ruts of ordinary perception, to be shown for a few timeless hours the outer and the inner world, not as they appear to an animal obsessed with survival or to a human being obsessed with words and notions, but as they are apprehended, directly and unconditionally, by Mind at Large - this is an experience of inestimable value to everyone and especially to the intellectual.

He wrote about his experience in his book, *The Doors of Perception*, and in later works like *Heaven and Hell*, and *Island*. These works helped to create a profound shift in western culture's attitude to ecstatic experiences.

Previously, western intellectual culture had tended to see ecstatic experiences as products of mental pathology, ignorance or overemotionalism. Huxley insisted that humans have a "basic human urge" to self-transcendence. We can find healthy or unhealthy ways to 'unself'. He warned that consumerism and nationalism were becoming intoxicating forms of unhealthy transcendence.

A healthier alternative would be for us to explore various spiritual practices, including the use of psychedelics. He thought the mass use of psychedelics could lead to a spiritual revival in western culture - and it did, briefly, in the late 1960s.

Since then, many of his prophecies have become mainstream, particularly in the US. Around 10 per cent of the US population practice meditation and yoga, the fastest-growing religious demographic is 'spiritual but not religious', and psychedelics are being decriminalised in many states, and studied as a means to mystical experiences. Today more than 50 per cent of Americans say they've had at least one mystical experience, up from 20 per cent in 1960.

There are problems, of course, with Huxley's vision of empirical spirituality and mysticism for the masses. It is quite individualistic, his vision of spirituality. There's not much community, or ritual, or elders. It can fetishise 'mystical experiences' so that we chase them hungrily, as Huxley did. And he underestimated the risks of ego-dissolution. It can be messy, as the sixties would illustrate.

Still, I agree with Yuval Noah Harari that Huxley is the greatest prophet of the 20th century - for his prophecies about the genetic revolution, the threat of ecological collapse, and the prospect of a new marriage of psychedelics and eastern religion. He's more appreciated, probably, in mystical California than in secular England. But that's often the way with prophets.

Writers

Words
CHERRY MOSTESHAR-GHARAI

Photography
HASAN DINDJER

There are more writers per square mile in Oxford than anywhere else in the world.

Living the literary life

Blackwell's bookshop

In his poem *Thyrsis*, the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold called Oxford "the city of dreaming spires". Those stunning spires have inspired writers for generations, and today it is calculated that there are more writers per square mile in Oxford than anywhere else in the world. The rich history of novel writing is ingrained in the DNA of the city.

It would be difficult not to let the imagination fly in a place where you could be walking in the footsteps of King Henry VIII or crossing the spot where The Oxford Martyrs were burnt at the stake. Today many tourists are on a pilgrimage to such places as the Bodleian library, New College and Christ Church where *Harry Potter* was filmed. The *Eagle and Child* pub, owned by the oldest college of the university, St John's College, was the meeting place of legendary literary group, *The Inklings*, around whose tables sat C.S. Lewis, his *Chronicles of Narnia* taking shape as his good friend J.R.R Tolkien refined *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. This informal literary group, with members almost exclusively from the University of Oxford, and exclusively male, met for nearly two decades between the early 1930s and late 1949.

Thankfully, things have changed and today, around the corner *The Oxford Writing Circle* holds its meetings every Thursday night. Just one of the hundreds of writing groups in the city that are no longer the preserve of the grandees of the university, but where men and women from all walks of life gather to support each other.

One of the leading lights in this transformed Oxford scene is novelist and Professor of World Literature in English at Oxford, Elleke Boehmer, the author and editor of more than twenty books. As director of

Mariah Whelan

Photo: Hasan Dindjer

the *Oxford Centre for Life-Writing*, which has gained a local, national, and international reputation as a unique hub for many kinds of life-writing, she laments the failure of the university and the city to combine their literary worlds.

In 2014 a couple of Boehmer's students were involved in setting up the *Oxford Writing House*, which worked to bring together all these different groups. However, this was hit by problems and disbanded. "When it sprang up there was a huge amount of energy and good ideas behind it. They organised workshops and writing events. Everybody got very enthusiastic about it and it did seem to be quite a hub for writers to come together; I'm really surprised that it wasn't able to sustain itself in a place like this," Boehmer explained.

One of those students was Mariah Whelan, an Oxford girl and former Oxford student, the author of a volume of poetry *the love i do to you*. She explained that the mission was to bring all sides of Oxford's literary scene together. "As a legal entity, it has come to an end, but it's been a bit of a liberation because I have the contacts. I am *me* doing exactly what I was doing before but just not under that burden of being a legal entity," she says.

After leaving university, in the middle of a recession, Whelan found it hard to get work. She taught English for a while and kept writing. "Then I thought I actually want to get better at this, so I came back to Oxford and got into the two-year Masters in creative writing."

The program has produced many great writers, but, she argues, "you can live your life, your writing life, as a member of the university within a square mile and never leave intellectually, creatively, or literally.

Elleke Boehmer

There are certain things, the commonalities about the sort of people, I believe, that can have a negative impact on your writing; everyone on my course, and people who I have been meeting had a similar educational background, similar socio-economic background. What makes sense to me, often made sense to them."

Boehmer acknowledges the place of 'the course' in encouraging Oxford to engage more with its literary heritage, but it has come late in the day in response to the growing writing programs throughout the UK. She also pays tribute to Oxford's other university, Brookes, where The Poetry Centre is leading the way in uniting academia and the city.

Of Oxford University she says, "There are ways in which, because it's so huge, it's quite hard for a single artist or writer to kind of get tips on what is going on. If they're not part of the university it is hard to set up a healthy relationship with it."

One of the most iconic of landmarks in Oxford is Blackwell's bookshop, where, over four floors hold more than 250,000 fiction and nonfiction books. At the heart of its activities are its booksellers and its events team, who not only sell books but encourage local writers.

Heading this outreach is Hannah Chinnery, Blackwell's Events Coordinator, who started working for Blackwell's as a weekend bookseller while studying for her degree. "We are a hub for literary lovers and academics alike. As a bookshop, it's really important to support writers, be that local writers or unpublished writers. The great thing about supporting a writing group like *Writers at Blackwell's* is that we can share the joy of members when their books have been published.

"Many authors have written their books within our bookshop. Lucy Atkins wrote a lot of her first novel *The Missing One* in our coffee shop. Lots of our booksellers have become successful published authors. Daisy Johnson, who was the youngest author to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, wrote a lot of her short story collection *Fen* in our staff room and Robin Stevens was writing the first of her bestselling *Murder Most Unladylike* series while working for us."

Oxford, by virtue of its reputation and the wealth of notable graduates, is perhaps unique in offering the possibility of running into just the right contact at the right time. This was especially so for Tess Little, who, while still finishing her doctorate in history, is about to have her debut book, *The Octopus*, published. Tess just happened to meet a top agent, based in Oxford, through a friend, and a casual conversation about her research resulted in becoming a published author. "I started working with my agent on my history stuff. Then I mentioned this draft of the novella, and she wanted to read it, and she really enjoyed it. But she said that nobody publishes novellas. So I worked very closely with her creating the novel."

Tess attributes a lot of her skill to the opportunities afforded to

Magdalen College, Oxford University

Tess Little, photo by Hasan Dindjer

students by the various student publications. “I think it’s very confidence-boosting. When I was an undergraduate, I used to write nonfiction pieces for the *ISIS* magazine.”

Oxford is not the exclusive domain of the young, just take Barbara Lorna Hudson, an Oxford academic, who after her retirement and very humorous attempts at internet dating, wrote a novel about a woman struggling to find meaning after retirement. She took several courses and started going to the *Writers at Blackwell’s* group, and now has two novels published, *Timed Out* and *Makeover*, and travels the country giving talks. Barbara started her working life as a social worker and sex therapist, and she draws on these experiences in her writing.

“The early hint that I might be any good as a fiction writer came when I wrote up some case histories that I had of people I’ve worked with as a social worker, and people said how readable they were. They weren’t very academic. That kind of inspired me to think perhaps one day I’ll get around to writing fiction.

“I also did sex therapy for the hospital. I did find it useful for my first novel. I gave one of the characters a sex problem, and I had the heroine kind of dealing with it. Also, being a social worker you learn to listen”, she says, “and that is so important for a writer.”

She confessed that working at Oxford you meet a lot of ‘eccentrics’ and these characters have fuelled her books. “I went to dinner at college once and I was sitting next to the Vice Principal, who turned to me and said, ‘You’re a vegetarian, well, I’m an alcoholic.’ ”

That is the magic of Oxford - it attracts the very best in the world and offers experiences and support that is rare anywhere else. Even if it does not have a literary hub as such, it certainly has the greatest of literary inspirations.

Photo: Paul Maguire

Home

Some of England's great gardens were created by women - Gertrude Jekyll and Vita Sackville West were both fine horticulturists and contemporary designers.

THE ENGLISH GARDEN

Words
SARA MAITLAND

Photography
PAUL MAGUIRE,
COLINDA MCKIE,
AIDA NOVOA

Photo: Aida Novoa

English people are deeply proud of their gardens. Gardening has even been described as a (or even 'the') national art form; we may have got literature, music, and painting from continental Europe originally, but gardens - particularly garden design - are our own.

Gardens occupy a very special place in the national psyche. We can see this pride in various 'national' events: The Queen, now in her 90s, still turns out every year for various events - the State Opening of Parliament, The Remembrance Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in honour of our War Dead, the Trooping of the Colour (The Queen's Birthday Parade), and The Chelsea Flower Show (more correctly the Royal Horticultural Society Great Spring Show). Every year the Queen also hosts a series of Garden Parties, both at Buckingham Palace in London and at Holyrood Palace, her official Scottish residence, in Edinburgh. She entertains her citizens in the garden.

And you see much the same sort of emotions expressed in The National Garden Scheme, which organises the opening of over 3,500 privately-owned gardens on specific dates for charity. It records over 500,000 visits each year and has raised more than £50,000,000 for a wide range of charities since it started in 1927. English people very much like to visit and inspect other people's gardens. They do so with a considerable depth of horticultural knowledge. Gardening is a massively popular hobby, as the number of Garden Centres (essentially horticultural supermarkets) and specialist nurseries (now usually also selling online) attests, together with the remarkable number of specialist nurseries, local flower shows and, in urban areas, the high uptake of allotments - "a plot of land made available for individual, non-commercial gardening or growing food plants" (This differs from a 'community garden' because each allotment is owned and worked as a private or individual garden by its owner; allotments mean that even people living in high-rise flats can own and work a garden of their own - and they do.)

This pride is not without justification - England does indeed have some very lovely gardens.

And there are a number of historical reasons for this: In the first place England has an unusually benign climate from the point of view of gardens. Drought, fatal for horticulture, is unusual, but so is extreme

or extended cold; although we are supposed to have an obsession with the weather in England, it is essentially temperate - in both rainfall and temperature - and this allows for an unusually wide range of plants to flourish and to have reasonably regular flowering seasons, which obviously assists design and planning.

In the second place the larger history of rural England has favoured the making and maintaining of gardens over several centuries. At the simplest level there have been fewer wars (which are rather bad for gardens) fought in rural England than in many other countries. The dissolution of the monasteries, as part of Henry VIII's Reformation in the 16th century, brought a large number of garden-sized spaces into private, secular ownership (many of the monasteries and their lands were sold, or given, by the crown into private, individual ownership). More widely, Europeans gardens had been immensely influenced by the role that monasteries played in the Middle Ages. The relative poverty of the English Crown (in relation to monarchies elsewhere) meant that 'court' - being in attendance on the monarch, usually at his or her expense, was less demanding than in, for example - France or Spain and land owners were more likely to stay on their own country estates and therefore have time and occasion for designing gardens and parks. In fact, medieval English monarchs tended to travel around the country and invite themselves to stay with their subjects, often at their great expense, rather than command their aristocracy's presence at court.)

