

# CITY A.M.

No. 79 — THE MAGAZINE — NOV 19

## TRAVEL

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## LIVING

Is your home making you ill? Meet the hypoallergenic housebuilders

## FOOD & BOOZE

Rapper and YouTube star Michael Dapaah on why he'd order a gold steak for his last meal



## MY DAD WROTE A PORNO'S ALICE LEVINE

Top chef James Lowe invites podcaster and DJ Alice for lunch at his new restaurant Flor



## GAVIN TURK: A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

The YBA talks about the beauty of rubbish, the future of the planet and why he quite liked being arrested





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## EDITOR'S LETTER



This year's Michelin guide included two major shocks for the London food scene. The first was Akari, the ultra high-end Japanese restaurant in Mayfair, which was stripped of its trio of stars, making it the year's biggest loser. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, to lose one star may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose three looks like carelessness. The other, perhaps even bigger shock was the elevation of Sketch's Lecture Room & Library from a single star to three, putting it on a level with the most elite restaurants on the planet, one of only five UK venues with such an accolade and among fewer than 150 worldwide.

That surprise isn't to say there's anything *wrong* with Sketch – last time I ate there, god knows how many years ago, it was... great. I think. I can't really remember. But *nobody* in food circles was talking about it. It just existed, part of the restaurant landscape, a cosy piece of furniture, albeit one where you had to urinate inside a giant egg.

So why the sudden love from Michelin? It turns out that's a difficult question to answer. For our feature on the famous guide (P32), food writer Josh Barrie quizzes dozens of chefs about the Michelin system, and it turns out nobody really knows what they're looking for, although that doesn't stop everybody from wanting a star.

Elsewhere I visited artist Gavin Turk in his Canning Town studio to talk about his latest exhibition. On P38 you can read about his thoughts on getting arrested at the Extinction Rebellion protests, and how we fell down a rabbit hole discussing his obsession with plastic waste (he even showed me his collection of plastic water bottles).

October is a slog – the nights are dark, it's rained solidly for a month and everyone seems to be operating with a constant low-level hangover. Hopefully you can find something to cheer you up in these pages.

– STEVE DINNEEN

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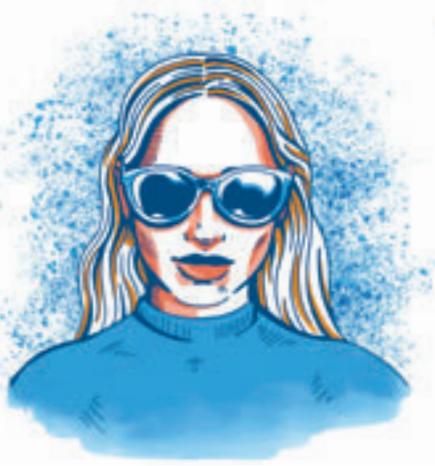


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# CONTRIBUTORS



**MICHAEL DAPAAH** is an actor, musician and comedian best known for his YouTube channel on which he plays the fictional rapper Big Shaq. On P18 he tells us what he'd eat for his last meal on earth, from a cheeky Nando's to a steak covered in gold leaf.



**SCARLET WINTERBERG** is *City A.M. Magazine's* luxury travel columnist. Each issue, she shares insider tips and frequent flyer information to help you get the best from your work trips. This month, she welcomes the advent of true VIP air travel – P72



**MARK HIX** is *City A.M. Magazine's* regular food columnist. His restaurants include HIX Oyster & Chop House, HIX Soho, Tramshed and Hixter Bankside. He talks about flying to Tuscany in hot pursuit of wild boar on P26.



**JOSH BARRIE** is a food writer and restaurant expert who spends his days hopping from restaurant to restaurant in search of the elusive perfect meal. In this issue he asks why chefs still care so much about the Michelin guide – P32



**DUMI OBUROTA** is the founding director of Disturbing London, the entertainment company responsible for launching the careers of stars including Tinie Tempah, Jessie J and Wiz Kid. He tells us about his life on the road on P78.



**HELEN CRANE** is editor of our Living section. On P86 she asks whether household micro-particles could be making you ill, and meets the developers offering solutions for those who have the extra money to spend.

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# FRENCH CONNECTION

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# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Stories from the world of arts, technology, design and luxury goods

Ben Enwonwu's portrait of hairstylist Christine Davis, which sold for £1.1m last month



## IS NOW THE TIME TO INVEST IN MODERN AFRICAN ART?

With sales booming, the art world is finally tuning in to a continent of potential.

Words: **STEVE HOGARTY**

**M**issing for almost half a century before being discovered hanging on a wall in a London apartment, a portrait by the late Nigerian artist Ben Enwonwu sold at Sotheby's in October for £1.1m.

The gavel fell at the end of a 13-minute bidding war between four buyers, which was eventually won by an undisclosed collector. The long-forgotten portrait of hairstylist Christine Davis sold for over seven times its

estimate, making it the most expensive item sold at Sotheby's record breaking auction of modern and contemporary African art.

Over 100 lots sold for a total of £4m, far outpacing previous sales of African art: in March 2018 the sale totalled £1.8m, and in April 2019 the figure rose to £2.3m. You don't need a graph to see that African art is undergoing a meteoric rise in popularity, and not just among private collectors, but across the entire art world.

"There has been a significant rise in interest in art from Africa and its diasporas," says Touria El Glaoui, founding director of the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair.

"This is being reflected in the prices achieved at sales. Although these figures are still relatively small in comparison to other contemporary markets, they demonstrate that collectors are increasingly committed to this sector. As a fair, we have also seen prices rise with works valued within the £1,000 to

“

In 2018, the 'African Mona Lisa' sold for £1.2m after being discovered hanging on the wall of an apartment in North London

£5,000 bracket in our first edition in 2013 now valued at over £20,000.”

The annual 1-54 art fair – the name refers to one continent of 54 countries – returned for its seventh edition at Somerset House in October. There it joined the first UK solo exhibition by one of South Africa's most prominent contemporary artists Mary Sibande. A month earlier, the gallery had hosted Get Up, Stand Up Now, a major exhibition celebrating 50 years of black creativity in Britain and abroad. Elsewhere in London, galleries and their visitors are increasingly tuning into African art and artists – the conceptual photography of Bernie Searle in Mayfair, Cape Town's Goodman Gallery opening on Cork Street, Kara Walker's installation at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall: interest in the market has never been higher.

"London is finally opening its doors," says El Glaoui. "But there's still a long way to go in confronting perceptions of what contemporary African art truly is. There is little understanding that Africa is a continent of 54 countries, all of which have complex and layered histories, languages and cultural conditions, which all result in a multitude of artistic practices. And though progress is being made, not enough time has passed to address eras of disparity and marginalisation."

In 2018, Ben Enwonwu's portrait of Nigerian princess Adetutu "Tutu" Ademiluyi (affectionately dubbed the "African Mona Lisa") sold for £1.2m at auction. It too had been found hanging on the wall of an apartment in North London, a recurring provenance for many such artworks.

Stories of lost masterpieces worth millions hiding in plain sight tend to capture the imagination of investors, but here it recalls the historic looting of artworks from the continent, and the broader omission of African art in galleries.

"Exclusion comes in many forms, from the lack of commercial representation to narratives being ignored and erased from histories," says El Glaoui. "The artists that were not excluded often had to change their work to suit a one-dimensional view of African art in order to exhibit in the UK."

"We're still fighting for artists from Africa to be offered the same opportunities as those from other parts of the world and for mutually beneficial collaborations to be the norm between Africa and the wider international art world."

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Launched in 2019 (twice, because of teething issues), the Samsung Galaxy Fold is the first commercially available folding phone.



## OUT WITH THE NEW, IN WITH THE FOLD

Will 2020 be the year folding phones finally break through? Words: **STEVE HOGARTY**

**T**he design impact of the original iPhone really can't be overstated. In one generational leap, Apple's little black rectangle set a design standard that's held a stranglehold over the industry ever since. Screen-to-body ratios have increased, notches have come (and are now in the process of going again), and some brave manufacturers have even dabbled with physical keyboard trays and secondary slide-out screens, but the essential shape has remained static for the last decade.

That may be about to change. The advent of affordable flexible displays has allowed for new product designs such as LG's proof-of-concept roll-up television, which unfurls from a long rectangular box like a sheet of tinfoil. Smart watches now sport displays that wrap snugly around the contour of the wrist, and Samsung's subtly curved Galaxy phones pioneered screens that bend around the edges of the device.

The first commercially available, truly foldable phone also came from Samsung in the shape of this year's Galaxy Fold, though its initial launch in February was mired in

manufacturing issues that saw creases and lumps appearing in the display. The launch was spiked and the phone recalled until the problems could be addressed, and while the £2,000 phone eventually did relaunch, stock is hard to come by. A Galaxy Fold 2 is already strongly rumoured to be in production.

Samsung's folding phone was followed by beleaguered Chinese manufacturer Huawei's Mate X, which features a screen on the front and rear of the device and flattens out into an eight-inch tablet. Also in development is the Xiaomi Dual Flex, a widescreen tablet that folds backwards in two places like a paperclip. LG, the company leading the charge in flexible television screens, is also bringing a flexible phone to market, as is its rival Motorola, which plans to revive its best-selling Razr clamshell design, this time with a folding screen hidden inside.

Earlier this month, Microsoft threw its own device into the mix: the Duo is a dual screen folding phone due to launch in 2020, though its use of a pair of discrete screens straddling a hinge places it in a different class to its truly flexible competitors.

"I remember seeing a prototype of this type of folding screen technology at CES in

2014," says John Vary, in-house futurologist at John Lewis. "Although low-fidelity, the technology in itself was very exciting. "However, technology alone is not enough, and identifying the right uses while meeting human needs was always going to be an obstacle."

Many see the rise in folding designs as little more than the gamble of an industry increasingly unable to inspire customers with homogeneous hardware, rather than a response to the needs of users. The strongest case against the idea that folding phones are the future can be found by looking at who isn't offering one. Notably absent is the very company that defined the generation of smartphone we're still in. Apple has long been rumoured to be working on a folding iPhone, but no designs have materialised, and it's likely nothing will. So if the future isn't folding, what is?

"Advances in connectivity with 5G, and the ease with which CGI will be accessed through augmented or mixed reality, mean that the phone and the human could one day converge," says Vary. "Whatever happens, the smartphones of the future won't take the form they have today."

# MASTER OF MATERIALS



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The "smog vacuum cleaner" in Krakow, which can filter 30,000 cubic metres an hour

# CAN SCIENCE FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE SILENT KILLER?

Air pollution is one of the most pressing urban problems, and scientists have some weird and wonderful solutions, says **DOUGIE GERRARD**

**A**ir pollution, in the judgment of the World Health Organization, is the greatest environmental health risk in the world, partly responsible for as many as one in eight global deaths. It is linked to a buffet of fatal health problems, from lung cancer to emphysema, and not even the

world's most affluent cities are spared its noxious effects. London, now regularly swathed in thick smog, operates consistently beyond the legal air pollution limit; a sufficiently dire situation for Mayor Sadiq Khan to have declared it a public health emergency.

As part of his efforts to tackle air pollution, Khan has announced an 'Ultra Low Emissions Zone' – an expansion of the congestion charge targeted at nitrogen oxide emissions – as well as a series of measures designed to encourage the use of electric cars. But if he is looking for further inspiration, he could do worse than visit the Mexican city of Puebla, home to Popocatepetl, an active volcano that periodically poisons the city's air – and as of last year, a lone robotic tree. The invention of start-up BiomiTech, the 'BioUrban' is really a towering hunk of metal, resembling more



Air pollution is the defining urban challenge of our century. Whether technology can provide genuine solutions, or merely exotic consolations, remains to be seen.

closely a brutalist sculpture than a pine or willow. It is packed full of microalgae, minuscule plant-like organisms that naturally feed on contaminating particulates, allowing it to absorb 368 times the air pollution of a real tree.

As of now, there are only three BioUrbans in existence, a paucity that can be attributed to their prohibitive manufacturing costs (the price of a single tree runs to around £40,000). But their existence also reflects a politics hungry for technological answers to environmental problems.

A similar solution has also been trialled in Krakow, Poland, where air pollution can reach six times the designated safe level. Dutch designer Daan Roosegaarde created a 23ft air purifier called the Smog-Free Tower, which sucks in 30,000 cubic metres of air every hour and passes it through a series of filters. Roosegaarde's company then compresses the fine carbon particles into tiny gem stones that can be embedded in jewellery or cufflinks.

Closer to home, Southampton transport operator Go Ahead recently turned five of its buses into mobile filtration systems, using a device on the roof to eradicate air pollution as the bus travels. Designed by Pall Aerospace, a tech company responsible for many purification innovations, the filter deftly traps particulate pollution and at the same time billows clean air into the atmosphere. As Go Ahead chief executive David Brown points out, the buses serve a dual environmental purpose, disincentivising driving as well as decontaminating the city's air. "We already know a fully loaded double decker can take up to 75 cars off the road," he says. "Now we have data showing that buses with an air filter can actively improve air quality."

In the absence of mass international action on climate change, governments – particularly local governments – are increasingly looking towards small-scale 'micro-solutions' to the worst symptoms of environmental breakdown. This is why a two kilometre-long stretch of electrified tarmac has been installed on the outskirts of Stockholm – a so-called 'e-road' that recharges the batteries of any electrically powered vehicle that drives on it. It's also why Leeds City Council recently trialled non-polluting liquid nitrogen engines in its lorries, and why the Dutch cities of Groningen and Arnhem have retrofitted their streets with heated cycle paths, designed to keep residents from their cars throughout winter.

Air pollution is the defining urban challenge of our century. Whether technology can provide genuine solutions, or merely exotic consolations, remains to be seen.

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# BUSINESS LUNCH

The best places to eat in and around the City of London, from hip new openings to long-established staples

## BUBALA, COMMERCIAL ST

**WHAT IS IT?** A new Middle Eastern restaurant a few doors down from Som Saa on Commercial Street. It's the first permanent restaurant by Marc Summers, who was general manager at Berber & Q, and head chef Helen Graham, whose CV includes stints at The Palomar, The Barbary and The Good Egg. Bubala – which means “friend” – is vegetarian, with all the aubergine and labneh and hummus you would expect from a restaurant inspired by the modern cafes of Tel Aviv. It's a relatively small operation, with around 35 covers and an as-yet-unopened upstairs space.

**WHO WILL IT IMPRESS?** It will certainly score points with vegetarians, but it's a great little restaurant in its own right, with echoes of Ottolenghi but enough character of its own that it doesn't feel like it's chasing a trend. The dining room is pleasantly rustic, with the clay walls and wooden furniture given a splash of colour by the liberal placement of pot plants and forest green tiles around the central bar.

**WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD?** Very good indeed. It's based around sharing plates and your best bet is to order a couple of the wonderfully floppy, oily flatbreads and get stuck in. The grapefruit ezme – a kind of Turkish salsa – is an intriguing meeting of sweet and sour and bitter, with a giant dollop served on a generous smear of tahini. Crisp little falafels break open to reveal vivid green, packed with parsley and coriander. The circles of fried aubergine are a must-order, with perfectly crisped skin smothered in date syrup and topped with zhoug (a Yemeni hot sauce). A special mention, too, for the mushroom skewers, which are meaty enough to satisfy any cravings you might have for animal flesh.



The charmingly rustic dining room, where you can perch at the bar and watch the chefs

**DESSERT?** Yes, there's tahini, date and tangerine ice cream and coconut and cardamom sorbet.

**SET MENU?** Not yet, although I hear one may be on the cards...

**PHONE:** 020 7392 2111

**WHERE:** 65 Commercial St, E1 6BD

**WEB:** [bubala.co.uk](http://bubala.co.uk)

## EMILE, SHOREDITCH

**WHAT IS IT?** A six month pop-up from Damian Clisby, former chef director of Petersham Nurseries, and Nick Gibson, owner of Islington gastropub The Drapers Arms (it's named after the former's grandfather). It's a laid-back, Mediterranean affair with a reassuringly small menu that will change daily, and an impressive wine list. It's a funny little space, part family restaurant, part somebody's front room; it used to be home to Rok Shoreditch and later the No Idea pop-up. It has character in spaces, from the little blackboard outside to the adorably tiny kitchen.