In the third place, perhaps more unexpectedly, one of the driving forces behind the development of English garden style was quasi-political. The French gardens of the time were highly formal, symmetrical and 'unnatural'. As England became more opposed to the French, and particularly the autocratic rule

Bishops Palace, Wells. Photo by Colinda McKie

of the French Kings, over the course of the 18th century, they began to design gardens to express their freedom and more natural style. One's garden, it was suggested, should express the beauty of freedom, the loveliness of the natural, in opposition to the formal, 'stilted' arrangements of the continental style. The 'natural' garden, with woody glades, curved driveways, loose shrubberies, and long vistas, was one of the earlier expressions of the Romantic Movement. This style of gardening, represented by Capability Brown, Humphrey Repton, and other designers, became known as the Picaresque; a garden should look like a painting, with landscape artists like Poussin as the model, but it was also called the English Garden even on the Continent. 'Improving', as it was called, your garden became fashionable in the second half of the eighteenth century and early years of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, there is a reference to garden design and this 'natural' style of park land in every one of Jane Austen's six novels, all published between 1811 and 1818.

In the fourth place the expansion of England's overseas interests meant that an extraordinary number of 'exotics' were brought home from around the world and massively expanded the available choice of garden plants. Perhaps the most famous of these imports were rhododendrons, which came from Asia and were almost ideal, provided you had the right soil for the 'naturalistic' woodland romantic gardens that were favoured through the nineteenth century. (One particular rhododendron species, *ponticum*, has proven appallingly invasive and damaging to English natural woodland; but there are over 1,000 other

Gardening, (for leisure and beauty, not just for growing food) is therefore a very ancient creative activity.

kinds and no one who has visited a garden where they flourish during their flowering season can fail to appreciate their glory.) Azaleas, magnolias, and a large assortment of evergreen trees were also introduced, along with an ever-expanding range of smaller herbaceous flowering plants. A hobby (later commercialised) for cross breeding developed, creating brand new garden plants. Plant hunting, as it is called, continues to this day, but the vast range of introductions in the 19th century (and the massive improvement in the technology of greenhouses) drove the English love of gardens to new heights. Fashion in gardens, both the designs (and particularly the swings between formal and informal) and the plants themselves has changed and developed inevitably and healthily for two centuries now - and so we have inherited an extraordinary variety of gardens, from the grand parks of the stately homes through to tiny highly creative urban gardens. There is also a substantial range of public gardens - not simply parks offering green space but designed, managed horticultural adventures open to, and loved by, a huge range of people. Nowhere in England will you be far from a garden to look at and enjoy.

Because of its 'domestic' nature, gardening even in the 19th century, was an acceptable pursuit for women, even when other artistic and professional expression was frowned upon. Some of England's great gardens were created by women - Gertrude Jekyll, Vita Sackville West, and several others were both fine horticulturists and contemporary designers. Although these women often worked on their own gardens, they also advised and designed more publicly for others. Sackville West and her husband Harold Nicholson created the gardens at Sissinghurst in Kent, now one of the most notable (and most visited) gardens in England. It is famous both for its design qualities - including the famous white garden in which all the flowers are that colour, the way the lay-out encouraged exploration and attentiveness, and for the range of plants she was cultivating, introducing, and breeding. Since 1962, Sissinghurst has been in the care of the National Trust, because it is seen as a national treasure. The National Trust own many of England's great gardens, but this is usually because they come attached to great houses. They own Sissinghurst because of its garden; the house itself, though charming, is not of particular interest.

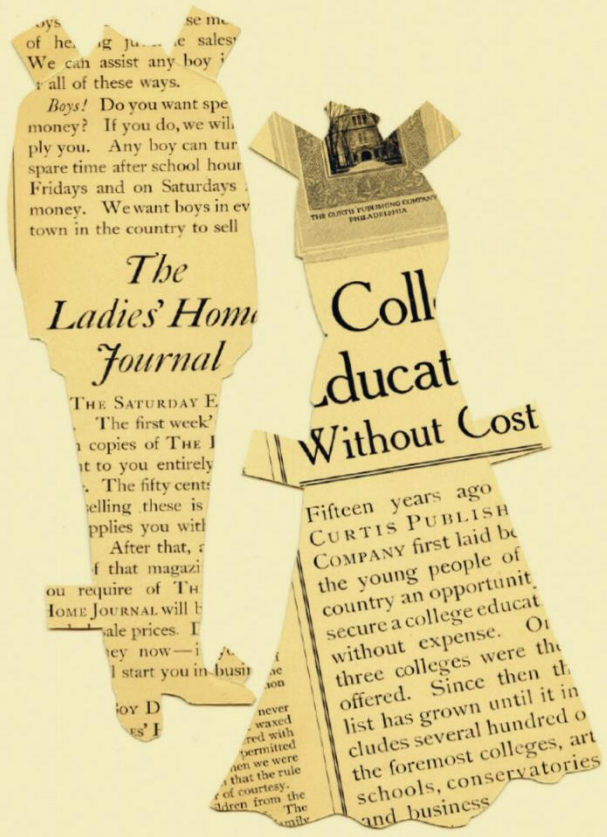
We know the Romans designed and planted gardens around their villas during their occupation of Britain, which ended 410 CE, although no gardens that old have been in continuous cultivation since their creation. Gardening, (for leisure and beauty, not just for growing food) is therefore a very ancient creative activity. And it continues still: each year the Chelsea Flower Show gives awards not just for individual plants but for garden design. Many of these little show gardens are innovative, even radical, and attract a good deal of attention. English gardens continue to develop and evolve. They continue to be loved.

The psychology of fashion

ARE YOU WHAT YOU WEAR?

Psychology

When we generate symbolic meaning about a garment it can help us change our perceptions and our behaviour.



Interviewee
PROFESSOR CAROLYN MAIR

Interview
LIZ EVANS

Paper dolls
THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL

How does clothing affect behaviour? Are we what we wear?

If we're wearing something that we feel confident in, it makes us more able to achieve whatever we're aiming for, and this positive behaviour is reciprocated by the people we're interacting with, so it's an upward spiral. There has been a lot of research into this - for example, we know when we wear a suit that we're likely to behave more professionally, whatever that means. The enclothed cognition study by Hajo Adam and Adam Galinsky tested two groups of people; one who had been told that a white lab coat belonged to a painter, and another who were told the same coat belonged to a doctor. Both groups were given an attention span test while wearing the coat, and those who wore it believing it belonged to a doctor outperformed those who wore it believing it belonged to a painter. They also discovered that people who merely looked at the coat lying on a chair, while believing it to be a doctor's coat, performed better than people looking at it thinking it belonged to a painter. So, belief is really powerful, and when we have a strong belief in the symbolic meaning of what we're wearing, it can actually change our thinking because when we generate symbolic meaning about a garment, it can help us change our perceptions and our behaviour. But it's not magic. We have to believe in it and make it work.

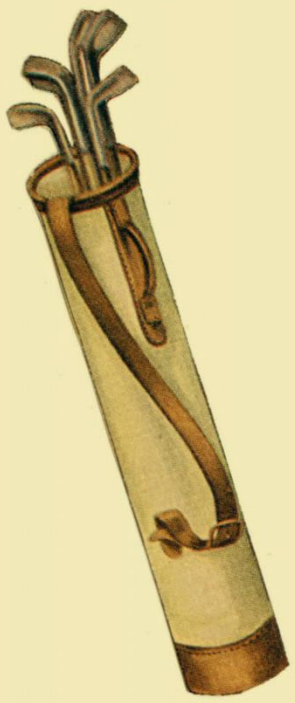
But are we what we wear? Well, it depends on who's observing us. I see fashion as a language, where the items of clothing are the vocabulary and the syntax is how we put it all together. And in terms of genre, style, and subculture, there are lots of different fashion languages, but if we see fashion as communication, how often can what we say be misinterpreted or misunderstood? We might dress in our luxury items - and if we're connoisseurs, we'll choose luxury items without logos - but unless we're interacting with people who have a similar knowledge to us, or who share our fashion language, it means nothing.

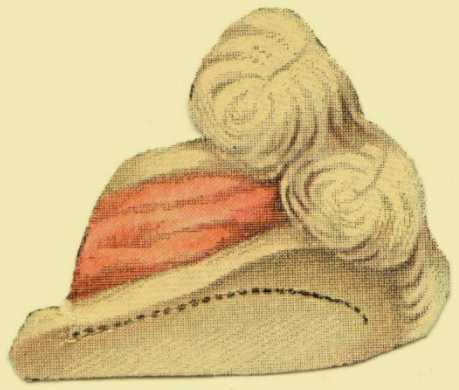
Can clothes affect our identity, or even change our personality?

When people call me a fashion psychologist, I say, "No, I'm a psychologist working with the fashion industry," because it's about the person first. The person changes the

fashion. Our personality will influence what we wear, but not so much vice versa.

You can have an item of clothing and put it on 100 people and they would all feel different in it, so it's really about what we bring to the situation. What are our motivations and assumptions? And, again, what are our beliefs - not only in ourselves, but in the item of clothing? In terms of personality measures, none of us are either extraverted or introverted. We're all a bit of both, depending on the context of the situation. So, if we're feeling good and people are responding well to us, we could attribute that to our clothing, but there are so many other factors at play. It would be very hard to tease that out. You might walk into a room and initially think "Oh, I wish I'd put my best dress on," or "I shouldn't have put my best dress on," but your experience there will ultimately be about who you are, not what you're wearing. This is the complexity of fashion; it's the window of us to other people, it's a reflection, and clothes can enable us - but we've





got to believe in that for it to happen. It's not magic, it takes effort.

How much is clothing bound up with identity?

The German sociologist Georg Simmel said that fashion enables us to fit in but also to stand out, so it's a bit of a dilemma because generally we want to do both, and a few tweaks with our clothing allows us to do that. So, our clothes can express our individual identity, and maybe show us to be someone who's anti-fashion. The term fashion is very hard to define anyway especially now, with fashion changing from day to day and week to week, as opposed to seasonally. Is that fashion? Or is fashion simply what we wear? Or do we use fashion as a verb, as in how we make our clothes, how we 'fashion our identity'? However you look at it though, we're all affected by the fashion industry - even if we think we're not fashionable or we think we don't care about fashion - because our clothes touch us, they're the closest thing to our bodies, and everybody wears them.

Is it useful to develop a fashion uniform in life?

In terms of identity, personal style, comfort, and confidence, having a fashion uniform makes life much easier. Most of our behaviour is subconscious, and we throw on our clothes first thing in the morning without really thinking about them, but they have an effect on other people throughout the day, so this is when a uniform is really helpful. If you have a uniform, you don't have wardrobe explosions when you're trying to find the right outfit and you've tried on 100 things and nothing feels right. At work, especially, reliable clothing frees up your mind to think about more important elements, and you don't worry about whether you're wearing the right thing to a meeting because you know your clothing works for you.

How much is personal style an expression of individuation, and what might a significant change of style indicate?

Style is almost like personality, it's enduring. So, my style is casual - jeans and a jumper, although sometimes I like to change that, and dress up and go for a bit of glamour if it's the right occasion, but once I'm enjoying myself, I stop thinking about what I'm wearing. A big style change in life may be the result of some kind of life change, or because

you want a life change. So, it could be someone who's had cancer and their body has changed as a result of surgery, or someone who's lost or gained a lot of weight, or had a baby, or got divorced, or someone who wants to meet a new partner. All these factors might engender a change of style, when someone looks at where she is in her life, and asks herself, what's my style? Or it might not even be that conscious, you might just find yourself in a fashion store looking at different types of clothes.

How do we age with style?

I think the real changes are not to do with being age 20 or 30 or 40; those are just numbers. The real changes happen in adolescence, at the start of puberty, and, for women, at the pre-menopausal and menopausal stages. It's difficult because we can make mistakes, but a lot of it comes down to confidence really. Teenage girls are generally not very confident, and they may be pushed into wearing something that their peers are wearing and persuaded to behave in ways they don't feel confident, because our social groups are highly influential, especially in adolescence. You do see young girls tugging at their skirts, pulling them down, and probably wishing they hadn't worn what they've worn but the pressure is there. And I think there's so much tied up with being in your mid-40s as a woman, that style is just one of the problems. This is often when women start thinking seriously about life and experience conflict, and these thoughts are based on all sorts of external influences as well as internal changes. It's never been looked at properly, particularly from a work perspective. Women are just meant to carry on as normal. But after menopause women often become more confident, because they care a lot less about what others think of them.

I also would love fashion to promote people who do good, as much as look good.

It seems that young teenage girls want to hide while being seen, while older women want to stay visible, but on their own terms. Can a psychological approach to fashion help?

I think the fashion industry needs to represent its customers much more than it does, not just in terms of skin tones, but also body size and age. It would help women feel more included instead of marginalised. Once you get past 25, you're just not represented in fashion images. We are seeing more older models, but generally they don't even look like older women. I'd like to see more average looking women in fashion shoots. I also would love fashion to promote people who *do* good, as much as look good. We make judgements in under a second when we see someone, so clearly appearance matters, but we pay so much attention to appearance and when we discover somebody isn't initially what we thought they were, then our judgement changes.

If we could promote psychological qualities like being kind, thoughtful, or generous, alongside the clothes, I think that would go a long way. Most fashion brands don't do this. Most of their models just stand there, gazing into space, and being gazed back at, which objectifies them. But if we had models who've achieved something, who are wearing something beautiful as well, then we'd make a positive association with the clothing which can be very powerful. When Michelle Obama wears something publicly, it sells out. And fashion influencers have the same effect,

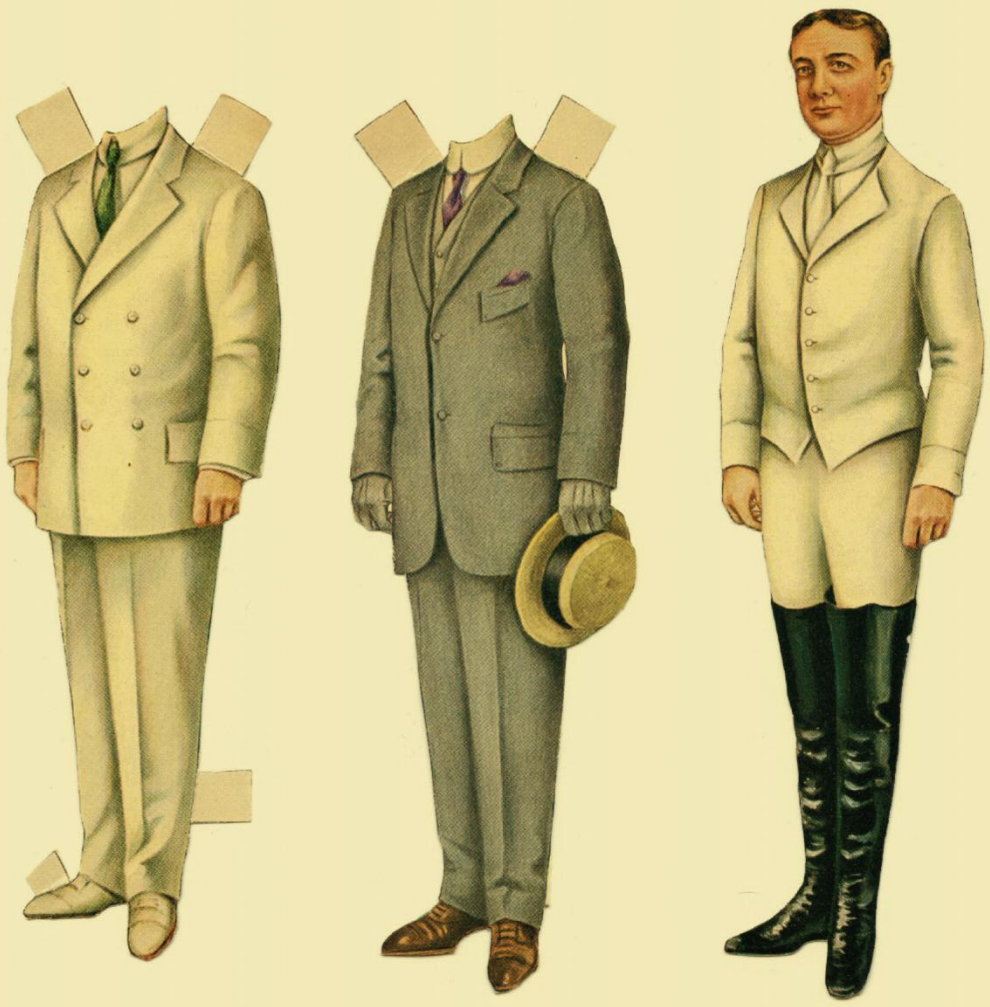
but often all they do is look beautiful on social media.

It's about bringing values into fashion. Younger generations are very opinionated about what's right and what's wrong now and they're much more likely to align themselves with brands that have the same values as they do.

One of the main issues affecting the fashion industry now is sustainability and the climate crisis. How can understanding the psychology of fashion help support the current situation?

I try to be positive about the fashion industry because there are so many negatives, but everyone wears clothes, so economically it's such a huge industry and it has enormous power to do good. So yes, suddenly, after being on the agenda for decades, the sustainability argument is extremely clear now and it's having a real impact. But the whole concept of fast and slow fashion is problematic. Slow fashion is expensive and grafted and who wouldn't want that? But it's exclusive, and this has been the problem for decades. I'm now a senior consultant at the H&M group, and if I can make a difference in sustainability within mass consumerism, it will have a bigger impact than if I were to work within the exclusive, luxury market. At the London College of Fashion, they used to say buy less and spend more and I used to get so upset with that because not everyone can afford to spend more. I completely understand that people should buy less and learn to look after their clothes, absolutely, but just making a binary split between fast and slow fashion - one bad, one good - doesn't make sense because how sustainable is a luxury item? The people who started the sustainability agenda weren't the people on the ground who are trying to find enough money in their pocket to buy a sandwich, so it's a very privileged perspective and I talk about this a lot in academia because I was coming at it from the other side. In the UK, America, Australia, and Europe, it's one thing, but the biggest part of the world's population lives in countries like India and Africa, and those people don't worry about buying designer dresses, but everyone should have the right to afford good clothing. They should not have to wear rags.

There's so much potential in the fashion industry to make the world a better place, and we can make changes. We're never going to stop buying clothes even though we don't need them, because we get bored, we habituate, and we like novelty, so we need to have a fashion industry that knows that but is also sensitive to people's needs and the climate crisis, because things cannot go on as they are.



Most models just stand there gazing into space, and being gazed back at, which objectifies them.

“There’s so much potential in the fashion industry to make the world a better place.”

“I reminded myself of someone, but someone I had not seen for a long time.”

Anita Brookner,
Brief Lives

Illustration by Monica Barengo

WOMANKIND

WOMANKIND'S Walking Challenge

Womankind readers were challenged to walk aimlessly, with no purpose, for five days. Here is how they fared.

Susan Wakefield
Mornington Peninsula, Australia

Day one: To perambulate or not to perambulate? I love that word: perambulate. It sounds so serious, so important. I put earplugs in my ears before I set off in perambulation mode: hmmm, now what should I listen to when I walk? I guess I am reasonably fit for a freelance writer who spends more hours a day on her gluteus maximus than the Brooklyn bus driver that does sixteen-hour shifts day and night. I leave the house. Keys down, shoes on, ear plugs: in or out? I stick the ear plugs in to listen to Drake and at the last minute decide to take my furry four-legged beast with me. Suddenly I feel a pang of guilt for being the dog owner that never walks her dog and justifies it with frequent ball play in the yard. I just don't get enough hours in the day to work, then get home, walk the dog, make dinner. And then I'm tired, and I want to put my feet up. And then it's dark. Dog jumps and begs like a kid at the circus for his ride; I acquiesce. I do not really know this neighbourhood. I turn the corner and am just about to walk past a property that looks unkempt - chain-link fence, dirty old armchair by the rickety door - when a mad white pitbull with burning red eyes rushes at me, teeth bared, growling. Startled, I jump back in shock and return his stare with a growl. Poor, sad, caged creature.

Day two: Why do we hate walking so much? How have we become so lazy? Our ancestors walked for centuries; aboriginal tribes went walkabout, tribal groups walked hundreds of thousands of miles from the deserts of Africa, crossing continents in the name of survival. Structurally we are built for walking. When did we feel the need to replace living with all this gadgetry? I dig in my bag for an assortment of modern, perambulatory accoutrements: the step counter, the distance calculator, the digital maps, the fit technology, the earplugs, and spend a good half hour untangling cords. I walk out the front door and down the street, past the dog with the chain-link fence. One step, two steps, pedometer clocking my feet, music pulsing in my ears, wind in my face - I get out the map-ometer app to plan and map my route. My friend Liz expects me to be at her house at six o'clock for wine and cheese; just as I'm standing on the side of the road I get an incoming text message. "Why don't you jump an Uber? It will be way faster." I am juggling my multiple devices and am about to text her back saying, "No, I think I'll really enjoy the walk," when a car whizzes past me at break-neck speed. What is the hurry? Why do I buy into this routine of faster, faster? Break speed limits only to stop at red lights. No longer a passenger in my own life, I gather myself, take the earplugs out then text her back that I'm fine and I'll be there in thirty minutes.

Day three: Saturday morning arrives and instead of my usual laze in bed routine, scrolling through countless lives and faces of others, or feeding likes and emojis to my narcissistic world, I decide to jump out of bed and get going. The sun is shining and I feel a spring in my

step. It isn't until I am halfway down the street that I realise I forgot the pedometer to calculate every step of my existence. I am completely unperturbed by the missing gadgetry and feel much freer without it. My sedentary occupation does little to help my poor posture and contributes to my sore joints. But I am developing a newfound appreciation for my legs and feet. I prance merrily along and climb the steps to a large grassy open space set between buildings. I reach a busy street and wait at the crosswalk - I am in such a light, airy mood, I can't help myself; I find myself without music and singing to The Proclaimers, "But I would walk five hundred miles, then I would walk five hundred more, just be the man who walks a thousand miles to fall down at your door - Da da da (da da da), Da da da (da da da)…"

Day four: I remember back when I lived in Paris for a year - I walked everywhere, all the time. I never needed a car and had my cute little red Vélib' bicycle to transport me. But back then, more often than not, I chose to walk; one sees and notices more when walking. I walked across the Seine to the Louvre and walked the length of her historical corridors with a sense of purpose. In America, I barely walked at all, and if I did, I was met with strange looks, people wondering why I'd not choose to be in my car instead. I worked hard in America - flying from this meeting to that, from this city to that, only to dash home, make dinner, feed the dog, fall into a heap, go to bed, get up, and do it all over again. The more I walk, the more alive I feel; it is a quiet transformation. I walk and walk, no longer counting steps or time or chores or to-do lists.