**WHO WILL IT IMPRESS?** Emile will go down well with the foodie contingent. Both Clisby and Gibson are veterans of



The bijou kitchen in Shoreditch pop-up Emile, which serves a great pork chop

the London food scene, guaranteed to rustle up quality dishes from well sourced ingredients. It's also a nice, quiet venue, a relaxed antidote to some of the cavernous restaurants that populate the surrounding streets.

**WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD?** We'd heard rumours of an excellent pork chop before we visited and it didn't disappoint. Robust and fatty, served with a generous portion of cavolo nero, it's about as good as pork chops get. We also had a very fine pappardelle with chanterelle mushrooms. That tiny menu does mean choice is limited (there were only two starters, cheese croquettes or potatoes with anchovy) but when the food is this good it's too much of a concern. And hey, you could always come back the next day for something completely different.

**DESSERT?** A choice of two, the best of which was figs roasted in honey and thyme with vanilla ice cream.

**SET MENU?** The lunch menu offers two courses for £19 or three for £23, which is great value. There are also a series of special menus available on Sunday afternoons, with three courses for £35.

**PHONE:** 07496 568 921  
**WHERE:** 26 Curtain Rd, EC2A 3JX  
**WEB:** emilerestaurant.co.uk

## TAYER+ELEMENTARY, OLD STREET

**WHAT IS IT?** The first London opening for acclaimed bartending duo Alex Kratena and Monica Berg, Tayēr + Elementary on Old Street is two bars for the price of one. Up front, Elementary serves sexed-up versions of classic cocktails as well as coffees. Tayer in the back is where the real magic happens, though. It's focused around an intimate central bar with a more involved cocktail list and asian-inspired small plates served by Tata Eatery.

**WHO WILL IT IMPRESS?** Cocktail connoisseurs. Its drinks list is seriously impressive, and full of unexpected ingredients including tonka bean, douglas fir vodka and mastiha. We tried the ginger and turmeric aperol spritz in Elementary, before moving on to Tayēr where we sampled the Pierre Gerbais and Aquavit with timur berry cordial and the one-sip martini: a shot-sized version of the classic tiple which comes with a blue-cheese-stuffed olive.

**WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD?** Tata Eatery, the Asian fusion concept run by two Chiltern Firehouse alumnae, which has popped up in various locations across town, serves up an interesting menu of substantial bar snacks. The go-to is their take on the Japanese sando: two slices of panko-crusting Iberico pork sandwiched between toasted brioche fingers with XO shallot sauce and raspberry jam. Sando devotees say it's one of the best in London, and it's hard to argue as you get to work on this perfectly tender, salty morsel, which looks like a



Tayer+elementary's take on the classic negroni, which is as bitter and delicious as you'd hope

slice of meaty layer cake. The menu rotates regularly, but other momentary highlights are the 'sausage roll,' an Iberico frankfurter with Asian slaw, and the 'prawn cracker': cured amaebi prawns with tobiko and wasabi, served with a side of crackers.

**SET MENU?** Nope – it's all about the small plates.

**EMAIL:** cheers@tayer-elementary.com  
**WHERE:** 152 Old Street, EC1V 9BW  
**WEB:** tayer-elementary.com

## BALUCHI, TOOLEY STREET

**WHAT IS IT?** The restaurant of the Lalit Hotel by Tower Bridge, Baluchi offers pan-Indian fine dining in the former assembly hall of a renovated Victorian grammar school, St Olave's. The dining room is cavernous and papered in oppressive shades of royal blue. The hall is enclosed by two flower-jammed fireplaces you could park a small car inside, and reaches upwards past oak balustrades to a pair of enormous chandeliers above. The stark mismatch between Raj-era excess and the still



Enjoy delicious roti dishes paired with a seriously impressive wine list at Baluchi

palpable air of public school formality is mesmerising. Baluchi is the kind of restaurant that rewards getting lost on your way to the loo, as you explore ancient corridors and classrooms now transformed into the characterful lodgings of a five star boutique hotel.

**WHO WILL IT IMPRESS?** It certainly impresses one of the school's alumni, who regularly comes back here to eat. Besides that guy, Baluchi will please fans of traditional Indian dishes tweaked for the British palate, as well as anyone who enjoys wine pairings with their naan.

**WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD?** The menu is playfully split into the school terms and holidays, encompassing every region of India with a few British cameos too. The wood pigeon starter is cooked with goat cheese and curried yoghurt. The tofu mince topped aubergine steak is more of a soggy schnitzel, and pulls its punches when it comes to spice. If you're after heat, the more understated and delicate flavours at Baluchi will leave you wanting.

**DESSERT?** There's a substantial menu of desserts to choose from here, from traditional kulfi and bhapa doi (a sweet Indian flan) to the more experimental saffron-infused tandoori pineapple.

**SET MENU?** A seven-course tasting menu costs £80, with wine pairings for an additional £70.

**PHONE:** 020 3765 0000  
**WHERE:** 181 Tooley St, SE1 2JR  
**WEB:** thebaluchi.com



# THE LAST SUPPER

Actor, rapper, comedian and YouTube sensation **MICHAEL DAPAAH** tells us why his last meal on earth would be his mum's jollof rice and a steak covered in gold

**F**ood has always been a big thing in my house. My mum was a catering officer back in Ghana and she's a great cook. She cooks everything from Ghanaian dishes like jollof rice to a really good Sunday roast or lasagne. I do a bit of cooking myself, too. I started learning how in food tech, where they taught me how to fry an egg, then I worked my way up to a rice cooker, which was a bit of a turning point, now I make my own sauces and stews. I even bake biscuits. It's a very experimental process – I see something I like and try to recreate it.

My mum still cooks salmon for me once a week. That's my favourite food, especially when I'm training and have to be careful about what I eat. You end up getting through a lot of chicken, fish, rice, fish and sweet potatoes. It's not exciting so it's all about trying to get a bit of flavour in there, which is hard when you're avoiding oil and butter. It can be tough eating well when I'm really busy. I have a natural sweet tooth so it can be tempting to just gorge on sweets – if you plan ahead it makes it easier to resist.

I go to Nando's a couple of times a week. If I'm on the go I'll get a double chicken wrap, with avocado and halloumi on the side. If I'm a bit more settled and have

time to eat properly I'll get a half a chicken with some rice, avocado – that's another standard – maybe some coleslaw. If I'm going a bit more upmarket I'll go to Hakkasan, or there's a place called Zen Lounge in Croydon that serves a 24K gold steak with actual gold leaf covering it. It sounds mad but it's actually very good.

My last supper is basically going to be my mum's cooking. First up is a big bowl of her jollof rice. It reminds me of being at home. I love plantain, so I'll definitely order some of that. I'll have a salmon fillet, because it's something I never get tired of. I'd have some mac 'n' cheese shipped over from the States, because they do it so much better than we do. The Palm Beach in Mayfair does the best prawns I've eaten in my life, so they can send some over for me. I should get some veg too, so I'll have a bit of broccoli.

For dessert, I'll have caramel cheesecake from The Cheesecake Factory, this great American chain that started in Los Angeles. I know this is a pretty big meal but I'm going to treat it like Christmas and really pace myself so I can get through it all. I'm going to wash it all down with a really nice, refreshing pina colada, flown over from STK in Ibiza. That'll do nicely.

📌 #SWIL Series 1 and 2 are available exclusively on YouTube. Big Shaq's new single *Buss It Down* is available to download now.

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Photos by Tim Boddy

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# CHEF'S TABLE

This month **JAMES LOWE**, the superstar chef behind Lyle's, invites My Dad Wrote A Porno podcaster and radio DJ **ALICE LEVINE** for lunch at his hot new Borough Market restaurant Flor

## THE LUNCH

Bread; Anchovy toast, lardo di colonnata, marjoram; Scarlet prawns, orange yuzu kosho; Palourde clam flatbread, spenwood, vin jaune, lautrec garlic; burrata, chestnut, pickled walnuts; Turbot, cultured butter, 'les molates' savagnin

**ALICE LEVINE:** Thanks for having me James. I remember when we first met – it was when I was doing supper clubs and you told me a great location to go and forage. You drew a map. I don't do the supper clubs anymore – I can't really imagine cooking for 25 people now. I'm more of a home cook

**JAMES LOWE:** I find cooking at home quite difficult. I mess up the scaling and end up with absurd amounts of food, or not enough food. I can order the amount of fish I'll need for two days in the restaurant, but if I try to cook for four people they'll end up with half a prawn tail each. Where do you like to eat when you go out?

**AL:** I always have a great meal in Rochelle. I love the Towpath. I've never had a bad experience in either. Both have a great atmosphere and they're nice and simple. Having said that, these prawns could do with a little cube of gelatinous something, and a lid that when you take it off, you get the smell of the rainforest, or your first boyfriend's cologne.

**JL:** You joke, but I've worked in those restaurants. I was at Heston's when he was developing that dish Sound of the Sea, which came with an iPod to listen to as you ate it. It was so awful. We couldn't believe he was serious about doing it.

**AL:** I've eaten in places like that where I've been impressed but haven't really enjoyed it. You can feel a bit out in the cold with that stuff, like if you don't know the process you're not getting the full experience.

**JL:** That almost makes it worse, like you've spent all this time making something and it's not very good. I tend to stay away from fancy fine dining restaurants, because more often than not they're disappointing, and they're always really expensive. Good cooking is about having a real understanding of your product, rather than making it into a mousse and a gel and wrapping it in cucumber.

**AL:** Do you have any restaurant experiences that changed the way you thought about food?

**JL:** Fat Duck and St John were formative and I still love them both. We ate out really rarely when I was young – my parents were obsessed with buying trays that would fit over your lap so you could eat while you were watching Eastenders. Microwaves and telly trays. Even as a child I hated that and loved eating out.

**AL:** We did it so rarely that it was a real occasion, although my mum was an amazing cook that it was often disappointing anyway. But the idea of choosing what you want from a menu felt so grown up.

**JL:** It's nice to be looked after. I can't tolerate bad service. People not saying goodbye as you leave is one of my pet hates. It makes me see red.

**AL:** Is there anything you don't eat?

**JL:** I used to be proud of the fact that I would eat anything, but then I went to Taiwan and tried this thing called stinky tofu, which smells like a latrine. It's disgusting. You'll be walking through a market and all of a sudden it smells like someone's crapped themselves. The first time I ate it, a load of people were watching – they were quite impressed because white people don't usually try it. I had it two or three times and there was one that was particularly strong. I couldn't do it again.

**AL:** I've had it. It's intense. It's challenging. But I didn't gag. What's your go-to chocolate bar?

**JL:** I'm going to sound really pretentious now. I only have good chocolate at home. I'll take stuff from the restaurant. Really dark. I've hated fizzy drinks and Cadbury's chocolate since I was a kid.

**AL:** Did you wear a monocle?

**JL:** Yes, and carried a tiny briefcase. I was a little snob. I don't like sugar that much, although when I was at the Fat Duck I used to go through Haribo Tangfastics and cans of Red Bull like there was no tomorrow. There was a really crazy, abusive Scottish pastry chef and if he wasn't looking I'd get my hand in and eat the chocolate he was making for desserts.

**AL:** So what you're telling me is that you're basically a poncey thief? Is being a chef like being a really good musician, the way they can hear a tune and play it straight away – can you eat something and know straight away how to make it? ▶



Alice Levine and James Lowe discuss podcasts, porno and Pantera over a plate of scarlet prawns in orange yuzu kosho

**JL:** Sometimes, yeah. I think you do that with anything you're passionate about. There was definitely a time when I'd go somewhere just to find out how things were made. But you can get too obsessed with technique.

**AL:** I suppose I do the same with writing and comedy. When you see somebody doing your job well, you try to work out how the pieces fit together. Why does that joke work so well?

**JL:** How has making *My Dad Wrote A Porno* changed over the years?

**AL:** People are harder to shock now. Series one was just us going 'ooh-err!' But the three of us have always enjoyed making stuff together. Even if it hadn't taken off we'd still have made it, although it's obviously easier when people like it. It's only 13 weeks of the year, like the school holidays. So we all sit in my dark spare room reading porn. People ask how Rocky – Jamie's dad's pen name – takes it, because we can be quite harsh, but he's impervious to criticism. He's such a wind-up merchant, loves the craic. It's all family jibes.

**JL:** It's amazing how much it's taken off. Your download numbers are massive.

**AL:** I don't pay attention to the figures – it's 200m downloads by the way – but it's funny, when you're doing it, it feels like this really intimate thing – kind of like cooking I suppose – so when I hear about people in Australia listening to I'm always a bit shocked. We did an episode where we talk to people who love Rocky's writing and we met Lin-Manuel Miranda who wrote *Hamilton*. He was filming something in Wales, so we went there and the weather was terrible. It was crazy seeing this Broadway legend hiding under a tree outside John Lewis in Cardiff. What do you listen to in the kitchen?

“

I'm no good at standing next to a boy presenter and giggling at jokes. If that's what you want, I'm probably not who you're looking for

**JL:** Well, we have an open kitchen, so we just listen to the same music as the restaurant. But in the early days most kitchens were separate so you'd get this elevator jazz in the dining room and the chefs would be listening to System of a Down. We have a baker who comes in at 3am and I saw her playlist the other night – it's the middle of the night and she's listening to Pantera and Metallica. But the bread is good, so go for it. Music in restaurants is really important. People think the music should reflect the mood of the room, but it's the opposite – the music sets the mood of the room.

**AL:** It's a hard balance, it's like how attentive waiting staff should be. Too little or too much can be terrible. There are parallels with what we do. When we have a guest we always want it to feel like a conversation, not like they are being interviewed.

**JL:** How do you find people?

**AL:** Mostly they get in touch with us...

**JL:** Do you make them beg? If they're really keen do you keep them hanging? 'Oh god, Cillian Murphy has emailed three times now!'

**AL:** Sometimes they will out themselves as perves by following us on Twitter. Emma Thomson's daughter let us know on the sly. The whole experience gets easier over time. We've crafted something that suits us all – we weren't comedians or comedy writers and the boys didn't do presenting, so we made something that was comedy by stealth. It's a bit geeky and freaky so we have a kind of sci-fi crossover. People like it because it's dorky and lame. We've all done jobs that you can't think about because it makes you feel so bad inside. But you get more confident in turning things down. I'm no good at standing next to a boy presenter and giggling at jokes. If that's what you want, I'm not who you're looking for.

**JL:** I was really conscious of the fact I didn't want Flor to be as difficult as Lyle's. We lost money for a long time and it was really hard: ridiculous hours and loads of pressure, with loans it took us five years to repay. It was horrible having that hanging over us when we wanted to spend money on the restaurant. Industry friends were saying 'I hope you're at least paying yourselves properly' but we weren't. I was giving pay rises to members of staff who were earning more than I was. It makes you feel like a bit of a failure even though I knew the food was good. It just didn't feel sustainable. People think restaurants make loads of money but we certainly didn't. It sucked. So I don't want to do that again, I've played that game. This opening was more successful and smoother because of how much of a disaster the last one was.

● Alice has curated an aperitivo menu designed to complement the distinctive flavours of Peroni Libera 0.0%. You can try it at the Peroni Libera Terrazza at Selfridges London; Series 5 of *My Dad Wrote A Porno* is out now and will go on a world tour in the new year; To book a table at Flor go to [florlondon.com](http://florlondon.com), call 020 3319 8144 or visit the Borough Market restaurant at 1 Bedale St, SE1 9AL ■

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- 5ml Ardbeg 10
- 25ml Cocchi di Torino
- 10ml Gammel Dansk
- 2ml Briotet Melon

**Glassware:**

- Martini

**Garnish**

- Grapefruit twist

## HOW TO MIX SMOKE & MIRRORS

This happy accident has become a staple at Hide. Find out how to rustle up a future cocktail classic. Words: **STEVE IRISH**

**M**any of the cocktails we drink today are recipes that have been passed down through the generations, from bartender to bartender, their measurements exact and their flavours timeless.