Day five: "You have arrived at your destination," Siri tells me as I pull into my drive. I have been climbing the office walls all day like a caged animal, just waiting to escape. I feel constrained in my business attire and sit restlessly at my desk and start to plan and map my route. Abruptly I stop what I am doing, turn off the computer and turn to look out the window at an overcast sky instead. I think about the pitbull and wonder if I will get to see him today. I long to make the world move at my pace. I change clothes and leave all of my worries at the door, conscious to feed my higher need to just go walkabout. I walk up to the chain-link fence; at first, I cannot see him, and begin to panic that he has run off as the two gates are wide open, the car gone. He emerges slowly from the side of the house, dragging a heavy chain. I look around for anyone at home, but the house is empty. I walk inside the gate, and he looks at me excitedly, bouncing up and down, his chain jangling beneath him. I kneel down to pat him. "Come on old boy, let's go for a walk before your owners get back."

Hannah Tyreman
Derbyshire, England

Day one: Since I started working from home, getting away from a screen and breathing in fresh air has become an important part of my day, but this had been far easier during the spring and summer months. It's quite a different story once the daytime hours shrank, and the cold arrived. I noticed how difficult it was for me to leave the house; gathering up my scarf, hat, gloves and wondering what else I'd need. Did I need to drop anything at the postbox? Would I need my phone? As I finally left the house, making the decision not to take anything but my house keys and begrudgingly popping an envelope in my pocket to post for my partner, it occurred to me how habitual it had become for me not to just go for a walk but to combine it with something productive. I couldn't just give my body and mind the peaceful break it needed from the cacophony of noise and tasks in my working life; I needed to achieve something, to tick something off. Today was the day before the general election in the UK. The peace of the empty park, and the patter of rain on my hood gave me the silence away from social media I hadn't realised I'd needed.

Day two: Today's walk made me thankful to live in a quieter part of the world. With an early train down to London for the day's work and a late train home in time to vote, there was very little room left for a purposeful walk. As I collapsed onto my train home, I reflected on the walks of the day, contemplating the feelings and sensations that had accompanied each. I noticed how often purposeful walks are spent with my legs tumbling over one another, my breath sitting shallow in my chest and my mind focused on everything *but* being present in my body. Environment can make such a difference to me and I realised how much my own response to walking had also been affected by the pouring rain, the bright lights, and the

hundreds of strangers passing by each other with their heads focused on the ground. I am so lucky to have somewhere I can take myself where few other souls are in sight.

Day three: I had booked today off work to get on top of the Christmas wrapping, card writing, and house chores. My walk was in the back of my mind all day, but I kept on getting one more thing done first: just this, just that, just the next thing. When I exited into the cold air, the dusk light was descending and I felt immediately dismal. Instead of heading in my usual direction, I turned right, took a few deep breaths and focused on being present in my body after a frazzling day. The light was unusual and as I wandered the cold and empty streets, the setting of a post-apocalyptic novel emerged around me, kept at bay only by the warm lights, cosy family scenes, and Christmas lights to be found in the windows of the houses I passed. As my eyes travelled upwards to gaze into the bare dark branches against a gradually dimming sky, my mind began to contemplate writing ideas and it was a welcome window of creativity and hope. As I rounded the corner, icy rain pounded my face until my nose began to run and my cheeks felt numb. This was a walk I returned home from feeling a little more alive than when I'd left - and I was thankful for that. I don't think the post-election glumness would have faded without it.

Day four: This first morning of the weekend passed leisurely with a pancake breakfast and time curled in my library chair reading a book as the wind howled outside and the rain poured down. As the skies began to clear and my chapter neared its end, I was contemplating heading out on my walk when there was an unexpected interruption. After much rushing to the other side of the city to check on my partner's father's house, it turned out to be a false alarm. We decided to turn the trip into lunch together and I offered to help my partner make a start on his Christmas shopping while we were out. As we made our way back to the car, I noticed how much we were marching; carried along by the hurry of everyone around us. I indicated to my partner that we slow down. I also suggested that we take a moment to step out of the human traffic lane and read the poem displayed on the side of a building in the city to greet its visitors. The dark and dimly-lit street meant we had to spend some time deciphering and trying to remember the words. After a few minutes spent this way, I felt ready to enter the lane at a slower and more enjoyable pace.

Day five: I finished my book in the morning, did a few bits around the house, and headed out just before lunch. I pocketed my house keys, pulled my hat on and opened the door on the day. I celebrated the lack of effort required in leaving the house in comparison to the start of the week. It was raining yet again but I zipped up my coat, reminded myself the rain wouldn't melt me, and enjoyed the feeling of the cold air on my face. The park was a little busier today than it had been earlier on in the week but in my part of the world, this meant an elderly man and his dog saying hello, a family to smile at, and a few young children running around. As trains whistled in the distance, I marvelled that a moment of calm can be found even when others are busy rushing around. I put a lot of pressure on myself to keep up with other people but these walks have taught me that it's OK to set my own pace.

Nelly Koko-Konan

Gravesend, England

Day one: I have always loved walking. My sister is 16 months younger than I am and the buggy was given to her as soon as she arrived. "You were simply walking with us everywhere," my mum recalls. My parents used to send me and my sister on errands to get the bread or post a letter. My Dad would have his shoes repaired once or twice a year and I remember the occasional trip to the 'cordonnier', the cobbler. Those little walks, a few hundred metres long at most, felt like adventures at the time. A mission had to be accomplished! Precautions had to be taken! We had to return safely!

I am now a city girl, an adventurer, an explorer. I grew up in Lyon, moved to London and New York, I travel as I live. Walking is my way to observe, getting lost is my way to connect. My disastrous sense of direction gives me a playful and creative approach to the world. Tomorrow, I will be in Canterbury, a city I have never been before, and I will walk.

Day two: I have spent the night at my sister's. My sister and I are close and the city's infrastructure makes us even closer; my train runs through her local station and I often jump off and visit. My sister and I have been living different lives in different countries and time zones; being neighbours in a city that has not

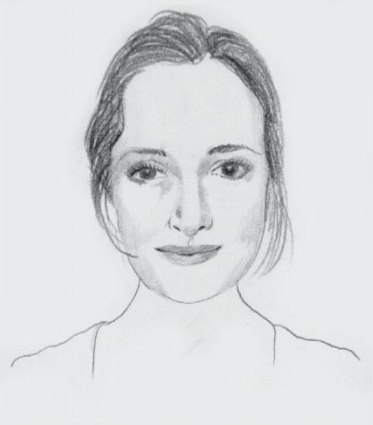
seen us grow up feels both strange and delightful! "Shall we take the 7.33?" my sister asks. The 7.33 is the promise of a morning walk together, a way to smoothly start our busy days at the same pace.

I am in front of her house, ready for our morning walk and she is not. My sister is stepping out and stepping back in. She is going around the garden and comes back with the bins. I hear and then see the truck: rubbish day. We have to walk a little fast, she is saying that we may have to take the shortcut… The shortcut is a muddy path cutting a diagonal across the park, the end obstructed by wild bushes. We are two adult sisters running on slippery ground, laughing and losing our balance. No grand topics have been covered. I sit in the 7.33 train overwhelmed with happiness.

Day three: According to most navigating apps I live a 15 minutes' walk away from my local station; but I see it as a seven-minute power walk. *"Shall I simply document this walk?"* I ask myself as I step outside. I start an intense conversation with myself. I discuss subjects such as breaking the rules and adjusting to circumstances, doing the right thing. I reach the station having turned my morning commute into a philosophical debate and I know that I will organise a second walk today. By 11am, I stand away from my desk, go around the office and randomly stop for little chats; I leave the building stretching my arms high in the sky; I give my neck a gentle massage; I walk a little without going too far and retrace my steps back to the main door.

Day four: I have just spent two weeks travelling in Argentina; work took me around London and Canterbury on my return. It is now Saturday morning. My orange sofa bed, the centrepiece of a tiny cute apartment I rent just outside of London, keeps me warm and cosy. I am exhausted, and I must find a way to recover. Suddenly, I frown at the idea of a ten-minute walk. Stubbornly, I fall back asleep. The entire day is spent under the duvet, a small cup of coffee is made each time I wake up. It is now 5.59pm, I am outside, I stand slightly moody against my front door. My pyjamas are topped up with a warm jumper I've just grabbed from a chair, I am aware my socks do not match, and I am wearing my hiking shoes. From where I am, I can see a very small street I've never walked down and this is where I am heading. Breathing slowly, deeply, calmly, I welcome my disorganised thoughts and very gently push them away; it is the very first time I try to meditate while walking. As I inhale and exhale, my body temperature adjusts to the icy air. My mind feels clear but not empty. I return home, refreshed, calm, and awake.

Day five: I moved to London many years ago when I was scared and fragile. Museums made me feel welcome, their open doors kept me calm and warm, art kept me entertained; my English gained in confidence by attending tours and talks. A few years ago I became a Tate member, a museum supporter; a birthday treat to myself and my humble way to say "thank you". My contribution is a small investment so others may keep enjoying the feelings and intellectual challenges only art can offer. I walk from Blackfriars to Tate Modern. I remember my first days in London, I remember my first exhibitions, visiting The Tate and The National Gallery. I remember observing the landmarks and crossing bridges with a simple repetitive thought, "I am in London." I observe the river; I allow myself to be anchored in the present; I stand still looking at the massive building. I resume walking, leaving my memories behind. My mind dreams about tomorrow.



Meredith Birrell

Glenbrook, Australia

Day one: Today is the first day I've been out of the house in a week. We have been so choked by bushfire smoke that it's been dangerous to go outside. Even without the smoke, the searing heat has made it impossible to go outdoors, especially with a toddler. This evening, though, the air feels fresh. There is a billowing blanket of clouds overhead. I'm taking a few moments to myself between the toddler's evening meal and bedtime, while her Daddy does bath and stories. I walk into the bush and turn to the left, making my way towards the lookouts that offer distant views of Sydney's skyline. A miniature grey-blue silhouette, like a stage set made by elves.

Day two: Today I turn away from the bush and walk along my suburban street. I take the first left, which takes me over a small rise and down to a road that runs parallel to ours, and which offers incredible views over the Blue Mountains National Park. I am very tired. I don't know if it's the normal fatigue that every parent feels, or if I'm coming

down with something. Either way, I am weary, my aching legs and lower back struggling to keep me upright. We've started noticing blackened leaves on the ground, having shot into the atmosphere in a vortex of heat and smoke. They are coal-black and fragile as insect wings. I cannot help but see them as portents. I peer at the Christmas trees in the windows of houses, inflatable Santas and reindeers, and other decorations in the front yards. What kind of Christmas can it be for those who have already lost everything? This is far from over. It feels good to walk in clear air, but for how long?

Day three: The smoke is back today, not as bad, but there is an unpleasant sickly pall over everything. The Sun is a blinding, yellow disc, which will deepen to red as day turns to night. I have not come down with anything, but I am still exhausted. It didn't help that the toddler kept us awake half the night. My husband is out at a work Christmas function, so it's just us two tonight, meaning I have to squeeze in this walk before he goes, or I will miss my opportunity. I walk down my street. Usually, I'd expect to see kids playing, but this evening there's no one about. There's a tree halfway down the street that irresistibly pulls my gaze at this time of year. It's a gum covered in flame-orange blossoms, so abundant they weigh down the branches. Their colour is enhanced by the yellow glare, and the tree appears to be ablaze. I walk over and notice the bees, beetles, and ants industriously collecting nectar, working around each other in a seemingly synchronised dance. It's good to see insect life, a healthy tree. I have to turn back, my husband will be leaving soon and I have to get washing out, make dinner, and put together a pastry for a tart I'm making for lunch tomorrow when my parents-in-law visit. I turn and notice the yellow Sun again and how high it still is in the sky, even at this late hour of the day. I picture the Earth, spinning on its axis, an insignificant planet in an immense solar system, in an incomprehensible universe. We are nothing, and yet we are everything.

Day four: I walk into the bush again today. The smoke is still pervasive. Awful as it is, it does make for a more dramatic twilight, as the particles in the air refract the low-angle of the Sun and throw a lurid orange-red onto the slanting roof of the sky. To the south and west I can see two plumes of smoke quite clearly. It is hard to feel anything but dread.

Day five: The exhaustion I've been feeling the last few days has lifted. I can walk without feeling like I'm dragging two lead pipes instead of legs. My daughter and I had to spend most of the day indoors due to the smoke, but the afternoon was clear enough for us to go outside into the garden for a while. And now I'm walking, and breathing a crisp, spring evening air. I walk along the road I took the other day, the one that looks south over the Blue Mountains National Park. It's mostly clear, though to the west the ranges are still largely obscured by smoke. I look at the Christmas displays in people's yards. The paddle-boarding inflatable Santa tethered to a boat I'd seen the other day lies in a sad heap on the ground. His summer idyll has come to an abrupt end or, more likely, it was a slow, sad decline as he shrunk in shame at his own facile absurdity. Who knows? Turning back towards home I notice something far more uplifting: a gum leaf, also in a state of decline, but to me, very beautiful. It's about twenty centimetres long and curved like a scimitar. Its colour is a muted, dusky pink, freckled here and there with white and brown. It feels lovely to hold, and I turn it about in my hand as I walk. As I near home, I look down to see the leaf has sheared in two. I am sad, then suddenly indifferent. Dead Santas and broken leaves. I crush the leaf in my hand and let it fall to the road.

Courtney Green
New Haven, United States

Day one: Charles Dickens and Mark Twain both described Hillhouse Avenue as one of the most beautiful streets in America. Given that there was a storm last night, I figured that the snow-covered 19th century mansions lining the road would refresh my senses. But since this is New Haven, the snow comes and goes all the time and within a few minutes, the magic of the postcard aesthetic had worn off. After only a block, I came across a thrift shop: *Fashionista Vintage & Variety*. The sign out front reads "men, women, costumes, unsolicited advice". I admired the storefront crowded with costumed mannequins. I then continued past the store but had the urge to turn back and go inside. A few seconds later, I found myself crowded between walls exploding with clothing from the 60s, 70s, and 80s. If Twain and Dickens were alive

today, I wonder if they would stick to the pretty route or if they'd take the detour. Life has a funny way of making you smile when you diverge from the obvious path.

Day two: They say that the footpaths at Yale are designed to force you to run into people. Their irregular geometry, zig-zagging across the green lawns, pushes you to at least make eye contact with one new person on your way to class. The arrangement seems random and at times inconvenient, but there is a purpose… It was time for a break. I had spent the afternoon prepping for an exam and I was wired. It seemed appropriate to take some time for today's walk before the sun set. I exited the cave of my study space and into the crisp New Haven air. I walked one way, changed my mind and wandered in the opposite direction. I didn't notice anything interesting until I saw Max, a good friend. His blonde hair was a ray of sunshine on this cold winter day. "Max!" I shouted. I crossed the street to him and we stopped to chat. We grabbed a quick coffee, complained about exams and then we parted. I wandered aimlessly again until I ran into Feyi, one of my closest friends. She was rushing to meet a professor but slowed down so we could walk together. Like everyone else on campus, she's worried about exams, grades, and essays. During a time when everyone is cooped up in a library preparing for finals, walks seem to be giving me exactly what I need: a smile and a friend to talk to.

Day three: Walking is such a visually immersive experience that I often forget to listen. The pattering of rain on my umbrella set the tempo for the evening. The water running through a street drain and down to the sewer comprised the melody, reminding me of a stream in the countryside. If all of the light in the world suddenly disappeared for ten minutes, yet the sound remained, would I be able to tell the difference between the sounds of the gutter and a country stream? The city doesn't feel so far removed from nature when I think in this way.

Day four: My body is tired. My back aches, my legs are stiff, and my shoulders tight. This is the aftermath of a long work week. A few seconds into my walk, I could feel my body resisting, asking me to take it easy. As I wandered for a little longer, someone sped alongside me with his head glued to his phone. His pace was so much faster than mine. To my left, another man quickly rushed across the street to beat the crosswalk signal. "People must have places to go tonight," I thought. I soon came to another intersection crowded with people. There, I decided to watch the way everyone walked. A few had a slow, even pace that matched mine, but most had a pace that was two or three times faster. One man was even running down the length of the sidewalk.

An actor friend of mine is good at reading body language. "Release your shoulders," he said to me one day. I hadn't even noticed they were so tense. Our body language shows the world what's going on internally and I'm thinking that the way we walk does the same thing. I'd say that my average pace has a pretty quick tempo. It seems like there is always another meeting to get to, another class. Go, go, go. Outside of a daily walk, I leave the gentle strolling for the people who don't have anything to do. But I'm wondering what would happen if we lead with our bodies first. Slow your pace and maybe your mind will follow.

Katie Duzik

Waldport, United States

Day one: This is not the best time to embark on a walking challenge. The days are short and the relentless rain and wind has arrived. I'm also breathlessly busy with a full-time job, being the mother to young children, living on a horse farm, and the holidays bearing down. I am working from home today and the day is grey with rain. I procrastinate until I realise the sky is beginning to darken and the rain is not going to cease, so I put on my coat and boots, call to my dogs, and we go out. I choose a forest path that loops around our farm and we set out into the woods. I rarely walk just to walk. I am usually walking with a defined purpose - to get somewhere, to do farm chores, to subject myself to exercise because it's good for me. As I move, I soak in the forest and its incredible greenness this time of year. Moss-covered spruce limbs hang down over a tangle of salmonberry bushes. I hear the faint voices of golden-crowned kinglets high in the canopy and the raindrops landing muffled on my hood. My mind quiets as I move down an elk trail towards home.

Day two: If there was ever a day with an agenda stacked against walking, today is it. I leave our farm in the blackness of an early winter morning, driving way too far to a city in the valley where I rush

about to various work meetings. Every minute has a task attached to it - there is even a meeting spanning lunch. It's also raining. My last meeting of the day ends. I burst outdoors into the fresh air and calculate that I can spare ten minutes for a walk. I am a little self-conscious about walking around the office buildings in the rain. People are seated at ground level at their desks, and as I walk by they look up out their windows as I scurry by, leaning into the wind with my hood pulled up tight around my face. I spot a path that winds around a building; it is lined with craggy oak trees which have dropped their leaves into a pile of soggy brown mess that coats the asphalt. I move through the thick leaves. I notice the movement of my hips and legs, and it feels so natural and delicious compared to the sitting I have been doing all day. I want to walk more, but my obligations beckon and I hurry back to the car.

Day three: I'm on the road again for work today. It's another day of driving and meetings where I'm acutely aware of how still my body is. I think about the walking challenge all day but can't seem to find the right space or time. As I drive home in the late afternoon I am feeling overwhelmed. The mental load I carry as a mum and a career professional feels suffocating. When I'm away, details and checklists are seemingly endless, and I'm reminded of this when I receive a call that something at home has been forgotten as I neglected to send my husband a reminder. My heart races, I can't keep up. I need to walk before dark, so I pull over at a beach access in a small town. I have stopped here before, but not in many years, so it feels novel as I make my way on the path toward the ocean. I pass shuttered beach houses that stand empty in the winter. It seems incomprehensible how in this country some have multiple houses and others have none. When I reach the shore, the sight of the ocean is a solace.

Day four: We've signed up to volunteer tree planting on a nearby stream with the hope to teach our children about healthy ecosystems, but I'm a little worried. Rain is looming in the sky and our children are only four and seven. I fear the task may be too much for them, but I need not have worried. Donned in jackets, they throw themselves to the task and plant trees with zeal for several hours. As we prepare to leave, I ask my husband if he would drive the car home, so I can walk back through the forest. The children want to come along; I hesitate because I'm not certain of the route. I give in. The trail is slippery, but the weather is dry. I occasionally hoist my 4-year-old daughter over blackberry vines that grab her legs as we move through the brush. Soon we emerge into a clearing that I recognise and find the trail I am familiar with from horseback. We walk, the three of us, more comfortably now. The children run ahead, stopping to investigate the occasional salamander crossing the trail in that spirit of wonder that is unique to youth. My heart is full of pride that I am giving my children a life with some wild in it.

Day five: I haven't been for a 'real' walk in ages. There are a million other things I 'should' be doing on a day off, like working with the horses or folding laundry, but it's the last day of the challenge and I want to have at least one intentional walk. My young daughter stays home with my husband and my son comes along with me to a trailhead south of town. The last time I was here, I was pregnant with him and overdue by several weeks. My midwife was concerned about his delayed arrival and so I hiked the five-mile trail with my mother, hoping the exercise would coax him out. Today, seven years later, he runs alongside taking several steps for every one of mine. I lost my mother two years ago and I feel the ache of her absence; but I am distracted from grief by the joyful shouts of my son. The first stretch of our route traverses several miles of open beach and we collect driftwood, investigate sand cliffs, and stop to poke at beached jellyfish. The trail eventually meanders inland into a stand of shore pines and rhododendrons known locally as the Hobbit Forest due to the presence of wind-stunted trees laden with moss. As we walk, my son reaches for my hand silently. Together we walk contentedly, our steps falling in silence on the thick duff of the forest floor.

Jennifer Purse
Walcha, Australia

Day one: What a challenge! Walking aimlessly I don't do, unless I am cruising the stalls at farmers' markets, or window-shopping between appointments, or possibly sinking into dementia. I'm certainly not walking outside this morning

to cough with a stinging throat in the smoke from nearby bushfires. I could try walking around my guitar-shaped house from one round window to the next, observing the changing view of the same droughted landscape under its smoky haze.

Later in the day I hear the drum of thunder and the clatter of rain and hail on my iron roof. The forecasted storm has arrived. Hope briefly rises, however the rain gauge registers only four millilitres - barely enough to lay the dust where my lawn used to be. Perhaps I could pace for ten minutes, marvelling at the fickleness of nature that brings cloudbursts, floods, and landslides to New Zealand, but denies the parched pastoral land of eastern Australia a decent fall of rain.

Later still, I become bogged down in the assessment of my overseas student's English grammar. I stroll from window to window, looking at the remnants of the storm and wondering if the ragged clouds can regroup. I walk around the curve of my hallway, recalling how difficult it was to accustom myself to the curves within my curved house.

Day two: I can't walk this morning. I can only pace, contemplating the seeming unfairness of life that dictates one person will survive cancer, while another will not. I have received a message from my daughter letting me know that her sister-in-law has been admitted to palliative care, an area my family already knows too much about.

I had thought I would have an opportunity later of walking aimlessly either before or after my plasma donation, perhaps taking a stroll around the arboretum, which is an easy detour from my homeward route. The arboretum is usually a lovely spot, although today I might have found it depressing to see moisture-stressed trees struggling to survive this drought. However, I decide to concentrate on my shopping instead. After I completed my errands, I came straight home, which was fortunate because an old school friend called to ask whether I could accommodate her for the night. We toured around the house, stopping to observe the different views from each window, and to check the level of smoke haze.