These are the mainstays of cocktail books that pass between collectors for many hundreds of pounds, perfect and unchanging.

Some, on the other hand, are the result of happy accidents, of whimsy, of pure impulse. That was the case with Smoke & Mirrors, which you can find on the menu at Mayfair's fine dining destination Hide. It was created by bar manager and mixologist Oskar Kinberg, who happened to have a craving for melon one summer's afternoon. "I'd ordered in a load of fresh melon and I was really looking forward to a slice when I got into work," he says. "But when I got there our fruit delivery had been mixed and there was no melon in sight. I don't usually drink when I get into work, but I spotted a bottle of melon liqueur and decided to

throw something together. My old friend Cocchi never lets me down, so in it went. After that I needed something with a bit more body - I spotted the Kamm & Sons. In it went. Next I needed something bitter to counter all the sweetness. Gammel Dansk is the perfect mix of spices to compliment melon liqueur. In it went. I stirred it all together and gave it a taste. It was divine but there was something missing - peaty whisky. Ardbeg 10 was the closest bottle. In it went. I tasted again and it was perfect, a great balance between bitter and sweet, herbs, spices, peat and fruit.

"It's serious and fun at the same time. It's in the same ballpark as alcohol-forward cocktails like Negronis. It would be a talking point to bring out before a dinner with friends."

Making it is simple - put all the ingredients in a shaker and fill it with ice, then stir for 30-40 seconds. Strain it all into a glass and garnish with a grapefruit twist. And who knows - maybe in a hundred years, Smoke & Mirrors will have found its way into the 2119 edition of Classic Cocktails.

● Visit Hide at [hide.co.uk](http://hide.co.uk)



Hide bar manager Oskar Kinbergh shows us how to make his creation Smoke & Mirrors, which was born after a mixed-up fruit delivery. Pictures: **Greg Sigston**





MY LIFE IN  
RESTAURANTS

MARK HIX

# WHAT A BOAR

Our resident chef heads to the Tuscan hills, rifle in hand, to bring home the bacon. But this time the pigs win.

**I** recently went on my third boar hunt in the hills of Tuscany. The first time was 20-odd years ago, and I only managed to get a single shot off, which went about a foot over its head. It didn't even flinch, just continued to stare at me, indignant. Since then I've taken up game shooting of the winged variety so my eye is a tad better – not great but getting there.

The second time was different. After some light-footed stalking – these beasts can sense human footsteps from hundreds of metres away – we came across a likely candidate, a big, mean-looking male. I lifted my rifle, measured my shot and dispatched the creature with my first bullet. The feeling is miles away from shooting game birds. This is a big mammal, really something to behold, totally different from a bird just dropping at your feet. Only after lumping it in the Land Rover did I start to think about how I was going to prepare it.

So this time, on a hunt in around an hour outside of Florence, I was confident, prepared to employ that crack shot again and bring home the bacon, so to speak. It's the hope that kills you. We were hunting with bloodhounds and saw a fair bit of action in the woods but my inexperienced eye failed us on the day. I just never seemed to get a clear line of sight, or the nimble things would scurry into the undergrowth before I'd had a chance to raise my rifle. In my head I was already deciding how I was going to cook the thing, which might have put me off my game. That's my excuse, anyway. "Must shoot more," was the depressing advice from my guide.

I managed to fool a few people who knew I'd gone shooting by sending them pictures of the last one, but eventually



someone noticed I was wearing a completely different outfit from the pictures I'd posted earlier. The shame!

My plan was to cook an Indian boar feast for friends who own Castello di Vicarello near Grosseto, but thanks to me we were boarless apart from a shoulder my guide had bagged the week before. Thankfully there was more than enough meat on it for the six of us and I managed to rustle up a five course supper. I brought my own spice mixes from London in anticipation of a boar and I got started in the kitchen, a two ring cooker in a hunting lodge, which was a little cosy but hey, confined spaces are sometimes a good thing for organisation.

The butchery process certainly gets the mind going, and as I was tackling each joint and muscle with a razor sharp knife I came up with the menu. Jointing a beast, whether it's a rabbit or a boar, is fairly straightforward. I singled out muscles within the joints that need very little cooking and tougher muscles that needed a slow cook. This is called seam butchery and means you don't end up with some tender and some chewy pieces in your pie or stew.

We knocked up some boar bhajis, with the less tender meat finely chopped, made into keema and served on homemade flatbreads. The more tender meat I turned into tikka and the chunkier bits I used in a biryani in the traditional fashion, with a layer of meat and sauce topped with rice and a pastry crust. Last of all I made a stock with the bones and sinewy

bits, which I chopped and stuffed into little potato and coconut cakes. We washed it down with wines from the surrounding vineyard. Like fishing, it's not all about what you catch.

● Mark went hunting with guide Oliver Rampley, whose business Altana Europe focuses on sustainable hunting, fishing and bird watching. For more info go to [altanaeurope.com](http://altanaeurope.com)

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\*All in-car features should be used by drivers only when safe for them to do so. Drivers must ensure they are in full control of the vehicle at all times. Mobile services subject to network coverage and capacity.

Pictures taken at the Wild Turkey complex, including an aging warehouse and barrels being flamed

# IN PURSUIT OF THE WILD TURKEY

In Kentucky, whisky is a multi-billion dollar cottage industry. **SIMON THOMSON** visits coopers, still-makers and master distillers to learn how Wild Turkey 101 is made.

**I**n the private dining room of a Louisville hotel, I angle a roasted marrow bone towards my face and pour a shot of Wild Turkey down the emptied channel. It sluices the remaining beef fat into my mouth, adding a rich, silky finish to the oaky caramel of the bourbon. A cheer goes up from the assembled crowd. I have only been in Kentucky for a few hours, and my head is already swimming from all the Southern hospitality.

At one end of the table was our host for the following days, Jimmy Russell, the octogenarian “Buddha of Bourbon”. At the other end was his son – and fellow Wild Turkey master distiller – Eddie; who had just finished a bone-luge of his own. Jimmy Russell began working for Wild Turkey in 1954 and is the longest-tenured active master distiller. Eddie joined the company in 1981, becoming master distiller in his own right in 2015. Between the two of them they have over a century of whiskey-making experience. I was there to learn, and they were throwing me in at the deep end.

In 1964, the US Congress recognised bourbon whiskey as a “distinctive product of the United States”, and the Federal Standards of Identity for Distilled Spirits state that bourbon must meet a series of strict requirements, right down to the type of barrels it must be aged in (new, charred oak).

Strictly speaking, “bourbon” is not an appellation of origin, although only American-made whiskeys can be sold as bourbon in the United States. Indeed, there is some disagreement about whether the name even ties the drink to Bourbon County, Kentucky, with a plausible case being made for Bourbon Street in New Orleans, where it gained popularity in the mid-19th century as a cheap, domestic alternative to French cognac.

Be that as it may, according to the Kentucky Distillers Association, 95 per cent of bourbon is produced in the Bluegrass State, where distillation was introduced by Scottish and Irish settlers in the late 18th century, and the limestone filtered water, hot summers and cold winters provide the essentials for making and aging the spirit.

This is not a tale of uninterrupted progress, however. There was a time not so long ago when bourbon was on its knees. Yuppies were drinking clear spirits, regular folk had beer, and once-great distilleries were being shuttered. A hardy few hung on to make whiskey for a dwindling contingent of old Southern men.

But after decades of decline, the turn-around has been rapid, driven by a number of factors. Alongside trends towards locally produced and quality crafted produce, there have been swashbuckling bartenders unearthing old spirits, reviving old cocktails and seeking novel ingredients, all the while accreting ►





A worker at the Vendome Copper and Brass Works factory showing off his tattoo of a whiskey still

► more bourbon enthusiasts, aficionados and obsessives. The tired complaint that “Millennials ruin everything” has no place here, with younger drinkers embracing the bourbon that Boomers and Gen-Xers once shunned. Pop-culture has played its part too, particularly shows like *Mad Men*, in which Don Draper stepped behind the bar to mix his own old fashioned, or the Kentucky-set crime drama *Justified*, which referenced “Jimmy Russell’s finest”.

In 2005 there were around 50 micro-distilleries in the US. By 2012 that number had quintupled to 250. In the last decade bourbon production has increased 115 per cent, with growth led by sales of artisanal, premium small batch, and single barrel offerings. Increased consumer interest drew the attention of major spirits companies, with Diageo acquiring Bulleit, Suntory merging with Jim Beam, and Angel’s Envy (a distillery that was founded in 2005, and didn’t release its first whiskey until 2011) being snapped up by Bacardi in 2015. Wild Turkey was ahead of the curve, having been bought by Pernod Ricard in 1980, but with

the upturn in the bourbon market it was sold on to its current owner, Campari, in 2009.

In 2018 Kentucky produced 1.7m barrels of bourbon, matching the previous record high output, set 50 years earlier, in 1968. The total number of bourbon barrels aging in the state is 7.5m; a figure unmatched since 1972. The next five years will see \$2.3bn spent on capital projects including expanded distilleries, aging warehouses, bottling plants, and facilities for tourists. The Kentucky Bourbon Trail, created in 1999, gives visitors the opportunity to tour distilleries and experience whiskey production first-hand – it attracted 1.4m visitors in 2018.

It’s a crisp autumn morning when I visit the fourth-generation family-owned Vendome Copper and Brass Works Incorporated factory, Wild Turkey’s still-maker. Dozens of denim-clad workers are there, in hoodies, jackets and welding caps are variously drilling holes, rolling sheet metal, hammering, and joining. These men (and they are mostly men) are skilled technicians who take pride in their work. One pulls up the sleeve of a thermal undershirt to reveal a tattoo of a still, which

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The tired complaint that ‘Millennials ruin everything’ has no place here, with younger drinkers embracing the bourbon that Boomers and Gen-Xers once shunned

covers the whole of his forearm. Vendome are producing 40-50 stills a year, some of which are replacements or additional units for existing distilleries, but the number also reflects the rampant growth in craft whiskey.

Few bourbon makers build their own barrels, so barrel production is another integral part of the industry. The Independent Stave Company, whose cooperage is located in the town of Lebanon, Kentucky (coincidentally, they have another cooperage in Lebanon, Missouri) supplies major brands such as Wild Turkey, Four Roses, Buffalo Trace, and Jim Beam. Inside the facility it’s uncomfortably hot and noisy, with barrels rolled in front of an industrial flamethrower and blasted on a scale of one (lightly toasted) to four (the so called “alligator char”, because the end results resemble blackened alligator skin).

The Wild Turkey distillery sits atop a cliff with the Kentucky River below. The facilities are ominous-looking: multi-story, grey, wooden, aging warehouses surrounded by raised-earth berms to limit the risk of fire and spillages. But this is where the magic happens. Wild Turkey 101 gets its distinctive taste by using more rye than most bourbons, giving it an assertive and peppery quality. The distillate is barrelled and aged for at least six years, coming out of the barrel at almost 55 per cent ABV, and is only slightly diluted, to be bottled at 101 proof (50.5 per cent ABV). Other whiskeys made here include Wild Turkey Rare Breed, bottled at cask strength using a selection of six, eight, and 12-year-old bourbons.

Wild Turkey may be owned by a huge corporation, but it’s still a family business; like many distilleries in the area, there’s something almost dynastic at play here. Eddie’s son is Wild Turkey’s national brand ambassador, while the gift shop is run by Jimmy’s granddaughter (and Eddie’s niece), who both men tease affectionately because she had the bad judgment to be born in Tennessee.

After a long day learning the intricacies of the trade – and sampling the produce – I grab a farewell drink with Eddie. I’m surprised when he asks the barkeep for a boulevardier (a bitter cocktail, essentially a negroni with whiskey in place of gin): I assumed he’d be a ‘straight-up’ kind of guy. “Well, if you asked Jimmy...” he says, pausing to take a sip, “he’d tell you that even an ice cube in your whiskey makes it a cocktail.”

● You can buy Wild Turkey 101, and other Wild Turkey products, from *The Whisky Exchange*, [thewhiskyexchange.com](http://thewhiskyexchange.com); You can visit the Wild Turkey Distillery as part of the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, [kybourbontrail.com](http://kybourbontrail.com) ■

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# STAR ATTRACTION

The Michelin guide makes careers and shatters dreams. But why is this turn of the century food manual for French truckers still the gong that gets chefs hot under the collar? Words: **JOSH BARRIE**

**T**his year's Michelin guide was released to usual chorus of dissent, complaints that fashionable, progressive restaurants were overlooked in favour of high-ceilinged, soft carpeted establishments where classic cooking is dished up on white linen.

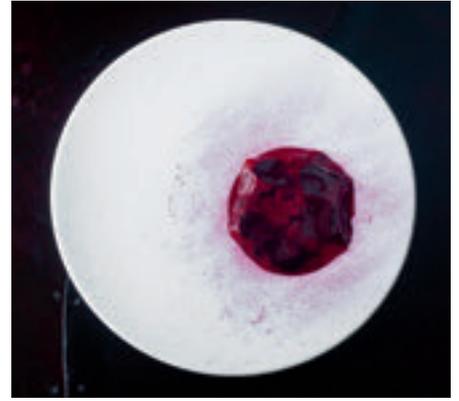
This, of course, is all part of the fun. Michelin is the guide we love to hate, and the only food award most people give a toss about. It's certainly the one that gets the world's finest chefs hot under the collar. What started in 1900 as a manual to help direct France's 2,000-odd motorists find hotels, restaurants and even petrol stations – burning through tyre rubber in the process – has long been a powerhouse in the world of gastronomy, dishing our awards that are coveted from Tribeca to Tokyo. For decades the mysterious, anonymous Michelin judges have made careers and broken hearts.

"It's like asking why the Oscars are the number one film award," says chef and restaurateur Victor Garvey. "There are others that are possibly less political, perhaps more objective, and newer and shinier. But

Michelin is the gold standard. It's been around forever and will be around forever. It has been directing people to great restaurants since before aeroplanes."

This year was relatively quiet for London, with only four restaurants gaining their first star (The Dysart Petersham, Da Terra, Endo at the Rotunda, and Mãos), and a further two gaining an extra one. It's been suggested that some of the capital's new restaurants were overlooked as Michelin shifts its focus to the rest of the UK. Others believe there's still a degree of French favouritism. Mayfair's Japanese restaurant The Araki, which had held three stars under Mitsuhiro Araki, lost them all. The chef had returned to Tokyo earlier in the year and there was speculation the restaurant might drop a star, but few thought it would lose them all. Its neighbour Sketch, meanwhile, was the only restaurant to join the elite three-star pack (La Dame de Pic moved from one to two stars).

One of the most high-profile chefs to miss out was Adam Handling. "I was gutted," he says. "We've worked so hard all year. All of us. I feel a responsibility to my team. We want to win Michelin stars and yes, I feel pressure. Michelin means a lot. My head chef is ►



**Opposite :** Sketch's Lecture Room & Library, which jumped from one to three stars this year;  
**Clockwise from left:** Adam Handling, one of the talented chefs who missed out on a star this year; A dessert by Sat Bains, who holds two stars at his eponymous restaurant; King custard crab, on the menu at Whatley Manor, which now holds two stars; Red mullet from the Sketch kitchen; Bains, whose protégés are now winning stars of their own





**Above:** Niall Keating, executive chef at Whatley Manor, was awarded two stars this year; **Below:** Dessert at Sketch's three Michelin star Lecture Room & Library

► usually a stone-faced, no emotions sort of guy. When we didn't get the star, he walked up to me and said, 'next year' and gave me a hug. I respect Michelin a lot, but it can be confusing. There are so many good restaurants in London and for just four to get a [new] star is mental. London is the food capital of the world. But we've made changes, trimmed down the menu, and we'll try again."