Day three: I don't want to fail this challenge, so today I take a meandering route via the riverside to collect my mail from the post office down town. And although there is an ultimate purpose to my walk, I hope that by taking an indirect route, I can fulfil the requirement of walking for the sake of walking.

I am rewarded with a clear, cool, partly cloudy afternoon - perfect for walking. On the uphill where there is no footpath, I walk on the road to avoid putting pressure on the droughted grass. The footpath on the downhill takes me past the pastor's residence and I remember meeting his wife at Carols in the Park last week. Her family moved here four years ago, and they love it. The memory of her enthusiasm coupled with the peace and quiet of the afternoon reinforce my own decision to relocate here.

Day four: On my way home from aqua aerobics, I decide to take the riverside walk again, to try and recapture my feelings from yesterday. But it is hot and smoky and initially all I can think about is the lack of rainfall and the dead grass and the seemingly everlasting fires.

When I stop at the bridge, the pool that I thought was stagnant teems with tadpoles and tiny fish we called gudgeons when I was a child. New life, continuity. I marvel at the gardens on either side of the bridge, feeling my heart lift at the sight of swathes of native flowering plants bright with scarlet blossom. I start thinking about my non-existent garden, and planning what I will plant when it finally does rain properly again - perhaps some of these hardy varieties.

Day five: Procrastination is my name today. I start several tasks and do not finish them. Finally, I give up and book myself a ticket to a chamber orchestra concert an hour away. However, the venue used to be the teachers' college that my late brother attended, and my grief at losing him assails me again. I want to remind him of a party he invited me to when he was a student. I remember feeling so grown up, attending a party with alcohol, mulled wine no less. My brother had a big personality, and among his friends, being his sister accorded me a certain status by association. I wipe my tears, and take my seat, but when I feel my phone buzz, I decide to read the message. My tears flow afresh. My daughter's sister-in-law has just died. I grieve for her husband's loss - his only sister, so precious to her six brothers and their loving parents. The concert commences. The sombreness of the Hindemith and Vaughan Williams mourning pieces seem appropriate to my mood. I realise I have not walked today, so I take a contemplative circuit around the beautiful grounds, admiring the extensive rose gardens. The memorial fountain for the gardener who planned and set out the gardens is dry and still due to severe water restrictions. But the roses are holding their own so far; another testament to endurance.

Gabrielle Campion

Connemara, Ireland

Day one: I got up late today. I didn't meditate. I didn't do my morning yoga. But I did get to university on time. I got through my day, I did my end-of-term assessment. Then, at about 3.45pm, something hit me. I'd forgotten to schedule a newsletter for my part-time job at 4pm, like I do every week. So, I worked hard for an hour and a half to get it done in lightning speed, and sent it at 5pm. I then drove an hour home to my little cottage in Connemara, Co. Galway. I had a work call at 7pm and didn't finish working until 8.30pm. When I finished, I decided to go to the local village, 20 minutes away, to buy milk and go for my walk under the streetlights. On the drive to Letterfrack, it started to lash rain. Galway is known as the wettest part of Ireland, but I'm an hour west of the city and even closer to the Atlantic. On the drive, I watched the sheep with their wool so wet they seemed to move in slow motion. I had almost resigned myself to not going for my walk, but as I drove into Letterfrack the rain cleared. After I bought my milk, I walked up and down the street a couple of times - from the pub to the shop. Back and forth.

Day two: After my work call last night, I landed a huge project which took until 6pm today to finish. I was due to meet people for dinner at 7pm so I had resigned myself to either walking in the dark after dinner or else missing my walk altogether. How is it so difficult to find time? I enjoyed my walk yesterday and yet today I can barely find a measly ten minutes to look after myself. As I walked to the *Park and Ride* bus, I realised I was early. I thought I would just walk to the next stop to breathe in the rainy air. Before I reached the next stop, the bus passed me by. And that was my decision made. My walk was happening. I took a longer route than I normally would - through the student residences. It's a walk I did hundreds of times during the first year of my undergraduate degree, but only once since returning to university last year. This time, I took my time. I looked around. I noticed how many cars were parked in the parking bays - I don't remember anyone having a car when I lived there almost fifteen years ago. The rain started again, so I sheltered in the bus shelter. I realised where I was - directly opposite the apartment I lived in way back then. It brought so much back. It was a time in my life where there were endless possibilities. It reminded me how that first semester of first year had started - with the loss of a family member. How I hadn't been ready and maybe didn't grieve because of all of these big changes. I'm grateful for having the space to just stroll in and out of those parts of my life. I was soaked when I got to my car.

Day three: Today didn't happen. I did an amazing yoga practice in the morning and thought I would go for my walk later. But the rain just didn't stop. I should have just put on my raincoat and braved it, but I guess after getting so wet yesterday, I didn't want to. And that was that. When the rain stopped, it was dark. I didn't want to drive a 40-minute round trip to a lit-up area, so I didn't. I reflected on my choice before I went to bed. Should I have just gone out, even though it was raining? Why couldn't I? And what would this mean for tomorrow? Have I ruined it? Having failed on day three is there any need to even continue?

Day four: So today was to be my decider. I dropped my boyfriend to work in the city at 6.30am and I drove to the Salthill Promenade near Galway City. It was dark, windy and wet. But other people were walking, even running. I sat in my car and knitted for a while. When the rain broke, I made my move. I wrapped up well, I put my phone on flight mode and I braved the weather. It was magnificent. The wind was beating off my jacket, my eyes were streaming. I walked for five minutes with the idea of turning around, but instead I kept going until the very end and turned around, walking back to my car triumphant. The water was beautiful and as the Sun began to rise, I felt lucky to be here, alive, and living this life.

Day five: Today I walked a road I drive every day but have never set foot on. From my front room, I've watched hundreds of hikers walk up and down these hills - but walking them myself was special. I thought about what those walkers saw when they glanced up into my house perched on the hill - me peering out over my laptop. I left the road and went down into a field to a stream. I watched the sheep graze, the water flow and the sun bounce off the mountains. Today was my favourite walk. It gave me a new perspective of where I live. I saw another side, literally, to a mountain I call "my mountain".

Gallery of Art & Philosophy

GAAP

"Art that reflects the philosophical tensions of our time can help us make better sense of our world, our place in it, and where we are heading."

Womankind has acquired a private art gallery at 7 Campbell Street, Hobart, which will be transformed into the *Gallery of Art And Philosophy* (GAAP), a new breed of gallery that synthesises art and philosophical thinking. Housed in a 19th century heritage-listed Victorian Gothic church, one of the last remaining structures of Hobart CBD's heritage Wapping district along with the adjoining Theatre Royal, the gallery will exhibit work from artists featured in *Womankind* and *New Philosopher* magazines and will become a centre for other artistic endeavours undertaken by the publishing house of *New Philosopher* and *Womankind*, Poet Press. The gallery space is set over two levels and GAAP will be seeking submissions from artists for representation in the gallery whose works fulfil the philosophical requirements of GAAP, which include such aspects as the study of reality, existence, and the search for wisdom. For more details or for artists seeking representation, please email news@newphilosopher.com.

7 Campbell Street Hobart 7000, Tasmania, Australia

For more details or for artists seeking representation, please email news@newphilosopher.com.

Theatre

Artistic director of London's Royal Court Theatre, Vicky Featherstone, makes change, and not just on stage. It's not surprising therefore that Featherstone has been named the most influential person in British theatre.

Interviewee
VICKY FEATHERSTONE

Interview by
STAV DIMITROPOULOS

Artistic vision

Illustration by Aida Novoa & Carlos Egan

What attributes or skills do you have that make you a leader?

I'm passionate about what I do, and I believe that if you're passionate about something and have clarity about why you're passionate about it - and you can communicate that passion to other people - that makes you a good leader. I'm very certain about what I do, and why I do it, and this can be communicated to others. I was also brought up to trust my instincts, so I do things quite instinctively.

For me, leadership is very much about making others feel empowered to do their best, and to create a really positive environment. Everybody thinks I'm a good leader, but actually they're doing all the work.

I don't want to come to work and have to behave in a different way in order to be successful. I don't need a massive separation between my workplace and my home life. I want to be able to be the same at work as I am when at home. That's really important for me. We don't need to have another side to ourselves. We can bring all of ourselves to the workplace; it feels holistic and good.

You studied drama at Manchester University. Why did you decide to choose directing rather than acting as a career?

When I was younger, I was obsessed with theatre, but I thought I wanted to be an actor because I didn't know about any other roles in theatre - you see, I didn't have any family or anybody who worked in theatre. All I knew was acting. When I went to university, I studied a degree in drama, but not a practical degree. When I left university, I still thought I wanted to be an actor, but then I realised I was a terrible actor. You know, there's nothing worse than going through life trying to do something you're not very good at. So, I was lucky enough to realise this quite young, sort of about 20. Then I made the shift to being a director, and of course, it is exactly the right job for me because it is about creating the right conditions and the environment for people to flourish and to take risks, and that really excites me.

Therefore, discovering you're not good at something can be a blessing in disguise?

It was a type of blessing in disguise because I think the skills of being a director in a rehearsal room are very similar to the skills needed to run an organisation; it's about having an idea, getting a whole team around you, getting everyone to buy into what the idea is, and working towards it. The skills of being a director are often quite similar to those required to be a leader. And that's definitely where my strengths lie. Yes, I'm always looking at the bigger picture and I'm very bad at looking at the present moment - I am terrible at that.

Our culture is obsessed with actors, but there are so many people behind the scenes who are making the magic happen...

Actors are the people everyone sees - they are the role models through which people see themselves on stage. They see someone on stage who they want to be, or they admire or find attractive, so we have a visceral response to actors on stage. You're absolutely right that we become obsessed with actors. It's because we relate to them and we fall in love with them.

And actors are extraordinary. The skill required is enormous, but it's understandable that we only connect with what is the front of the profession because that's what the general public sees. But it's also about where you feel your ego sits. In terms of successes, you know, my ego is huge. I enable people to achieve things. I don't feel humble about it.

I find it liberating that you say you have "a huge ego". Quite often we hear people attribute their successes to 'great luck' or 'circumstances', especially women...

It's the same thing when women talk about being told they're loud, or women being told they're 'being difficult' for behaving outside societal norms. When I say I have a huge ego, it doesn't mean that I'm arrogant and I blast through with my behaviour and expect everyone to just 'deal with' who I am. I think it's important that we understand what the word 'ego' is. And you know, in its purest form, it is a strong sense of self; of being allowed to be yourself and to take up the space you deserve. We live in a world where there is so much fracturing and intolerance and insecurity around who we are individually. As a society, it's important that people aren't embarrassed to say that they have a strong sense of who they are, and to feel safe in that; we want to create environments for people to feel safe and to take up space. I feel really passionate about this. I actually feel more passionate about it as I get older.

When I was growing up, there was this sort of 'anti-success' culture at school in England.

When I was growing up, there was this sort of 'anti-success' culture at school in England, which was that if you were trying 'too hard' at school, you weren't cool. I lived and went to school in Germany for two years when I was 10. At that school, all of the children tried really hard to be good, to be the best, to work hard. When I left Germany and came to school in England, in London, when I was 12, it was quite the opposite. Everyone was trying not to work hard. It was embarrassing to be seen as someone who was trying to be good, to work hard. So we have a very complex culture in England - a culture where people want to be rich and famous and successful but we're against people trying hard. It's really messed-up. It's a class thing. It has to do with privilege, and it's to do with sticking your head above the parapet and all of those things. It's really important to be able to say to people, as a leader, "You know, it's all right to take up space, own it."

So, in England, is it preferable to say you're successful because you are innately gifted, rather than because you worked hard?

School in England is very much about wanting to fit in, being normal, being like everyone else. But being like everyone else is about mediocrity. You don't stand out. But the people we do reward in this country are the people who are gifted. There's a conversation that everybody from an estate wants to be a football star or a pop star because, although you have to work really hard at those things - you're either gifted enough to be it or you're not. We are a culture that does not celebrate toil and really hard work anymore.

What is it like to direct theatre, to create a whole new world out of a written story?

I mostly work with living writers. I'm incredibly interested in the present and the contemporary and the questions of now. Even though I love the classics, I don't feel the need to put them on because I think that we stand on the shoulders of those giants.

What I do is, I interpret somebody else's words, that's my job. I'm not the originator of those words, but the interpreter. My job is to take it and communicate it to an audience. And it's an enormous privilege to be able to do that. But sometimes it feels like a burden too. Because when a writer is writing an incredible play, you feel you have to nurture what that is, and make sure that the first time that play is put on stage is how the writer envisages it. It's a really interesting role, the role of the director.

Many actors say the experience of theatre far outshines their work on screen. Why do you think that might be?

The process of theatre is very different. Because we rehearse a play, we spend a lot of time - minimum, you know, four weeks or longer - in a rehearsal room, talking about the play, sharing the vision, interrogating it deeply, digging down into what the play is about. In film, lots of people have to do much of that work on their own and then they come together, so it's a very different thing. It's a fractured process.

So, the first thing is that detailed process of being in the room and making it together. And the second thing for actors is that the play does not come alive until it's in front of an audience. Especially with a new play, something that's never been done before, the first time it's in front of an audience for the actors is an extraordinary thing. You witness the adrenaline in them. I also think it's about community. In theatre - regardless of whether the piece is *Mamma Mia* or something more serious - we bear witness as a community to the story being told.

And the act of theatre hasn't changed for thousands of years - we sit together, someone stands in front of us and they tell us a story. It is really primal, and it spans cultures. We may have more technology now, better lighting and projection, we may have incredible music, but the actual act of sitting and watching human beings tell a story has not changed.

How can theatre transform its audiences?

It depends on the piece. Sometimes people hate what they see. It can be a negative experience. But when it works, it's about empathy. We come with who we are in our daily life to a place, and we sit down and watch something in front of us of which we have not got necessarily the direct experience, or, if we have it, we see it play out in

front of us and we recognise it. During those moments of watching, we feel something we would not otherwise have felt if we were not in that space. We feel empathy. Empathy is the most sophisticated human emotion and we are changed by it because, once you have felt something for somebody, you can't 'unfeel' it. It's visceral. And that is how we are literally transformed - and we can never undo that once that's happened. That's how people are transformed.

In October 2017, when Harvey Weinstein was exposed, you introduced *No Grey Area* - two events to tackle the abuses of power in the theatre industry. The first was an industry-wide session on how to eradicate sexual harassment in theatre and the second an event where people who wished to have their stories heard were given a space to share them. And then you instigated the Royal Court's Code of Behaviour: an industry behaviour code to tackle sexual harassment. Had you wanted to introduce all this before the Weinstein scandal?

Vicky Featherstone, photograph by Helen Murray

Can culture really change, or is our culture embedded so much in the DNA of a country, or community, or a group of people, that change can never happen? We have all accepted a culture that makes some people feel more uncomfortable than others, where there are abuses of power, not just in theatre. It is across the world: in politics, law, medicine, and academia. It is everywhere. So, as we have this conversation, I refuse to say it was just happening in the arts or in film; it is everywhere. About a year and a half before [the Weinstein scandal] a couple of incidents occurred, whereby I realised I was naive in thinking that just because I was running this organisation alongside Lucy Davies, our executive producer, it meant our character was shining all the way through. So we came up with what we called, very naively at the time, and a bit rubbishy, the *Sexual Harassment Workshop*, where we created a series of workshops for all staff, where we looked at scenarios and we worked out what behaviour was appropriate and inappropriate so we could discuss it. We had done this about 18 months before. Then, when the Harvey Weinstein scandal broke, I was like, "Well, maybe, you know, we need to be doing something about this," and I tweeted what we were going do about it and that we needed to have this conversation. But for me, it was never about trying to find the 'Harvey Weinstein', the culprit in the team. It was about understanding our culture. How have we allowed this to happen? What do we do to change it going forward so that this doesn't happen again? It's always about change. That's why we did the *No Grey Area* day. But my big theory about that is that the culture was already changing, which is why those women spoke against Harvey Weinstein. It wasn't like they went from zero to 100 overnight. There was a sort of seismic shift happening moments before those incredible women spoke against Harvey Weinstein.

On 13 December 2017, you cancelled a touring revival of Andrea Dunbar's *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* - a play about two teenage schoolgirls who have a sexual fling with a married man - and then reinstated it after accusations of censorship. So, how do we strike a balance between free expression and censorship?

I totally agree in terms of 'freedom of art' but not in terms of how we make it. Art doesn't have to be unsafe to the people who make it, which is really different from 'freedom of speech' and 'censorship of ideas'. In order for a writer to say what a writer wants to say doesn't mean that an actress should feel that, in a rehearsal room, somebody has been objectifying her body. We can still make ambiguous, complex messages in a way through which the people making it don't need to be exploited in order to achieve it.

People do not need to feel nervous, or scared when making art. The end does not justify the means. In that respect, it's very important to separate out what the actual work is and what the process towards the work is. It's not just about what

Let's just try something and see if it works. If it doesn't work... let's find the next thing.

happens on stage. That's a different conversation. And the thing for me is that around week two or four, for a series of reasons, rightly or wrongly, I decided that *that* production - because of where it had come from and what had happened around the company - shouldn't come to the Royal Court. That was very specific and that was about the process not about the players. I definitely believe that we did it for the right reasons. However, when we were accused of censoring Andrea Dunbar, I was like, "That has nothing to do with what she's written. It's to do with the contents of that play and the process of that play in this climate." That was why we decided to take it off. When we were accused of censorship, what I learned at that moment was that no statement explaining the reasons when you're accused of censorship is ever going to be adequate. So, the only thing I could do - to show my decision was not about censorship of the writers - was to put the play back on. The interesting thing is, I think those decisions were right. Even though they were contradictory, they had to be made.

As a woman, have you ever faced harassment or been, to use a social media term, 'mansplained'?

I hate those social media-created words like 'mansplaining'. I feel they are too easily thrown around, and they create division where conversation should happen. There's a situation now where, if a man starts to explain something, you can accuse him of 'mansplaining', which is shit. In my house when my son, who is 20, begins to say something to my daughter, and she says, "Are you mansplaining me?" And he's like, "So I'm not allowed to have an opinion anymore?" That's terrible. We have to be careful around this kind of language, when it gets thrown at people to silence them.

Have we become a bit too excessive - overly sensitive in our culture these days?

The word sensitivity is very interesting in the context of capitalism, which we have all bought into, and therefore, we believe we have a right to be happy all the time by acquiring things. Anything which is triggering or makes you feel disrupted or is complex or grey or ambiguous is an uncertain place to be. There are always interesting questions around censorship and triggering people's sensitivities, which is why I think we are only at the beginning of the conversation. It's difficult because you don't want individuals - because of their own personal experiences - to feel exposed and to be made to feel uncomfortable and to experience repeated trauma, but that doesn't mean people shouldn't be talking about those things and we shouldn't be bearing witness to them publicly. So, it's a really difficult thing to think about how we protect people from trauma and actually disrupt by experiencing it.

How is capitalism to blame?

When I talk about capitalism, I'm not really saying it as a sort of 'Marxist, anti-capitalist thing'. I'm saying that capitalism is our belief system now in the west. It is across the world, but I can only talk about the west because it's my experience. It's our belief system. And we all buy into it, nobody doesn't. We don't know how not to buy into it. So that's what I mean. I'm not being simplistic when I'm talking about a belief system in which, if we make money, we can buy something, which means we will be happy, speaking generally, as an idea. And what that means is the breakdown of community and the fact that it's all individual, it's all about us. And that is what has happened. It's not about what is good for the community anymore. It's about "What do I get?"

What is your biggest bugbear?

A big complaint for me is our educational system - how the arts are being constantly diluted. There is less and less space within the curriculum for creativity, and less space from this government for drama, music, and creativity, within the curriculum, and this is so damaging to the long-term health of the country. When people talk about an involvement in the arts - what that means in terms of wellbeing for humanity and its sense of self and confidence and all those things - it is really important. I feel it is sort of my duty and the duty of others like me to keep promoting, to keep bringing in as much money as possible through our donors and our fundraising and our tickets, to keep what we do as buoyant as possible, so it's still a significant part of what our country is.

I have read that you support the need for radical change, rather than polite, gradual progress. What do you mean when you say radical change?

As a person, I get bored easily. I'm kind of like, you know, let's just do it. Let's just try something and see if it works. If it doesn't work, let's not beat ourselves up about it. Let's find the next thing. That's just my personality. I believe in radical change, but using the power of institutions to make a shift in the way we see things, otherwise, I wouldn't be doing this job. I run a big institution, and I love it, and I hopefully run it with care and a belief in what is important.

How do you react to reading bad reviews?

It's awful! I mean, I'm older now. You build a thick skin. When I was younger, a bad review for a work would make me feel sort of toxic about the work. It was a physiological thing. It's hard for it not to become the narrative of what you've made, even though you believe in what you've done. And then, I realised, that a single opinion should not make me shift the way I felt about some things. So, I've worked hard to grow a thick skin. And that's what I've tried to do as well with our organisation. Although I respect people's opinions, and everyone has the right to a different opinion, an opinion doesn't become a definitive view on something because it has status and it's in an 'important paper' and all those things. We need to be clear ourselves on why we've made the work, what works and what doesn't, and we should hold on to that; that's resilience, you need to build organisational resilience.

What is your motto?

There's an amazing quote somebody told me years and years ago, and I just thought, "Wow, this is incredible!". It goes something like: "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

Photograph by Ewan Munro

Books

“Reading is that fruitful miracle of a communication in the midst of solitude.”

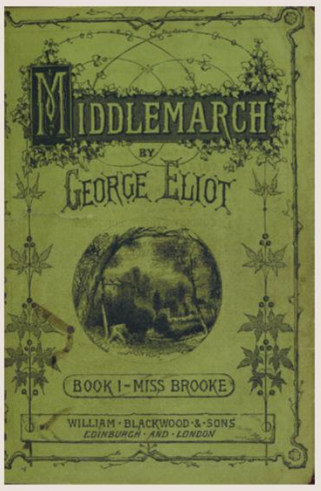
Marcel Proust

The Magdalen Reading, Rogier van der Weyden, 1445

Middlemarch

By George Eliot

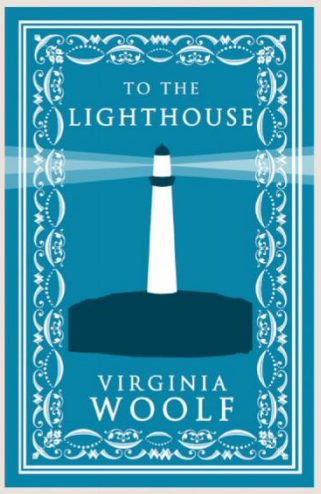
Often named as one of the best English novels of all time, George Eliot's masterpiece, *Middlemarch*, is set in a fictitious Midlands town from 1829 to 1832. Dorothea is a young idealist whose search for intellectual fulfilment leads her into a disastrous marriage to the pedantic scholar Casaubon. *Middlemarch*



is a masterly evocation of diverse lives and changing fortunes in a provincial community.