Michelin stars would suit Handling. They don't suit everyone. Skye Gyngnell famously called earning a star a "curse" when she was in charge at Petersham Nurseries. "If I ever have another restaurant, I pray we don't get a star," she told *The Telegraph* in 2012.

Gordon Ramsay, one of an exclusive group of British chefs to win three Michelin stars – at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay – says he shed tears when The London in New York lost its prestigious two-star rating in 2013. "I started crying," he said at the time. "It's a very emotional thing for any chef. It's like losing a girlfriend. You want her back."

The flip-side is the feted 'Michelin effect', which can drastically alter the fortunes of those upon whom stars are bestowed. There are dedicated restaurant goers who will traverse entire continents trying to dine in every notable restaurant in the guide, spending five or six figures over the course of a lifetime on their gastronomic hobby. Michelin stars are even said to boost local house prices, with "gourmet clusters" in provincial towns giving otherwise nondescript villages a healthy boost.

Property experts Knight Frank point to



Speaking to a dozen or so chefs for this piece, the same sentiments came up again and again: respect, admiration, confusion



the 'Golden Triangle', which stretches across North Surrey and East Berkshire, as an example of an area that's benefitted from Michelin's Midas touch.

"When we were awarded the second star in 2013, our bookings increased by 25 per cent," says Arnaud Bignon, who was then in charge of The Greenhouse. "In the beginning, people were coming out of curiosity, but some of them turned into regulars."

Sat Bains, who holds two Michelin stars at his eponymous Nottingham restaurant says winning his first star in 2003 was transformational, filling his empty tables and diversifying his clientele. When he got the second in 2012, he says it pushed him further and helped him maintain his drive.

He's gone on to forge an impressive legacy, with chefs who trained under him now winning stars themselves: Niall Keating (Whatley Manor, Cotswolds) and Jordan Bailey (Aimsir, Co. Kildare) were both awarded two stars this year, while Alex Bond (Alchemilla, Nottingham) won his first. "I'm proud of them," says Bains. "They've worked hard, and that's all you can do. None of us know what we need to do to get there, really – you just have to push and push."

Speaking to a dozen or so chefs for this piece, the same sentiments came up again and again: respect, admiration, confusion. Everybody wants a Michelin star, but nobody's quite sure what that entails. Perhaps that's part of the appeal. One thing's for sure: I'll be expectantly waiting for next year's guide just like everybody else. ■

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# DISCOVER THE ART OF GIFTING WITH A HARRODS HAMPER

There's a perfect hamper for everyone, whether they love chocolate truffles, a rich Christmas pudding, or fine wine from Spain or Italy

**U**ndeniably exciting and instantly recognisable, with a heritage dating back to the 1890s, a Harrods hamper always delivers. In fact, it's impossible to think about hampers without thinking about Harrods. Offering a wide selection of traditional favourites, from handmade condiments to sweet treats and specially selected wines, there's a hamper for everyone. This year, Harrods continues to expand the selection of everyday and rare foods with the launch of the Fresh Market Hall, which offers the very best fresh produce plus a tantalising array of goodies prepared by the 150 in-house chefs.

Harrods understands that when it comes to eating and drinking at Christmas, everyone has a favourite indulgence; it could be a secret love of chocolate truffles, a rich Christmas pudding, or a fine wine from Spain or Italy. Whatever it is, the expert Corporate Service at Harrods team has carefully curated its Hamper and Gifts Collection for the 2019 festive season to delight everyone you wish to recognise or

reward. Or for a truly unique gift with the personal touch, the team at Corporate Service at Harrods will create bespoke hampers with products hand-picked directly from the famed Food Halls and Fine Wine and Spirits Room. Choose from six sizes of hamper and add a monogrammed tag; hot-stamped in copper foil. Each hamper can be delivered within the UK and internationally in time for Christmas. Here are some examples to delight friends, family, colleagues and clients this Christmas time.

#### THE HARRODIAN

The namesake hamper contains everything you need for a festive feast. Enjoy fine wines and spirits, sweet treats, cured meats and tea and coffee, among other memorably delicious products. £2,500

#### THE FOOD HALLS COLLECTION

The Food Halls Collection is hand-picked from the shelves of the famous Harrods Food Halls, this generous hamper includes a delectable assortment of wine and biscuits. Tucked inside a charming Harrods wicker basket, you'll find luxury coffee, tea, biscuits, jams, honey and chutney alongside a bottle

each of red and white wine - the perfect accompaniment to a festive meal. £125

#### THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

What better way to celebrate than with a luxurious selection of festive favourites? Dive into a pair of wicker baskets to unearth fine wines and warming spirits, tea and coffee, brandy butter, Christmas pudding and more. £750

#### DAYLESFORD PANTRY

Only organic, premium British produce makes its way into the exclusive Daylesford Pantry Christmas hamper. Packed into a generously-sized hamper basket, the sumptuous contents include fresh cheeses, cured meats, tea, coffee, cakes, wines and more, plus a cool bag ready for festive visits. £500

#### THE WINE BUYER'S SELECTION

Harrods in-house wine buyer selects 12 bottles to showcase the very best the Harrods Wine Rooms have to offer for The Wine Buyer's Selection hamper; enjoy the beautiful contrast between bottles of rich Rioja and celebratory Champagne, all presented in a traditional wicker hamper. £350



### THE BELGRAVIA

A range of wine, tea and coffee, condiments and biscuits, fudge and caramel, The Belgravia is the perfect choice for those to delight in a mouth-watering selection of delicacies from the renowned Harrods Food Halls. Packed in a traditional wicker basket, boasting fine wines, a selection of biscuits, jams, chutney, truffles and more. £400

### THE SLOANE

When guests drop by for Christmas treats to escape the cold December days, The Sloane hamper celebrates Harrods store's rich history with a selection of traditional delicacies from the world-famous Harrods Food Halls. Tucked inside this wicker treasure trove, you'll find a whole host of delicious indulgences – from biscuits to hot drinks, and pantry essentials including jams and dried pasta. £200

### INDULGENCE HAMPER

Set the scene for a perfect night in with the Harrods Indulgence Hamper. Pamper yourself some bubbly, Pink Marc de Champagne luxury truffles, rose fondants and a duo of sweet-smelling products from

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### THE LEYBURN

Named after the market town of Leyburn in Cartwright & Butler's Yorkshire homeland, The Leyburn hamper offers a taste of the British Isles, with all the essentials for a proper afternoon tea. With sweet and savoury covered, you'll find chocolate chunk biscuits, caramel syrup waffles and an assortment of confectionery served alongside cheese wafers, olive bread thins and a host of marmalade, preserves, mustard and horseradish cream to suit any palate all year round. £150

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Discover a selection of Christmas favourites with the Harrods Christmas Carol hamper. Think clementine shortbread, spiced black tea, classic Christmas pudding and brandy butter, tucked into a festive Harrods wicker basket. All come served with a selection of jam and marmalade with a spiced milk chocolate bar for a delicious finishing touch. £100

For more information on the complete 2019 Harrods Hampers collection and personalised gifts for the festive season, call Corporate Service at Harrods on +44 (0)20 7225 5994, email [corporate.service@harrods.com](mailto:corporate.service@harrods.com) or visit [harrods.com](http://harrods.com)

Harrods

# TURKISH DELIGHT

Young British Artist Gavin Turk on getting arrested, collecting junk and trying to save the planet.

Words: **STEVE DINNEEN**; Pictures: **SOPHIE CHEVERST**

**A** generation of artists and musicians and filmmakers are starting to engage with climate change in the way creators in the mid-1960s engaged with the anti-war movement. You couldn't move during this year's Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy, for instance, without falling over an oblique reference to the planet dying. But in the case of Gavin Turk, the 52-year-old still widely referred to as a Young British Artist, the climate protests have lent a new urgency to themes he's explored for decades.

"I'm obsessed with waste and recycling," he says, staring at a row of hulking diggers hauling metal through the scrap yards outside his Canning Town studio. "It's quite inspirational watching them, creating and destroying at the same time. Sometimes you see new stuff being crushed – the life of things now is so short. Sometimes I want to phone them up and say 'I have this big public sculpture to do, how much for the pile over there?'"

His studio is a white-washed oasis at the end of an aggressively potholed road on a grey industrial estate. He and his staff are the only people around who aren't wearing hard hats and high-vis vests.

Perhaps the most notable thing about Turk's studio is that it's filled with rubbish. There are plastic bottles

everywhere, part of a collection he's been building for years. He seems genuinely excited to show me some of his favourites: "This one originated in Poland," he says, brandishing a mangled one litre bottle that appears to have been run over. "The design excites me," he says, pointing out the dimpled, geometric design spiralling down the neck. "The shapes and patterns – they have this magic about them."

But, like much of Turk's work, all is not what it seems. While many of the bottles are indeed discarded bits of plastic, some are cast bronze sculptures painted to look like the real thing, fine art masquerading as trash.

"With the casts, I'm painting an invisibility, which is impossible. It's kind of an optical illusion. I was trying every trick in the book to simulate transparency and depth. It's about forcing people to question their preconceptions. They will go into an exhibition and some art will exist in their head, and then they see a crappy plastic bottle. You can *see* nobody wanted it – it's been crushed and it's dirty. Then you realise it's *not* a plastic bottle – it's a fake. So now they're wondering why someone would do that. It's a question of how we value things."

Turk values them at £8,500 each, according to the guide for Amsterdam's Reflex gallery, where they went on display last month, although he tells me he has no idea how he's going to price the genuine plastic ▶





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Gavin Turk in the rain outside his studio, where he keeps a caravan full of junk he'd like to one day exhibit

► bottles that will reside in purpose-built cases in the exhibition window.

This isn't the first time Turk has explored the artistic potential of discarded things. He's famous for his trompe-l'oeil bronze castings of grubby sleeping bags and crisp packets and bulging bin bags. He's cast cigarette butts and balls of gum in solid gold (there's giant version of the gum stuck to the wall in his studio). He shows me two identical crushed paint cans, one real, the other a meticulously recreated copy. In the toilet, I notice a can of "artist's piss" signed 'Gavin Turk', inspired by Piero Manzoni's famous "Merda d'Artista". The rubbish even spills outside, where he shows me a decrepit old caravan covered in graffiti. "It's actually quite beautiful. I want to put the whole thing in a big glass cabinet and show it as a sculpture."



Turk exploded onto the art scene alongside Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, gaining notoriety for his Royal College of Art degree show – an empty room with a blue plaque reading "Borough of Kensington, Gavin Turk. Sculptor, Worked Here 1989-1991". He failed the course, but the publicity was priceless. His reputation as the trickster prince of British art was cemented when he attended Charles Saatchi's glitzy Sensation show dressed as a homeless man. It was brilliant: the tramp being welcomed into the exclusive party because he called

himself an artist.

I thought of that story when Turk was arrested at an Extinction Rebellion rally last year, although he says he was protesting as himself rather than an artist. "Getting arrested was easy. They were very gentle," he says, almost wistfully. "There was something quite profound about it, spending a few hours without a phone or anything. You realise there's very little time in your life when you have to just sit and be with yourself. I started thinking quite lucidly."

His new show isn't a direct response to climate change, he says ("I've never wanted to make art that just says one thing"), but the future of the planet takes up an increasingly large part of his mental landscape. Take the bottles: "I started out being interested in glass – I was fascinated by the idea of them being created from sand

and water. Then plastic started being used to contain the water, and that plastic goes on to contaminate the water..."

So does he think we're all a bit screwed? "Well, when I was born, there were 3.5bn people in the world – today there are almost 8bn. In 50 years we've doubled as a species. There are still possible futures but my youngest child is 18 and he's at a point where he's probably going to see some serious environmental issues, and if my kids have any kids they will *definitely* see some stuff. But I'm naturally quite optimistic. I'm not at the point where I think it's useless to change our behaviour. I do think we can start living by different measures.

"My wife is always saying 'the planet is dying' but I'm not sure it *can* die. It might lose some of the organisms that are here but something else will come along. Strictly speaking, we're too close to the sun to work anyway. When they are looking for other planets that might sustain life, it's the equivalent of Mars they're looking for rather than earth. In the Goldilocks scenario, earth is too close to the sun."

I'm not sure this scenario is quite as cheerful as Turk makes it sound, but he's infectiously upbeat. He a natural performer, which is unsurprising for a man who's spent his career placing himself into his work. Dozens of his pieces feature either his likeness or his signature, among them a life size waxwork of Gavin Turk dressed as Sid Vicious dressed as Elvis Presley. ►



I'm naturally quite optimistic. I'm not at the point where I think it's useless to change our behaviour. I do think we can start living by different measures.

“

Most artists don't just want to make art for the fancy bedrooms of people with private jets, although inevitably that's where it ends up

► He bounds around the studio, bouncing from topic to topic. During our photoshoot he needs no direction to twiddle his voluminous moustache for the camera (“it was supposed to be totally Dali but it got too big and now it's more Phileas Fogg”).

When we ask to take pictures in front of a giant canvas from his Fright Wig series, featuring him wearing an Andy Warhol wig, he insists on drilling new brackets into the wall to hang it on. Later, when we're shooting by the caravan – in the pouring rain – he gamely pushes a broken-down transit van (presumably a casualty from last year's A Brexit Portfolio and Other Transit Disasters exhibition) out of the way so we can get a better angle.

Later I ask if he feels conflicted about being a part of an art scene that's largely supported by the super-rich – hardly natural bedfellows with the Extinction Rebellion crowd. “Lots of artists are left wing people who want to make art for a large audience,” he says. “They don't just want to make art for the fancy bedrooms of people with private jets, although inevitably that's where it ends up.

“I'm not in a position to audit the collectors of my work. My biggest collector is Damien Hirst, which is an interesting one because he's sold his work to the most wealthy people around the world. He's created a kind of elite decor. But he's an artist and he's spending his money buying my art. He's probably the best collector you could have.”

Speaking of Hirst, I wonder if the YBA label has ever felt like a millstone? “It's an odd grouping. They are very different artists making very different work for very different reasons. It's not like the surrealists who all believed in a certain way of thinking about the world. There's no manifesto, just this bagging together of artists. It almost stopped people from thinking more deeply about what we were trying to say. But it's still commercially viable.”

He says the people the YBA label really hurt were the next generations of artists, who never got the same adrenaline shot of exposure. He sounds genuinely humble when he says he's just thankful to have the means to carry on creating. “As an artist I get to do what I like and that freedom is hard to beat. It's a bit indulgent, I must admit. I'd do something else if I could think of something better.”

I don't believe him for a second. He's in his element in his studio, surrounded by his bottles and his bin bags, coming up with mad new ideas. And if he can help save the world at the same time, all the better.

● Gavin Turk's new show, *Letting Go*, is on at Reflex Amsterdam until 6 December ■



From top: Turk stands beside two identical crushed paint cans, one original, the other a bronze cast; The window display for Turk's new exhibition, which is made using real plastic bottles



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ALEX DYMOKE

TWEETER

# ALMOST FAMOUS

The man behind Twitter parody accounts Pret L'Etranger, Rap Nigel Slater and Steve Baker New Yorker Profiles talks about the highs and lows of social media stardom

I had the idea for my parody Twitter account while watching the Laura Keunssberg documentary, “After the Brexit Storm”. There’s a scene in which Steve Baker, the Conservative MP and self-styled “Brexit hardman”, tears up as he resolves not to vote for Theresa May’s withdrawal agreement. He appears to feel caught in a great cosmic struggle, in which his personal rectitude is being tested – an infuriatingly and hilariously self-important take on Brexit. Days later I set up New Yorker Steve Baker Profiles. The account incorporates jokes about Baker into a parody of literary New Yorker magazine intros. I wrote five tweets, followed some people and went away for Easter. I returned days later to 20 notifications. John Rentoul, the Independent’s chief political commentator and one of a dozen journalists I’d followed, had retweeted me to his 100,000 followers. I was hooked.

I wrote more tweets and gained more followers. Journalists I admired began following the account. Someone from the Economist said it was the “best political spoof account yet made”. A month later, during a meeting at work, I glanced at my phone. Dozens of notifications. I logged on: Steve Baker, clearly chuffed someone deemed him worthy of satire, had retweeted the account, co-opting the New Yorker Steve Baker format. Laura Keunssberg retweeted him, saying she hoped her programme had inspired the account. I’d gained 2000 followers in a month; four times that of the personal account I’d had for seven years.

Transitioning from Twitter lurker to custodian of a mildly trending parody account drove me crazy. I was a dopamine junkie, constantly refreshing my feed in a desperate quest for more likes, more engagement, more affirmation. The impact on my mood was alarming: a ‘like’ was a pipette of molten gold dripped into my amygdala. A retweet and I was in orgasm territory. I found it hard to concentrate on anything else.

But I also had some nagging doubts. I was troubled by some of my followers. It was intended as an esoteric form of Remain activism, but Baker had taken it in his stride, and, to my dismay, used it to burnish his credentials as Mr Brexit. Many of my followers were right wingers or bots who actually approved of the jingoistic caricature in the tweets. Some of my most ardent likers and retweeters were Brexit ultras, people with bios like “Love Britain, No Deal, WTO rules!” Toby Young tweeted his approval.

Baker used the account to cast himself as this droll bloke rather than the mad libertarian crank he is. When he wryly referred to it in an Instagram video hinting he might run for Conservative leader, I physically slumped in my seat. As he leaned into it, I resolved to be meaner. I made jokes about his wife. Implied he was shagging his motorbike. But the further I ventured into his mind, researched his background (he’s a state educated son of a carpenter, like me), the more I began to see him as a real person with feelings I didn’t want to hurt. My solution: stop tweeting.

For those who don’t spend their lives on social media, Twitter can be hard to fathom. I explain it like this: imagine you’re at a party full of friends, colleagues and celebrities. Feeling shy, you stand in the corner, silently taking everything in. But then you say something. And people laugh. A guy high fives you. Some repeat your joke to their friends – and they start laughing, too. At the end of this process, you are, essentially, high.

A strange thing about Twitter is it is violently hated by those who use it most.

It’s tremendously entertaining. But there’s something dark about the way it hooks you in. I now have two more parody accounts: Pret L'Etranger, which imagines existentialist philosopher Albert Camus visiting Pret A Manger, and Rap Nigel Slater, which is exactly as it sounds. I find these easier to write. And less politically fraught. Still, I occasionally get my girlfriend to change my passwords. You never know when you’re going to get sucked back in.



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The incredible new Leica M Monochrom designed by Andy Summers, which complements a limited edition guitar

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CITY AM CLUB

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London offers a fresh take on Pic's French culinary heritage. Retaining many original features, the French restaurant offers a contemporary dining experience whilst remaining true to its surroundings. City A.M. Club members will receive a complimentary bottle of Champagne when they book the fabulous La Dame de Pic London Private Dining Room.



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## CITY A.M. CLUB

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Bermondsey's Tanner & Co also have quirky bars and restaurants which are open to the public seven days a week.

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Given the British MoD's major contribution to the field of 'mil-spec' – iconic tenders from the likes of Rolex, Omega and IWC – it is quite the accolade for Christopher Ward to be granted the licence to carry the insignia of the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

Conscripted to the Maidenhead brand's 60s-inspired 'C65' collection, with the insignia engraved into its steel casebacks, the trio of new recruits are perfectly turned-out (not to mention highly affordable) takes on the most classic, and most collectable military styles – each named after the services' officer-training academies, each just £795.

The Dartmouth: a true diving watch inspired by the 'Big Triangle' Omega Seamaster commissioned by the Navy in '67. The Cranwell: a precision pilot watch with nods to the RAF-issue IWC Mark XI of '48. The Sandhurst: a robust infantry watch with roots in Smiths' W10, which first marched come the late 60s. In terms of 'attention!' these handsome numbers should be getting plenty.

# WHAT'S TICKING?

Happenings in the world of time-keeping, from the public face of Big Ben to the face of Patek Philippe's new international exhibition



From above left: The new vibrating wrist watch from Richard Mille; the revamped Elizabeth Tower; Oris' fancy new store; the Patek Philippe Ref. 5303

## BIG BEN BETTER

After two years clad in scaffolding, the wraps are finally coming off London's most famous landmark. And 160 years since the hour was first struck, London's crowning timepiece Big Ben has never looked finer.

Halfway through the biggest-ever upgrade to Parliament's Elizabeth Tower (fondly nicknamed in tribute to its biggest bell), a major milestone already completed is the new-look, spick-and-span North Dial, which has been re-glazed, repainted and re-gilded in the original 'Victoria' colour scheme.

It will remain visible for the remainder of the project, driven by an electric motor, while restoration of the other three dials and Edward John Dent's 11-tonne, pendulum-regulated clock mechanism continue. As for Big Ben? He remains in situ, awaiting special Remembrance Day and New Year's Eve strikes.

## BIG IN SINGAPORE

Business travellers to Singapore can't help but have noticed the vast hoardings on arrival to Changi Airport heralding the arrival of Patek Philippe's travelling exhibition, 'Watch Art', to the city's Sands Theatre. As with those who visited Chelsea's Saatchi Gallery in 2015, the great and the good will be treated to a greatest-hits museum, to the tune of Switzerland's finest act.

The interest of top-end collectors was piqued more, however, by the arrival of not one but six commemorative Patek Philippes, typified by the expo's scarlet colour scheme. The headlining 'Ref. 5303' is an unprecedented flourish of open architecture, revealing complicated mechanics such as a chiming minute repeater and tourbillon. Price on application, needless to say.



## ORIS ON MOLTON

London's thriving scene of mono-brand watch boutiques added yet another string to its bow in September, on Mayfair's oft-overlooked and highly 'boutiquey' South Molton Street. Making a long-running pop-up permanent, it's the first solo venture for Oris – a fitting face for the pedestrianised retail strip, given its similarly 'in-the-know' brand of nextdoor neighbours, operating at luxury's meeting point of affordable yet cool. The opening night saw the unveiling of its latest 'Artelier' piece, the ProPilot X, which is modern Oris in a nutshell: an everyman's watch, fit for purpose (flying in this case) powered by sophisticated and creative mechanics, priced democratically thanks to an unabashed approach to industrialised manufacture. Get thee to South Molton Street: if you know, you'll know.



## TURBULENT TIMES

For a brand that's been in constant search of perfect shock resistance, it's ironic that Richard Mille's latest high-tech tour de force is deliberately bringing vibrations inside the watch case. Not only that, but in a fashion that will be familiar to fans of early-Noughties mobile phones, as the (deep breath) 'RM 62-01 Tourbillon Vibrating Alarm Airbus Corporate Jets' doesn't have a normal hammered-out alarm function, but rather a tiny off-kilter weight in solid gold (visible above, at the bottom left of the movement), which spins at the allotted time, alerting your wrist through its erratic kinetics.

As the iconoclastic watchmaker notes, in the intensely focused atmosphere of a meeting room, the confined space of a first-class cabin, or even your own cabin given this is the latest Richard Mille in partnership with the bespoke private arm of Airbus, such discretion is always welcome.



## The C1 Moonglow

“In the world of haute horology, a handful of makers have done intriguing things, but in the realm of the affordable watch, only Christopher Ward has tackled this challenge”

**Worn & Wound**



[christopherward.co.uk](http://christopherward.co.uk)

NB. This is a visual depiction of the C1 Moonglow – it will appear entirely white in daytime light and glow green after dark.



# TIME SAVER

Switzerland isn't all highfalutin haute horlogerie – in fact, as **ALEX DOAK** reports, there are not-so-rich pickings aplenty in the low thousands, all boasting precision mechanics of their own



Oris's fantastic Big Crown ProPilot X, which you can get your hands on for less than £6,000

**I**t's been over 17 years, but Nicolas Hayek's snap decision of 2002 continues to reverberate throughout the Swiss watch industry. In short, the late, great founding father of the mighty Swatch Group announced what could only be comparable to Intel withdrawing its microchip supply to two-thirds of the world's PC manufacturers. Only instead of chips, this concerned the biggest fish in watchmaking's pool of 'movements'.

Like Intel, Swatch ETA wielded a virtual monopoly on third-party, white-label mechanics, affording hundreds of clients instant bona fide 'Swiss watchmaker' status. But not only was Swatch's then-boss unhappy with this arrangement – “you don't have BMW supplying engines to Audi,” he bemoaned – he also spied dark clouds on the Jura mountains' horizon, comparable to the Quartz Crisis of the 70s, when a complacent lack of innovation saw the traditional horlogers of the sleepy region fall victim to cheap Far Eastern technology.

Monsieur Hayek did have a point. And the Swiss competition commission did let him start a scale-back. But what no one expected was quite how industry-wide the innovation he foresaw actually was. It reached a point where Swatch Group had to backpedal in 2016, repealing their self-imposed restriction of supply. Hundreds of thousands of unsold ETA movements were sitting on shelves, threatening a “massive price hike” for those select clients who remained on their books.

It's been an extraordinary turn of events. In a sector whose technical evolution is usually prefixed by the word 'glacial', Hayek's bombshell led to a jostling landscape of internally developed mechanics powering all manner of reformed ETA addicts, from Frédérique Constant to Raymond Weil, Breitling to Tudor (in a refreshingly open exchange of intellectual information, the latter have even started sourcing and adapting movements from each other – the B01 chronograph and MT5621 time-only chronometers, respectively).

These new so-called 'base calibres' are by no means the most glamorous end of watchmaking, but they are the workhorses of the trade – the entry-level foil to 'haute horlogerie' and all the painstakingly hand-finished craftsmanship it demands at the likes of Patek Philippe and Jaeger-LeCoultre.

Making a volume mechanical is an arduous and impressive undertaking in itself, though. Achieving perfect repeatability is one of the hardest aspects of industrial watchmaking – every component must be primed for quick assembly and predictable performance, with the slightest error having major consequences. If you do have the money and the ►



► inclination, bringing the requisite R&D and computer-controlled milling machinery beneath a single roof will open your account at around 10m Swiss francs. And that's just for your debut, time-only calibre, with the inevitable on-cost to the customer.

So how does that explain the sheer variety and creativity now ticking away beneath logos that would normally adorn a basic ETA, at a relatively miniscule premium to the customer? The Raymond Weil 'Freelancer' watches that come kitted with the Geneva brand's automatic 'RW1212' start with a price tag of just £1,795. That's a mere £35 over Longines' gorgeous new 'sector dial' Heritage Classic – being a Swatch Group stablemate of ETA's, fitted with Longines' own exclusive version of the movement-maker's top-grade 2895-2, making it an affordable 'manufacture' proposition in its own right. (Anyone who argues it's not 'in-house' enough are reminded of Longines' 190-year history and museum chock-full of horological milestones; if any Swatch brand deserves first dibs on ETA's oeuvre, it's Longines.)

The new 'movement' is even pushing formerly entry-level brands into higher-end, but still high-value territory. Oris's ProPilot X Calibre 115, unveiled at the Swiss brand's South Molton Street ribbon-cutting, may be quadruple the price of an Oris kitted out with an ETA clone made by Sellita (another white-label movement maker doing very well, as you can imagine) but your £5,950 gets you whopping 10-day power reserve and a dramatic display of mechanics that's part-Terminator, part-Transformers.

The term 'in-house' is actually a little misleading. Many brands will develop and assemble on-site but farm out the manufacture – exclusively, mind – to established, 'shadow' facilities who've

already invested in machines and technicians (this isn't the case at Tudor, whose new 'Kenissi' facility establishes it as well and truly independent of big brother Rolex). British brand Christopher Ward even ended up buying out its Swiss movement supplier five years ago, affording them highfalutin 'manufacture' status (in a roundabout way).

"We are totally transparent with our customers," says Raymond Weil's CEO Elie Bernheim, "that movements used in our timepieces are outsourced movements specially adapted to fulfil the aesthetic we want to achieve, offering the best price-quality ratio of the market."

"The collaboration with Sellita came up naturally as we've been introducing new movements in timepieces on behalf of the movement manufacturer for many years. By developing our in-house movement [with them]," he adds, "we were able to assure this but also give our customers a mechanical watch with a technically intriguing design."

And therein lies the rub. Where they could simply get around the ETA restriction by sourcing generic movements from someone like Sellita, brands stand to



Bringing R&D and computer-controlled milling machinery beneath a single roof will open your account at around 10m Swiss francs

capitalise on a better-informed-than-ever entry-level market, with 'technically intriguing' mechanical watches. Bragging rights, one might say.

A recent and significant move comes from the broadest layer of the Richemont Group pyramid, Baume & Mercier. And the interest lies not necessarily in the fact it's gone 'in-house' or 'manufacture', rather how upfront it's been communicating its reliance on its parent group's multi-faceted, Switzerland-wide skunkworks – the prosaically named Research & Innovation Management Services, or 'RIMS', whose ValFleurier movement facility has worked wonders with new silicon-based components and a cocktail of new oils.

"Our movement obviously had to be better than the existing ETA or Sellita offering," says Baume & Mercier's CEO Alain Zimmermann, "but we had to deliver that performance at the right price. Price is equally as important as innovation. That was the equation we had to solve."

"While the overall movement is exclusive to Baume & Mercier, the 'bricks' that make it up can't be individually exclusive," he says in reference to RIMS' involvement, "otherwise the price wouldn't be possible..."

That price, by the way, is a mere £2,500. Barely a few hundred pounds north of Baume & Mercier's existing ETA/Sellita-based oeuvre. And this doesn't get you a mere alternative to the standard-issue tractors; this gets you a movement that boasts more than a dormant weekend's worth of power reserve (off on Friday, still ticking on Monday), over five years before another service is required and even-better-than-chronometer-precision precision.

If that doesn't answer Mr Hayek's clarion call for renewed vim and vigour, then we may as well pack it all in and buy Casios. ■



**From opposite left:** The Junghans Meister Chronoscope in midnight blue, £1,290, [bucherer.com](http://bucherer.com); Tudor's Black Bay Bronze, £2,910, [tudorwatch.com](http://tudorwatch.com); Longines Heritage L2.828.4.73.0, £1,760, [longines.co.uk](http://longines.co.uk); Raymond Weil Freelancer Half-Moon Opening Date Window, £1,695, [raymond-weil.co.uk](http://raymond-weil.co.uk); Watch expert Christopher Beccan wearing the Longines Heritage L2.828.4.73.0



WOMEN'S HOUR

LAURA MCCREDDIE-DOAK

# BACK TO BLACK

Embrace the dark side with these new inky-hued watches, with versions from horological heavyweights from Longines to Chanel

**T**he overriding theme for this season's crop of new watches is one I like to call "impenetrable, darkness of the soul". Black dials, black face, black straps. The first inking of this trend came from a rather unlikely quarter: watch-industry iconoclasts MB&F. In a first for the 20-year-old brand, it launched a woman's watch, and an exquisite one at that. Underneath a domed sapphire was a tiny angled dial that only the wearer could read, while rising through the middle was a vertical flying tourbillon. But it was the black dial that demanded attention, a pool of black lacquer that looked both dangerous and beautiful, like something out of one of Guillermo del Toro's magical realist horror movies (which is a compliment by the way).

Never one to pass on a trend involving black, Chanel followed suit with a suite of four watches – the Première, J12 and Boy.Friend for women and the Monsieur for men – all in a delightfully menacing matte black. Apparently, this was a nod to its eponymous founder who famously said: "I imposed black; it's still going strong today, for black wipes out everything else around." Always one for understatement was Mlle.

The award for darkest version possible is H



Moser, whose Diamonds and Vantablack uses the darkest material known to man: the aforementioned Vantablack. Developed by Surrey NanoSystems, this material is made from a forest of tubes, which means that instead of light bouncing off it, it becomes trapped, continually being deflected by them until they turn into heat. This rather sinister substance was previously only used commercially by artist Anish Kapoor, but Moser managed to get its hands on some to make its dials. To misquote Gregg 'The Grocer' Wallace: "you can't get blacker than that".