To the Lighthouse

By Virginia Woolf

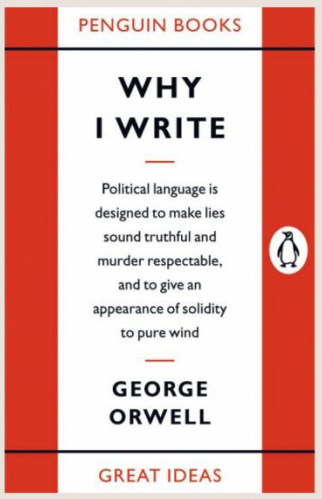


Mr and Mrs Ramsay and their eight children have always holidayed at their summer house in Skye, surrounded by family friends. Time passes, bringing with it war and death, and the summer home stands empty until one day, many years later, when the family return to make the long-postponed visit to the lighthouse. The novel follows the characters on a decade-long journey to the lighthouse.

Why I Write

By George Orwell

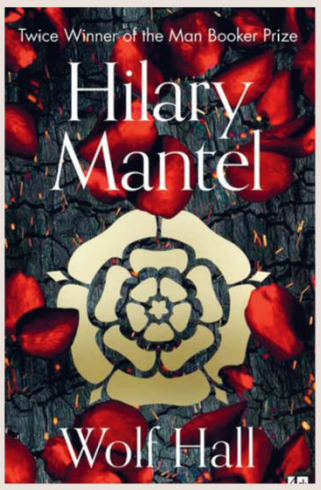
Why I Write is an essay by George Orwell detailing his personal journey to becoming a writer. Orwell lists "four great motives for writing," which he feels exist in every writer: sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose. "From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer. Between the ages of



about 17 and 24 I tried to abandon this idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature," Orwell writes.

Wolf Hall

By Hilary Mantel



Wolf Hall is a Man Booker Prize-winning novel by English author Hilary Mantel. England in the 1520s is a heartbeat from disaster. If the king dies without a male heir, the country could be destroyed by civil war. Henry VIII wants to annul his marriage of twenty years and marry Anne Boleyn. The pope and most of Europe opposes him. Into this impasse steps Thomas Cromwell: a charmer and a bully. Cromwell helps him break the opposition, but what will be the price of his triumph?

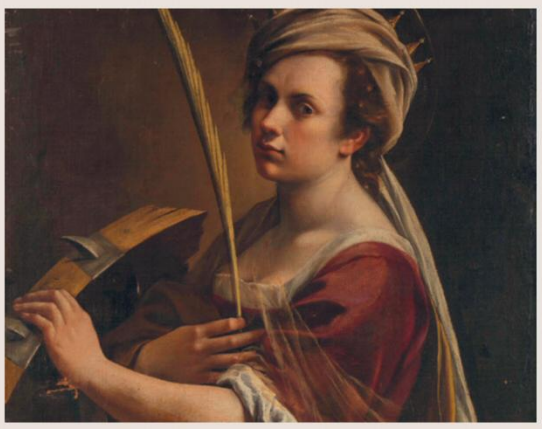
What's on

THE NATIONAL GALLERY
Trafalgar Square, London

Artemisia

4 April – 26 July 2020

Come face-to-face with Artemisia and her paintings in the first major exhibition of her work in the UK. At a time when women artists were not easily accepted, Artemisia Gentileschi was exceptional. She enjoyed a long and successful career as a painter, spanning more than 40 years, and she was the first woman to gain membership to the artists' academy - the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno - in Florence. Around 35 works from public and private collections around the world come together to give a selective overview of Artemisia's career: From her training in Rome, where she learnt to paint under the guidance of her father Orazio Gentileschi, to her time in Florence, where she established herself both personally and professionally, and the last 25 years of her life, during which she set up a studio in Naples and undertook a brief trip to London. The exhibition features some of her best-known paintings and self-portraits, as well as more recently discovered works, and gives visitors a unique chance to encounter Artemisia.



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
London, England

Swan Lake

6 March - 17 May 2020

The Royal Ballet revives for the first time the recent new production of Tchaikovsky's magnificent ballet. Liam Scarlett's glorious production of *Swan Lake*, new in 2018, returns for its first revival. While remaining faithful to the Marius Petipa/Lev Ivanov text, Scarlett's additional choreography and John Macfarlane's designs breathe new life into what is arguably the best-known and most-loved classical ballet.

PRINCESS THEATRE
Melbourne, Australia

JK Rowling's Harry Potter and the Cursed Child

Until 19 July 2020

It was always difficult being Harry Potter and it isn't much easier now that he is an overworked employee of the Ministry of Magic, a husband, and father of three school-age children. Based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne, and John Tiffany, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, a new play by Jack Thorne, is the most awarded production in the history of Britain's Olivier Awards, winning a record-breaking nine awards including Best New Play and Best Director. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is the eighth story in the Harry Potter series and the first official Harry Potter story to be presented on stage.

THE MET

New York, United States

Art at the Tudor Courts

6 October 2020 - 10 January 2021

England under the Tudors was a thriving and sophisticated home for the arts. Against the backdrop of England's shifting political relationship with mainland Europe, Tudor artistic patronage legitimised and glorified a series of tumultuous reigns, from Henry VII's seizure of the throne in 1485 to the death of his granddaughter Elizabeth I in 1603. The Tudor courts were truly cosmopolitan, on par with any continental rivals, and boasted the work of Florentine sculptors, German painters, Flemish weavers, and the best European armorers, goldsmiths, and printers. At the same time, they nurtured local talent and gave rise, by the end of the century, to a distinctly English style. While the extreme politics and personalities of the Tudor dynasty continue to grip the popular imagination, *Art at the Tudor Courts* will introduce new audiences to its astonishing legacy in the visual arts.

TATE BRITAIN

Millbank, London

British Baroque Power and Illusion

Until 19 April 2020

This is the first time that Tate has staged a show devoted to the later 17th century and the first to explore baroque art in Britain. It will be a chance to encounter a rich, sophisticated but overlooked era of art history. Many of the works will be on display for the first time - some borrowed from the stately homes they have hung in since they were made. From the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the late Stuart period was a time of momentous change for Britain. From the royal court as the brilliant epicentre of the nation's cultural life to the rise of party politics, the exhibition will look at the magnificence of art and architecture as an expression of status and influence.

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Vancouver, Canada

Rapture, Rhythm, and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries

Until 28 June 2020

Emily Carr is an iconic Canadian artist who is widely recognised for her paintings of forested British Columbian landscapes that investigate the shapes, colours, and rhythmic changes in nature. In this exhibition, Carr's images of the forest and the coast will be presented alongside work by some of her lesser-known female contemporaries. Drawn primarily from the gallery's collection, this exhibition focuses on artwork from the first half of the twentieth century by women artists based in British Columbia, and presents an expanded account of the context in which modernism developed on the Canadian west coast during the early to mid-1900s.

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY

Auckland, New Zealand

Civilisation, Photography, Now

April - July 2020

Featuring the work of 100 of the world's finest photographers, *Civilisation, Photography, Now* illustrates our increasingly global, connected society, and encourages viewers to consider where we live, how we consume, what we make, and how we travel, learn, explore, and control.

Documentaries

The Great Hack

The Great Hack is a 2019 documentary about the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal, produced and directed by Academy Award nominees Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer. Through interweaving stories and interviews, the documentary follows Professor David Carroll, a man intent on reclaiming his own personal data; investigative journalist Carole Cadwallad set on better understanding the inner workings of Cambridge Analytica; and Canadian data consultant Christopher Wylie who released a cache of documents prompting the data scandal.

Ways of Seeing

Writer John Berger and producer Mike Dibb created *Ways of Seeing*, a four-part BBC TV series, produced by Mike Dibb, and adapted into a book of the same name. John Berger presents his insights on how images from European oil painting to photography and modern advertising inform and seep into our everyday existence. Through examples of art history Berger shows how our very sense of sight has been transformed. By discovering why this is so, according to Berger, "we shall discover something about ourselves".

Up Series

In 1964, a group of seven-year olds were interviewed for the documentary *Seven Up*. The children talked about their dreams, their ambitions, their fears for the future, and every seven years documentary maker, Michael Apted called back into their lives to interview them again. The most recent instalment, titled *63 Up*, reveals a group now nearing retirement. The series was inspired by the Jesuit saying: "Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the man."

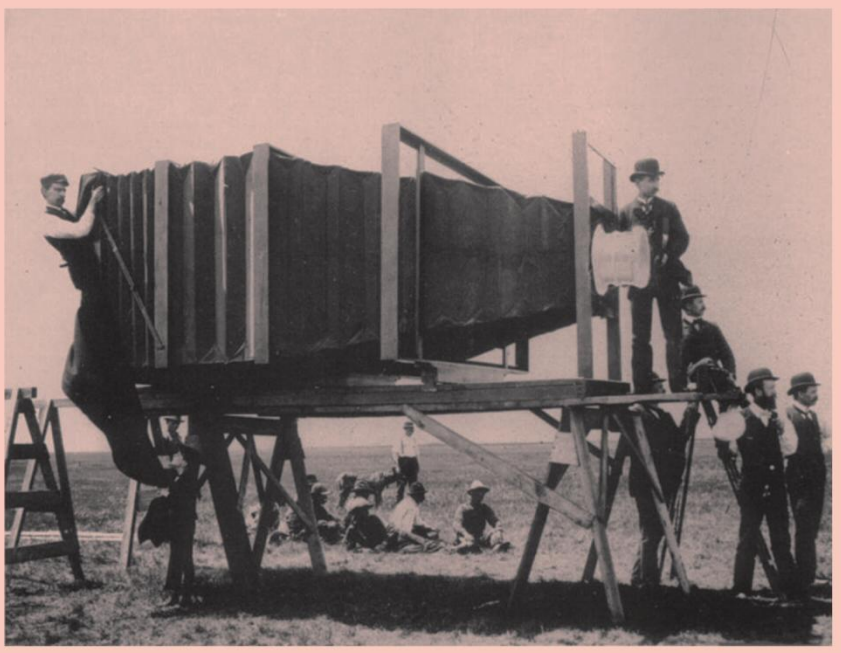
Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist

Vivienne Westwood rose to prominence in the 1980s in the merry days of parties and liquid money. Her punk aesthetic was edgy and revolutionary, and caught the attention of the British public, who awarded her Designer of the Year two years in a row. But today, with climate change casting a pall over festivities, Westwood's 'revolutionary' spirit has singled out climate emergency as its primary target. The documentary shows how the fashion industry has been forced to grow up and take responsibility for its actions.

"Capitalism survives by forcing the majority... to define their interests as narrowly as possible...Today... it is being achieved by imposing a false standard of what is and is not desirable."

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

The Great Hack



Ways of Seeing

Up Series

Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist

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Early Morning After a Storm at Sea, Winslow Homer, c. 1900-1903

Lines

I die but when the grave shall press
The heart so long endeared to thee
When earthly cares no more distress
And earthly joys are nought to me

Weep not, but think that I have past
Before thee o'er a sea of gloom
Have anchored safe and rest at last
Where tears and mourning cannot come

'Tis I should weep to leave thee here
On the dark Ocean sailing drear
With storms around and fears before
And no kind light to point the shore

But long or short though life may be
'Tis nothing to eternity
We part below to meet on high
Where blissful ages never die

By
EMILY BRONTË