These are all dress watches, but there are some everyday designs out there, too. TAG Heuer's Aquaracer comes in a sporty ceramic-and-steel bi-colour, while Rado's Thinline collection has a lovely inky-looking number that's so slim you barely notice it on your wrist.

If you really want to channel your inner horological goth, however, then look no further than Longines's luscious Conquest VHP. Not only does the quartz use thermocompensation (basically it adjusts according to the fluctuations in temperature to maintain super accuracy), it also looks gorgeous. The dial is mother of pearl, giving it a moody purple hue. It looks like 2019 is the perfect time ditch colour and get back to black.

● *Laura McCreddie-Doak is one of the country's foremost experts on women's watches and jewellery*

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The Lexus LC500 coupé parked up outside the Lexus LY650 yacht, one of the most stylish seafarers in the world



# BY LAND AND SEA

How a Lexus mid-life crisis led to a £3m yacht and a car that outshines both Jaguar and Porsche.  
Words: **ADAM HAY-NICHOLLS**



Above: The LC500 coupé blends in perfectly in Miami's super-trendy design district

A few years ago, at the prestigious Pebble Beach concours in California, the president of the Toyota Motor Company was holding court and pressing flesh. Akio Toyoda, 63, is the grandson of Toyota's founder and so, you can imagine, he takes enormous pride in its products, and none more so than its luxury off-shoot, Lexus. But during this meet-and-greet a guest was unexpectedly candid with Toyoda-san. "Lexus is just soooo boring," they complained. This is Akio's response: I'm in Boca Raton, 40 miles north of Miami, to see the Lexus LY650, the company's new flagship... literally. It's not a motor car, it's a motor yacht. And a very stylish 20-metre 2,100bhp one at that.

Styled by Lexus, built by Marquis Yachts in Wisconsin and with a stunning Armani-like interior by Venetian tastemakers Nuvolari



Lenard, it boasts three guest cabins, two state-of-the-art Garmin multi-screen helms, active ride control, a flybridge and a two-tone metallic-coloured hull. The result is individual, refined and sporty.

Major League Baseball is even bigger in Japan than it is in the US, so to make the £3m boat even more glamorous, Mr Toyoda has invited J.Lo's other half, A-Rod, to smash the champagne bottle. And with that, my fellow seafarers and I kick back and cruise down to Miami along a corridor of multi-million dollar waterfront homes.

It's here that I split from the group and make my own plans. I've arranged to get to grips with the car that inspired the yacht's design, Lexus's sleek LC500 coupé.

It has a sprawling spindle grille like a great white shark's gob, yet it's a truly elegant piece of 2+2 GT design. Think of it as an Aston Martin DB11 from the Far East. It has thin, sharp lights, high flanks and a low bonnet and roofline. Its wide, subtly meaty stance is emboldened by a seductively pinched waist. And there's substance beneath the style; a glorious 5-litre 471bhp normally-aspirated V8.

Such an artful piece of automotive sculpture calls for a trip to Wynwood and Miami's Design District. The former is a neighbourhood that's been taken over by street artists and creatives. A collection of walls, warehouses and the sides of buildings represent a blank canvas for graffiti and some of the most famous practitioners in the world have left their mark. It's an open-air gallery, established to coincide with Art Basel, which has blossomed into a haven of murals.

Nearby, in the fashion and architectural

playground of the Design District, I'm able to slot the LC500 into its very own artwork.

When you think of a multi-storey car park you think of concrete columns and bad overhead lighting. Not so at the Museum Garage, a seven-storey parking lot with five different facades by five different architects.

One features the red abstract shapes of vehicle brake lights, another has the orange and white stripes of traffic barriers. Inspired by the movie Inception, 45 metallic American cars have been placed in a vertical traffic jam. Another façade is inspired by Japanese anime and European baroque, with black and white renderings of elephants, gargoyles and caryatids.

Tonight I'm staying on Miami Beach's Collins Avenue. Located among the quiet, classy blocks north of bustling Ocean Drive, The Setai is an Asian-influenced boutique hotel housed in an historic Art Deco building, designed in 1936 by the renowned Henry Hohauser, who was also responsible for the Cardozo, the Edison and the Colony.

Throughout The Setai, which includes an 40-storey tower extension, one finds Indonesian bronze, Burmese teak, individual brickwork imported from Shanghai, Japanese calligraphy and stingray skin on the door handles. It also has the best selection of Japanese whisky in the state. The Kardashians regularly rent the penthouse, which is a surprise given how discreet this place is. I love its Jaya restaurant, led by chef Vijayudu Veena, which fuses cuisine from Thailand, Vietnam, India, China and Japan. I opt for scallop and shrimp dumplings with shaved black truffle, followed by a wagy striploin.



Clockwise from top: The art deco front of the Setai Miami hotel; The incredibly luxurious courtyard; Adam poses beside his aggressive-looking Lexus

The LC500 is a melange of sorts itself. It's built using the Japanese philosophy of 'takumi' craftsmanship and the leather stitching uses the same 'sashiko' techniques that have been applied to judo uniforms for 1,200 years. Yet the glorious turbo-free V8 feels like American muscle and the dynamics are thoroughly European, with a taut chassis and precise, communicative steering. At £78,000, it undercuts the equivalent Porsche 911 S and V8 Jaguar F-Type and is far more exclusive. The following morning, I have to prize the key off the valet.

My destination is the Florida Keys. The Lexus prowls along Ocean Boulevard as everyone descends for brunch, passing the Villa Casa Casuarina, the former home of Gianni Versace. It burbles across the MacArthur Causeway, ritzy Star Island to the starboard side and mammoth cruise ships to the port. Soon I'm on US Route 1 bound for Key West; 160 miles of strip malls, mangroves, marinas and cerulean seas, most notably the overseas highway – Seven Mile Bridge – on which Arnold Schwarzenegger called in a Harrier jet strike in True Lies.

The LC500 is just as brutal when you want it to be, but it rides effortlessly with just the right amount of firmness. Its ten (!) automatic gears mean its firepower is always right there, locked and loaded in its torque band, especially in Sport+ mode. Inside, it's as ergonomic as a fighter's cockpit, but with much higher quality materials. It puts Porsche and Jaguar to shame.

Key West lies at the southernmost point of the United States. It's closer to communist Cuba than it is to a Walmart. I check into the

Casa Marina, a Waldorf Astoria resort right next to the southernmost marker where thousands of tourists queue every day to have their pictures taken.

Presidents have made frequent appearances in Key West, and they stay in the old town in what was a naval station. Harry S Truman spent 175 days of his premiership at what he called The Little White House, enjoying the sunshine while recovering from the exhaustion of office. It's a charmingly modest unflashy abode, compared to Mara-Lago at least. Taft, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Carter also stayed here. Since 1991, it's been open to the public. Most recently, the Clintons made a weekend of it.

The other house worth a visit is Ernest Hemingway's. Located on Whitehead Street, just down from my hotel and opposite a lighthouse Hemingway used to guide himself home when sozzled, the swashbuckling author lived here between 1931 and 1939 and penned To Have And Have Not in its study, above what's now a visitors' café. Descendants of his six-toed cats roam freely. The garden features a urinal he obtained from the nearby Sloppy Joe's tavern, now a water feature, and the first swimming pool to be built on the island. His second wife, Pauline, had it constructed while he was away documenting the Spanish Civil War. It cost \$20,000, which was more than twice what the French Colonial style residence was worth.

Upon his return, with mounting anger regarding the bill, he tossed a coin into the pool and announced to his wife: "Well, you might as well have my last cent". Slightly unfair, as she was the money and he was the

typical starving writer scrounging off his spouse. It turns out James Bond visited Hemingway's house in 1989's Licence To Kill, in which it posed as MI6's Floridian headquarters. On announcing his resignation from the Secret Service ("We're not a country club, 007") and forced to hand over his gun, he said to M: "I guess it's a farewell to arms". I never understood the context of the reference until now.

Duval is the bar-packed main street, where you'll still find a Sloppy Joes, but the original pub where Hemingway ordered his daiquiris is now called Captain Tony's, and aficionados of sticky, raucous dives will delight therein. For a more cultivated cocktail I recommend General Horseplay which, I was informed by the barman, is owned by the patron saint of maverick imbibers, Bill Murray.

After a weekend of daiquiris and jet-skiing, I aim the Lexus north and set Miami as the target. The low-lit ambiance of the Setai awaits, while Key West disappears in the mirrors to the echo of eight cylinders. The LC500 is a Japanese fusion concept that's perfectly suited to an American road trip with its comfy ride and roaring engine. And, like the yacht, there's a sense of occasion that's unusual for this brand. Akio Toyoda has succeeded: there's nothing boring about either of these Lexi.

● The Lexus LC500 starts at £78,150. For more information on the LY650 yacht, visit [lexus.com/future/LY-650](http://lexus.com/future/LY-650)

● Rooms at the Setai, on Miami Beach, start at £500 per night. [www.thesetaihotel.com](http://www.thesetaihotel.com)

● Casa Marina Key West rates start at £160; [casamarinaresort.com](http://casamarinaresort.com) ■



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# TRAVEL

## SKI GEAR

Our pick of the season's essential outdoor clothing and gadgets – P66

## INDIA

Explore the ancient trading routes crossing the remote Himalayas – P68

## MOROCCO

The four hammams that define Marrakech's spa scene – P74



### **VICTORINOX CONNEX HARDSIDE COLLECTION** FROM £270, [VICTORINOX.COM](http://VICTORINOX.COM)

The latest luggage from Swiss masters Victorinox certainly won't go unnoticed on the baggage carousel. Three bold new colours – olive, brick and mustard – have been rolled out in a number of the company's formats, including these ultra-durable "hardside" cases.

The colour scheme is inspired by the "beauty of leaves in the Fall," so if you're planning a trip to rolling hills of New England, famed for their autumnal majesty, this is the luggage to pick up beforehand.

The cases come with an integrated multi-tool inspired by the Swiss Army Knife, which includes a SIM card replacement tool, ID tag and pen. They also expand by

4cm to squeeze in as much of your vital kit as possible before you embark on your latest adventure.

As well as the cases, the new colours will also be available across Victorinox's range of sleek backpacks, shoulder bags and carry-on totes, meaning you can coordinate your look throughout your holiday, from airport lounge to mountainside to evening meal in a fancy restaurant.



### ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE

You can swaddle yourself in as many high-tech, self-heating boots and fog-proof goggles as you like, but what matters most is the bit that's touching the powder. Our pick of the best skis of the season includes the **Line Skis Sakana** (pictured top, £749) with its distinctive

swallowtail design. We're also drawn to the latest **Movement Go** (pictured mid, £559), a quality all-terrain ski for advanced skiers looking for maximum stability. And for the progressive skier in search of the perfect daily driver, there's the newest addition to the **Enforcer Free** collection (pictured bottom, £620).



### GOPRO MAX £479, GOPRO.COM

With a lens on either side for 360-degree filming, a rubberised body, improved HyperSmooth processing and a widescreen viewfinder, the GoPro Max is the Aussie firm's most versatile action camera yet.



### HESTRA ALPINE PRO GLOVES €140, HESTRAGLOVES.COM

These short freeride gloves by the family-run Swedish company Hestra are made of supple cowhide aniline leather, and feature outseams for increased comfort and superior pole grip, as well as five-finger lining.



**SUUNTO 9 BARO GPS WATCH**  
£539, [SUUNTO.COM](https://www.suunto.com)

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**SMITH CODE HELMET**  
£200, [SMITHOPTICS.COM](https://www.smithoptics.com)

Skate style helmets are increasingly popular, but the new Code from Smith doesn't compromise on function. Its super-light Aerocore construction and low-profile shell design is shaped for ideal goggle-integration.



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**K2 RECON 120 MV HEATED SKI BOOT**  
\$649, [EVO.COM](https://www.evo.com)

This heated ski boot not only looks the part, but guarantees you'll make it back to the chalet with all of your toes still attached. Recharge it before you head out, and it will provide up to 19 hours of toasty feet.

Diskit Monastery is the oldest and largest Buddhist monastery in the Nubra Valley of Ladakh in northern India



# INDIA'S SILK ROAD

Deep into the Himalayas, the centuries-old trading route is still within living memory. **SOPHIE IBBOTSON** follows the paths of missionaries and merchants across the mountains of Ladakh.



**S**tanding on top of Khardung La, I was higher than I'd ever been without flying. An enterprising clutch of soldiers had set up the world's highest tea shop, and as a brisk wind blew across the Himalayan peaks, I was grateful for the steaming cup of chai in my hand. A group of bikers were looking decidedly green around the gills having ascended the pass too quickly – given we were at more than 17,500 feet and the air was thin, that shouldn't come as a surprise.

We were all marooned here together, Bollywood pop blaring from a speaker among the streaming rainbow of prayer flags, waiting for the next explosion. It came as an almighty bang, then a thunderous rumble as rocks poured in an avalanche down the mountainside. Ladakh is seismically active, and the Indian Army deliberately dynamites loose cliffs, then bulldozes the

resulting rock falls, in order to keep the road open.

Ladakh might feel so remote as to be another world, valleys cut off completely for much of the year, but it's a place of great strategic importance. Both India and Pakistan claim the Siachen Glacier, which also spreads towards the Chinese border. Ladakh was always the crossroads through the Himalayas, a vital route for trade and the spread of ideas as well as a gateway for rulers with conquest on their mind.

My interest on this journey was not contemporary geopolitics, but the vestiges of the ancient Silk Road. I'd assumed evidence of the intercontinental trading caravans would be long gone, but as the railways never penetrated this far into the Himalayas, and the borders only solidified in 1948, for some people it's still within living memory. The caravanserai still stands in Kargil, and the nearby Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum explores the history of trade with ►



► Central Asia and British India. In the galleries are textiles, armour and weaponry, coins, and – in a poignant reminder of how recently the trade continued – even prized household objects such as early 20th century toiletries made by Colgate and Pear’s. Leh, formerly the royal capital of Ladakh, also boasts a Central Asia Museum in the Old Town, though the primary focus here is to explore cultural and economic ties with Buddhist Tibet rather than the Muslim ‘Stans.

The trading wealth of Ladakh was not spent on grand mansions; palaces survive in Leh and Shey, but they were functional, heavily fortified structures rather than opulent pleasure palaces. Their mudbrick architecture has weathered well in Ladakh’s high altitude desert climate, though the modern pressures of urbanisation are inevitably taking their toll, especially in Leh’s Old Town.

Instead, Ladakh’s treasures – spiritual and physical – are preserved in the Buddhist gompas which punctuate the arid mountain landscape and dominate the skyline above even modest villages. In design, they are

very much like the monasteries of Tibet and Bhutan, another reminder of the region’s historic cultural links.

Buddhism took root in Ladakh more than 2,300 years ago when India’s Emperor Asoka sent his missionary here. The earliest Buddhist carvings are in a cave at Sani, and



in roadside petroglyphs and relief carvings at Khalatse, Mulbek, and Khartse Khar.

The Buddhist chanting of Ladakh – which you can still hear early in the morning in many of the monasteries – is recognised by UNESCO as part of the world’s Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the red robed monks are omnipresent against the grey-brown mountain backdrop. When the Dalai Lama comes to preach, the crowds are of biblical proportions, and many Tibetan exiles have made their new homes in Ladakh’s villages and towns.

Foreign tourists have only been allowed to enter Ladakh since 1974, and in the 45 years since, tourism development has been erratic. This is in part due to the region’s inaccessibility but also because the state of Jammu and Kashmir in which it lies has always had an uneasy relationship with Delhi, and thus received little state investment. Private investors are slowly coming in, recognising Ladakh’s potential, and every season the roads seem a little better, new hotels open their doors, and more tourists – domestic and foreign – come to spend their rupees.



Clockwise from main: Lamayuru temple; Chamba Camp; a Yellow Hat monk in the monastery at Thiksey; and a village in Ladakh. Inset below: Tibetan prayer flags outside Leh Palace

One of the biggest signs of development is that for the first time there are luxury places to stay. Guesthouses are well represented, and Leh has some reasonable mid range hotels, but these understandably never quite ticked the boxes for visitors who wanted to enjoy the wild landscapes and rich culture of Ladakh, but to do so with a certain level of comfort.

This summer, the ultraluxe Chamba Camp has pitched its tents in both Thiksey and Diskit, beside two of the most important monasteries in Ladakh. Inspired by the best safari camps in Africa – or perhaps the travelling camps of an Indian maharaja – both camps sit by the river, their respective monasteries and mountain peaks rising up behind.

In Thiksey, I rose before dawn to join the Yellow Hat monks in their 7am prayers. The temple is pretty dark, but in the flickering light of the butter candles you can just about make out the monks' intense looks of concentrations. The dancing shadows on the mural covered walls reminded me of a shadow puppet show, and the periodic chiming of bells mixed with the monotone

chanting made the hairs on my neck stand on end. Nothing about this experience has been laid on for tourists; the monks are simply repeating the same ritual that they and their many generations of predecessors have done day in, day out for 600 years.

I ate breakfast at Chamba Camp and then returned to the monastery to appreciate it in the full light of day. Monks were circumambulating the sacred chortens (small stupas containing relics) and prayer wheels, spinning the latter as they walked. I climbed a staircase to come

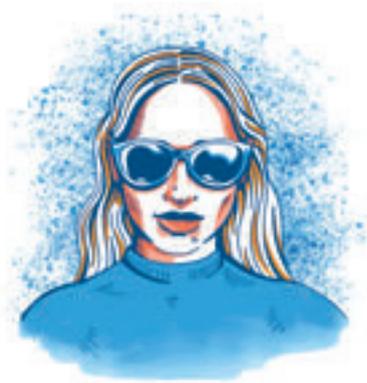


Even today, there's no way to travel fast, and so any journey in Ladakh takes on the spiritual aura of a pilgrimage

face to face with the 49 foot high statue of the Maitreya Buddha, the stare on his golden face looking straight through me. It's unusual to find a Buddha statue in Ladakh seated like this one in the lotus position; more often the Buddha is presented regally on a throne.

Mother Nature has always dictated the paths along which one might travel in Ladakh; I followed the contours of the rivers and the passes between cloud-kissed peaks. There is no sense that mankind has ever tamed this place, but still we have left our marks. The rock cut Buddhas and the lines of chortens showed the way to Silk Road travellers past, and to those of us who have followed on to see firsthand where and how their faiths, art, trade goods, and DNA spread. Even today, there's no way to travel fast, and so any journey in Ladakh takes on the spiritual aura of a pilgrimage: it's one you should embark upon yourself, should you get the chance.

● Journeysmiths ([journeysmiths.co.uk](http://journeysmiths.co.uk); 01604 637 332) offers a seven night stay at Chamba Camp, including international and domestic flights, from £5,879 per person. ■



## FREQUENT FLYER

SCARLET WINTERBERG

# THE HIGH LIFE

A new generation of luxury services are making life in the skies increasingly opulent for VIPs and the one per cent

**W**hen it comes to flying, there is “how the other half live” and there is “how the one per cent live”. I always consider the measure of success to be how few people you have to come into contact with between your home and your destination. As a VIP, not only will you be chauffeured to the airport but you’ll avoid security queues, crowded business class lounges and waiting at the gate. For celebrities, minimising the chance of anyone asking for a “selfie” is essential.

In the case of Air France, first class passengers at Paris CDG hand over their luggage to a porter and are personally escorted to a private lounge for check in. After a Biologique Recherche facial they will be taken to a secret door and driven to the plane, which they will access via a dedicated lift that delivers them to the entrance of the La Premiere cabin, meaning they don’t have to see any “normals” at all. Even once seated, they can draw a curtain so no one but the crew can catch a glimpse of them. What heaven.

Over in Los Angeles, spiritual home of the A-Lister, LAX has perfected the discreet art of moving Desirables behind the scenes with enviable ease, speed and polish. The master of ceremonies is a company called the Private Suite, which has built a standalone terminal at the airport that promises customers will take no more than 70 steps from car seat to plane seat, compared with the average passenger, who takes 2,200 (the equivalent of about a mile).

TSA screening is done on-site with minimal groping, there are private suites with a living room, bathroom (complete with shower), double day-

bed, pantry and runway views, and when it’s time for take-off, customers are whizzed to the aircraft in a BMW 7 Series sedan. In total, there are eight members of staff assigned to each VIP, with an “unseen” one dealing with bags and another waiting at the plane door to show them to their seat.

It’s also possible to experience this seamless process on arrival, with a customs and immigration agent waiting just for you (don’t expect to get away without the same grilling as everyone else, though). Avoiding the paparazzi comes at a price, of course – using the Private Suite comes with a \$4,500 a year membership fee and \$3,000 one-way price tag for an international flight. Pocket change, really.

Heathrow also has an ultra-exclusive VIP service manned by sleek operatives who can pick you up from home or work and stay with you until you are safely on the plane. It may sound OTT but for heads of state and diplomats, for example, it’s just the way things need to be done. Other thoughtful touches include a personal shopping service for emergency bottles of Chanel or corporate gifts for clients.

With other airports charging thousands for this kind of special treatment, Manchester airport is only asking for £50 to £100 for passengers to use its new check-in-free PremiAir terminal that opened in September. It seems like excellent value given they also get a luxury transfer to the plane and the option of free food, fine wines and champagne. Groups can even get their own room instead of being in the lounge, although this comes at an extra cost. The problem, however, is if the 99 per cent can travel like a star, then what does it mean for Beyonce?

● *Scarlet Winterberg is a seasoned business traveller. There is nothing she likes more than sipping champagne while staring through an aeroplane window.*



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The pink marble relaxation room at La Sultana spa

# FULL STEAM AHEAD

Four very different spas define the breadth of Marrakech's hammam scene. **LISA KJELLSSON** puts them through their paces.

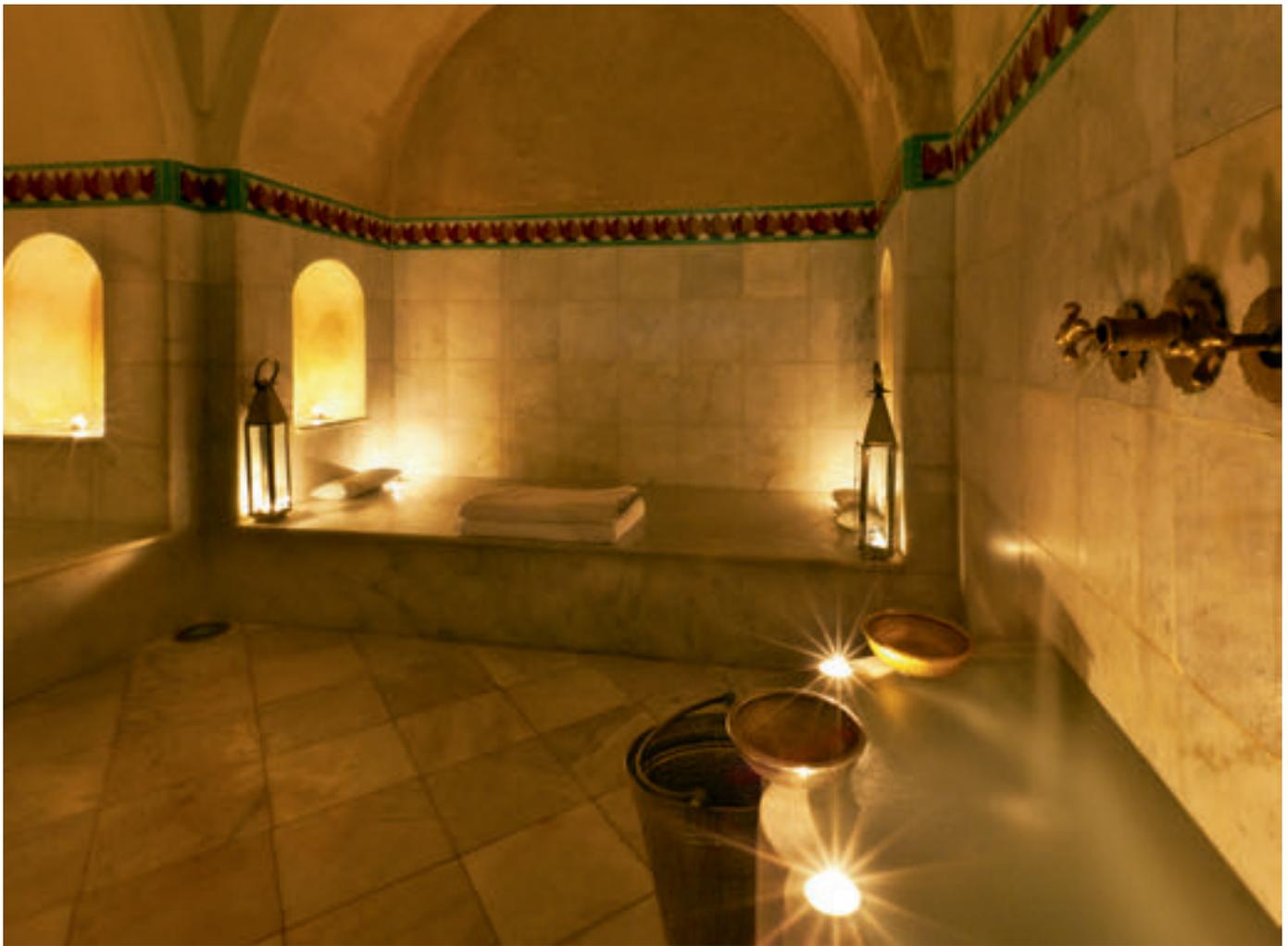
**I**n Morocco a weekly hammam bath is a must, an integral part of life that is about so much more than simply having a wash. It's a way to decompress and purify the body before going to the mosque for the Friday prayer, and a form of mindfulness in itself. In the countryside and remote mountain villages most homes have their own little wood-fired steam room, but in cities like Marrakech people tend to visit a public hammam. The traditional cleanse has also been turned into an art form in Moroccan spas offering the same ritual involving *savon beldi*, a gooey soap made with crushed olives and olive oil infused with eucalyptus; a thorough scrub with a *kessa*, the traditional wash mitt; and *rhassoul*, a body mask of mineral-rich mud from the Atlas Mountains. I had the full works in four very different Marrakech spas and was steamed, scrubbed, oiled and kneaded from top to toe.

## LA SULTANA

La Sultana is an oasis in the heart of the Medina, and one of the most gorgeous hotels I've stayed in, but the Royal Hammam (45 mins, £34) wasn't the pampering experience I'd expected. There is no steam, as "international guests aren't used to it" and when left to relax in the small and brightly lit pink marble room I just got bored. Despite my pleas the scrub was rather rough, and having too hot then freezing cold water chucked all over me while lying down was a bit of a shock to the system. It also meant I got soap in my eyes, which stung horribly. Thankfully the rest of my spa treatments were much better. La Sultana's signature massage with neroli-infused argan oil (50 mins, £59) is a classic spa massage that finally helped me relax, and the body wrap with argan cream (20 mins, £34), rich in vitamin A and E making it the perfect quick fix for dry or sunburnt skin, left me silky smooth. Rooms from £303; [lasultanahotels.com](http://lasultanahotels.com) ►







Above: The hammam at Riad Farnatchi, where the menu includes a seven-plant rhassoul clay mask, rinsed off with rosewater

### RIAD FARNATCHI

Every once in a while a treatment really blows my mind, and that's what happened at Riad Farnatchi's chic little spa. Holistic massage expert Ahmed Bihssi combines Moroccan, Ayurvedic and reiki techniques in a ritual involving warm neroli oil, known for its relaxing effect. Using heated herb poultices – with lavender, cloves, rose and rosemary, and sea salt to draw out negative energy – he applied tapping motions on pressure points to soften knotted muscles. Ahmed works intuitively to treat each client according to their individual needs, and in my case that involved attempting to unblock my solar plexus – ie releasing tension in my stomach – to rebalance my energy flow. I could tell from the sense of peace I felt afterwards that some deep healing had taken place (90 mins, £60).

Equally, Farnatchi Spa is the perfect hole-in-the-wall sanctuary to pop into for a reviving cleanse after sightseeing in the Medina. The Royal Hammam (60 mins, £46) is a steamy affair that includes a seven-plant rhassoul mask rinsed off with rosewater. Rooms from £250; [riadfarnatchi.com](http://riadfarnatchi.com)

### TIGMI

Set in the Berber village of Tagadert, 25 kilometres outside central Marrakech, Tigmi is a charmingly rustic retreat enveloped in a



To a hammam novice the exfoliating scrub can feel a little rough, but it's gratifying to see the dead skin come off in the process

stillness you simply won't find in the city. The spa is the highlight – an intimate space where you can leave your worries at the door and surrender to the care of your bath attendant. Inside the cave-like hammam the air is hot and humid and I felt my body relax as it was coated in luscious savon beldi. A few minutes in a separate steam room allows the soap to seep into the pores before it is scrubbed off with an exfoliating wash mitt. To a hammam novice this can feel a little rough, but it is gratifying to see the dead skin come off in the process. Next a lavender-infused rhassoul mask was brushed all over my body, and a clay and silk powder mask infused with seaweed, rosemary and sage applied to my hair. I was left to relax for 15 minutes in the candle-lit hammam while the mud worked its magic. After a thorough

rinse, the Mineral Body Care ritual (40 mins, £42) ended with an invigorating dip in the plunge pool followed by a mini massage with neroli oil. I not so much walked as floated out of the spa. The following day I returned for an energising massage (45 mins, £34) and traditional Berber facial with hydrating peach extract (40 mins, £29), and by the end of my stay I felt reborn. Rooms from £158; [tigmi.com](http://tigmi.com)

### AMANJENA

Wellness is front and centre at all Aman resorts, not least its Moroccan outpost located in leafy Palmeraie, a 15-minute drive south-east of the Medina. The spa is a bit of a cultural melting pot but has several locally inspired treatments, and its signature Moroccan Bloom ritual (120 minutes, £211) is hammam heaven. The format is the traditional savon beldi application followed by a deep exfoliation and rhassoul mask to nourish and hydrate the skin, but also includes a white clay facial. It's all rinsed off with eucalyptus water before ending with an hour-long massage – either relaxing holistic or deep tissue. I also had a wonderfully decadent hair treatment and head massage (45 mins, £118) with heated argan oil infused with rosemary and geranium – super soothing and therapeutic for both the hair and scalp. Rooms from £446; [aman.com](http://aman.com) ■



Clockwise from top: Ahmed Bihssi at Riad Farnatchi's spa is renowned for his holistic massage treatment; Massage therapy at Amanjena; Savon beldi, a soap made from crushed olives and eucalyptus; The hammam at Tigmi





# EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE DUMI OBUROTA

Co-founder of entertainment brand Disturbing London **DUMI OBUROTA** tells us how he survives travelling for six months a year, and lists the belongings he never leaves behind. Photos: **TIM BODDY**







Disturbing London CEO Dumebi Oburota outside his new Hackney Wick studio

**B**eing the CEO of an entertainment business means I'm on the road at least six months of the year. Disturbing London consists of a record label, publishing company, live events, communications and brand strategies. Over the last 14 years I've worked with acts including Tinie Tempah, Jessie J, Wiz Kid and Yxng Bane, and in the capacity of manager I'll travel with the acts. I've been everywhere: Kenya, South Africa, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, all over America. Touring has definitely shaped the way I think about business. You can go five hours away, or even an hour away, and the landscape of music and art can be completely different. It means you pick up new things. It helps keep me ahead of the game.

It also makes you good at dealing with problems. I remember landing in Sao Paulo for the first time for a Tinie Tempah gig. He had this microphone that was covered in diamante crystals. It wasn't worth much, it was just a show mic that looked flashy under the lights. But when we looked in the mic case, it had gone. Someone had seen it and thought it was diamonds or something. So we went to the airport staff and said we weren't leaving until someone brought it back – we needed it for the show that night. And they brought it back! We've many villas broken into. Watches stolen.

One time we were driving from Detroit to Minneapolis and flying home the next morning. When I got there I realised I'd left

my passport in the hotel safe in Detroit. The hotel were refusing to go into the room because someone had checked in, so I had to beg them to go in and find it. Then I realised that I'd never make it there and back in time for my flight because it's a 20 hour round trip. So I went on Gumtree and found a driver who was willing to pick up the passport and drive through the night to drop it off. She arrived 15 minutes before I had to leave.

I'll pack a spare set of clothes in my hand luggage, or at least a toothbrush and a change of underwear. If you're always travelling, one time your bag is going to get lost, so you have to keep the essentials with you. I always travel with my Smythson notepad. It's really important to be able to write down ideas when they come to you. I just brain dump in there, get all my ideas down so I don't forget anything. There's an intimacy to it, it's just for you. It doesn't matter if you have shitty handwriting or anything. In fact, the worse your handwriting the less other people can read. It's encrypted.

Then I have my charge pack, which is vital. There's nothing worse than running out of battery and being totally disconnected, especially when you have a long day at the hotels or something. When you're looking after acts, you need to be contactable – running out of charge is such a schoolboy error. Same with an international adaptor – I never travel without one.

I always bring a bottle of my aftershave,

Le Labo Santal 33, which has been my go-to fragrance for the last three years. I discovered it when I walked into American music exec Jason Flom's office: I asked what the amazing smell was and I've used it ever since. I'm very much about smells so I always want to smell fresh. When you're coming off a long haul flight, you just give yourself two squirts and you'll be fresh for whoever is picking you up. Nobody likes body odour.

I've got a pair of Sennheiser x Marshall headphones that I've used for years. They're super comfortable and they're Bluetooth but you can still plug them in if you run out of charge. I couldn't travel without them, an absolute must when you're on the road. I listen to lots of demos that have been sent to me while I'm in the air. I try to listen to new stuff, but the majority of the time I forget to download anything and end up listening to the same handful of albums over and over again. Tinie's album is always on there. Or Ed Sheeran's The A Team. Stuff from before the streaming days.

Next I have my Macbook so I can do a bit of work. My laptop is more reliable for music because it's all downloaded. It's really nice listening to old records I've worked on while I'm on a plane, thinking 'this is really good' or 'this is really shit!'

I fit all this stuff into my Saint Laurent carry-on bag that I picked up in Philadelphia. It looks a bit like a ladies Celine bag but it was in the men's section. My wife cussed me about it for so long but I love it. ■



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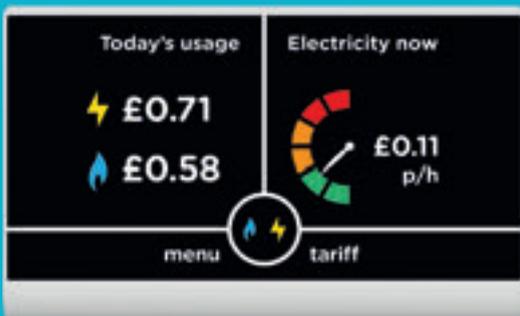


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# LIVING

## HOME SICKNESS

Why some people think the places we live are making us ill – P86

## OFFICE SPACE

Clivedale's Mayfair base is the antidote to all things co-working – P90

## TOWNHOUSE 2.0

How this timeless classic is being reinvented for a new generation – P94



### THE JOY OF PLANTS SUITE LEMAN LOCKE HOTEL, ALDGATE

We all know that houseplants are good to have around. But would you know which flowering species might be able to help you sleep, or which perennial beats the rest when it comes to removing toxins from the air? Book into the Leman Locke hotel in Aldgate between now and 10 November, and you might just find out. Dutch organisation

The Joy of Plants has commissioned three plant experts to design foliage-filled rooms, each with a mood-boosting mission.

'Biophilic designer' Oliver Heath's room is populated with plants that are supposed to boost productivity, while Nik Southern, founder of florist Grace & Thorn, has set up a romantic room including a cascading botanical canopy above the bed. The final room is an oasis of calm created by This

Morning plant expert Michael Perry, featuring a 'clean sleep zone' with air-purifying plants to help guests get a good night's kip.

"It's been proven that spending time in nature reduces stress and improves your wellbeing," says The Joy of Plants' Chanel de Kock. So if you're feeling a bit under the weather, a night in this urban jungle might be just the ticket.

📍 [Go to lockeliving.com](http://lockeliving.com) for more information



**B&O BEOVISION ECLIPSE**  
£7,495, [BANG-OLUFSEN.COM](http://BANG-OLUFSEN.COM)

When it comes to innovative design in home electronics, Bang & Olufsen has been leading the way for decades. This BeoVision Eclipse is a case in point, as easy on the eye as it is devastating in its visual fidelity. It

features an integrated 450W, six-driver soundbar for teeth-jangling bass, and has a motorised stand that you can use to tilt the screen to suit your viewing angle. The screen is essentially an LG OLED, meaning you could pick up similar image quality for far cheaper. But just look at that design...



**WHISKY & WATER REED DIFFUSER**  
£49, [NOBLEISLE.COM](http://NOBLEISLE.COM)

Make your house smell of whisky – in a good way. This reed diffuser from Noble Isle slowly releases a warm and spicy aroma that will give your living room a subtle but distinctive flavour.



**FERM LIVING WALL ART**  
£239, [NORDICNEST.COM](http://NORDICNEST.COM)

If you want to add warmth, colour and a touch of noise dampening to your home, you might be in the market for a hanging tapestry. This creation from Ferm Living will create a stylish talking point.



**KETTNAKER COFFEE TABLE**  
 £90A, [KETTNAKER.COM](http://KETTNAKER.COM)

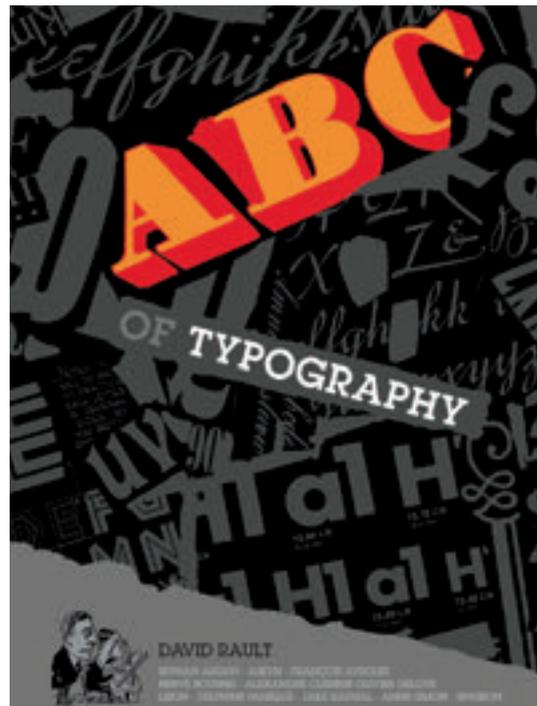
German product designer Kettner manufactures its impeccable furniture in its factory in Dürmentingen, in the Swabian Oberland. Its highfalutin marketing spiel says the brand's products combine "system and

poetry", and when you see them in the metal and glass, you can kind of see its point. These low-slung minimalist 'slouch tables' are tiny little statement pieces, furniture as sculpture, and will make a welcome addition to any home, whether it's an Edwardian Townhouse or a fancy new build.



**WEB DESIGN**  
 £40, [TASCHEN.COM](http://TASCHEN.COM)

You have the coffee table, now you need the coffee table books. This upcoming title from Taschen takes you on a wild ride through the barmy history of internet design, all the way back to the heady days of GeoCities.



**ABC OF TYPOGRAPHY**  
 £14.99, [SELFMADEHERO.COM](http://SELFMADEHERO.COM)

This hardback recounts the last 3,500 years of typography through a series of comic-style illustrations, taking in everything from classic calligraphy to Bauhaus and modern logo design.

**IS**

**YOUR**

**HOUSE**

**KILLING**

**YOU?**



A unit in No1 Millbrook Park, a project by developer Joseph Homes, which plans to eliminate volatile organic compounds in its flats within five years

People believe everything from their paint job to their affordable Scandinavian furniture could be poisoning them. Is this hypochondria's latest frontier, or do they have a point, asks **HELEN CRANE**

**T**hink back to the last time you redecorated a room. Did you paint a wall? Lay a new carpet? Buy a shelving unit with a Swedish-sounding name? According to some housebuilders, architects and designers, all of these things could be making you ill. They say that many common types of paint, carpets, flooring, kitchen and bathroom surfaces, and MDF furniture – essentially everything in our homes – contain chemicals that can be damaging to health. As a result there is a small but growing drive to detoxify new homes, and clean up existing ones. But are our homes really bad for us – or is this just hypochondria's latest frontier?

The substances in question are called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and are also found in cigarettes, solvents and cleaning products. The one you've probably heard of is formaldehyde, and others include benzene and bisphenol A. While they're not going to poison you on contact, some believe that long periods of exposure can cause respiratory problems and skin diseases, as well as other, potentially more serious illnesses. Top 50 architect Perkins and Will has created an open-source website called Transparency which contains a 'precautionary list' of materials that contain 'questionable' substances, in the hope that architects will start to question the materials they use. The number of substances on the list is currently 56, and the architect's clients will be informed if any of them are to be used in their projects.

"Our hope is that this will influence manufacturers

to reformulate products for reduced toxicity" reads the website. "By changing one product, together with our partners in the design and construction process, we believe that we are participating in an effort to change the world."

The website cites a US government study claiming substances in homes can "interfere with hormone regulation and physical development... lead to neurological problems, a weakened immune system, and more."

But if the danger is real, why aren't more people talking about it? Well, it's almost impossible to prove – and for this reason, little evidence is being collected to even try to prove it.

"Isolating the cause of illnesses is very difficult. Is it from their home or pollution out on the streets?" says Peter Newton, architectural director at Barton Willmore and associate lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, who has been researching the hidden chemicals in our homes for more than a decade.

The figures out there tend to be from healthy air campaign groups, and it's not always clear how they reached them. My Health, My Home says 15.3 million UK homes are at risk of 'toxic home syndrome' – when a combination of pollutants, allergens and chemicals mean respiratory and skin diseases "can occur more frequently." Another such group, Clean Air Day, estimates that 45 per cent of homes exceed "healthy" levels of VOCs.

Most housebuilders aren't paying much attention, but that hasn't stopped Joseph Homes, which is currently building around 200 homes around ▶



You know that fresh paint smell? It's actually really not good for you. Is there a serious danger to people's health? It's a debate we should be having.

► London. Its managing director, Michael Bryn-Jones, says the company plans to be "VOC-free" within five years.

"You know that fresh paint smell? It's actually really not good for you," he says. "We are looking at the materials we put into homes and the chemical components of them, and asking, are these things we would ordinarily want to be around?"

He says people who buy Joseph homes don't usually ask about it of their own accord, but they like the VOC-free approach when it's explained to them. Having fewer scary-sounding chemicals in your family home isn't a difficult sell – but is there really a serious danger to people's health? Bryn-Jones says it's at least "a debate we should be having".

Another early mover is Facit Homes, which fits all its homes with a filter where "stale" air is extracted to remove, among other things, "chemicals released from furniture and carpets" and replaces soft furnishings with cement, wood, ceramic tiles and synthetic blinds. "As concerns grow over air quality and pollution outside the home, particularly in cities, customers are increasingly keen to ensure the air they breathe inside their home is clean and safe," says director Rhys Denbigh.

The idea of stripping your home of unwanted chemical nasties seems like it should tie in neatly with the current vogue for 'wellness' and being eco-conscious. But in reality, the two don't sit well together.



Above: Soundproof hemp panels, which provide an alternative to traditional insulation; Below: A wall-hanging by Paulina Kwiatkowska that can improve the quality of air, especially important in well-sealed modern flats

The way to make a home 'green' is to make it extremely airtight, so there is as little leakage of energy as possible. But doing that also traps in pollutants, allergens and chemicals.

"If you've got VOCs in [an eco-friendly] home, they are likely to stay in there for longer," says Newton. "So you have to think about what you put in your house far more." He adds that in Germany, where lots of homes are built under the strictly-defined green standard, Passivhaus, "you don't really find people building furniture out of MDF."

Cleaning up the air inside our homes has also caught the imagination of the design industry.

For example, at this year's Global Grad Show in Dubai, which showcases the work of emerging designers across the world, Paulina Kwiatkowska of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw will present a series of sculptures that are displayed as pieces of art, but also cleanse and regulate the air and humidity in a room. "People are only now realising that the air inside our homes is dirtier and more toxic than out on the streets," says its curator Eleanor Watson of The Design Museum in London. "And designers are trying to come up with a solution for that that is also aesthetically pleasing." At the Grand Designs showcase in Birmingham earlier this month, designers AIVAN presented Chip[s] Board: a natural MDF alternative made from potato peel, bamboo, wood and hops which doesn't contain formaldehyde and is also biodegradable. Atticus Durnell presented

That's Caffeine; a glittering plastic substitute made out of recycled coffee which can be used on kitchen and bathroom surfaces to avoid using petrol-based resin, which also contains VOCs. There more widely available offerings, too – last year Dyson launched a "purifying fan heater" that claims to "remove gases including NO2 formaldehyde and benzene," yours for £549.

Cost is another barrier to cutting unwanted chemicals from the places we live. With VOC-free alternatives to paint and MDF often being more costly, 'healthier' homes might only be for those who can afford it. Ben Adams, founder of Ben Adams Architects, says that while his clients are increasingly interested in achieving "the kind of air cleanliness we see in hospitals," it is "usually a case of striking a balance between clean air and a sensible budget." But he adds that people can start by trying to avoid using plastics when decorating their homes, instead using timber, steel, aluminium or leather.

Even if these theories are right, people are going to need a lot more convincing before they believe they can get ill from the stuff that they've been putting in their houses for years.

"At the moment, you have to do the work as the consumer," says Newton. "If you're deciding between one type of flooring and another, cost is the biggest determinant – and it will remain that way until there is [more evidence] about the risks.

For now, it's unlikely many people will be giving that lick of paint a second thought. ■

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# OFFICE SPACE CLIVEDALE

The property developer's Mayfair base echoes the super-luxe homes it creates for its clients  
Words: **HELEN CRANE**; Pictures: **SOPHIE CHEVERST**





The entrance lobby at 73 Brook Street features a deconstructed glass chandelier

**R**eal estate firms' offices tend to fit into one of two moulds: a converted Mayfair townhouse, an old-fashioned relic left over from the days where Hanover Square was overrun with estate agents in braces and pinstripe suits; or a clinical, corporate space interchangeable with that of any other property company, law firm or accountant. Super-prime property developer Clivedale is neither, and it shows the moment you walk through the door. The entrance lobby at 73 Brook Street in Mayfair sits beneath a glistening sculpture, a kind of deconstructed chandelier where curved pieces of transparent and amber glass are suspended across the entire ceiling.

Opulent, striking and modern, it immediately tells you what Clivedale is about – and it should, because the company developed the office building itself.

The sculpture was created by design studio Haberdashery, and is supposed to look like water, alluding to Brook Street's previous life as – no prizes for this one – a river. Creating a “dramatic sense of arrival” was a priority for the building according to development director David Laycock. “The material is almost liquid-like, and it scatters light across the ceiling and floor like a moving river,” he says.

The company, which is less than a decade old, has already made a name for itself developing some of the most luxurious apartments in central London.

“We are an exclusively super-prime developer with an eye for detail and an innate understanding of the global ultra-high-net-worth investor,” says Fred Scarlett, Clivedale's sales and marketing director. He wanted the office to reflect how the company is “setting new precedents in craftsmanship and service.” Studio Indigo was the interior designer, but Clivedale was involved throughout. It shares the building with just one other small company, which only occupies it part time, so it had plenty of opportunity to put its stamp on the place.

Clivedale is developing high-end apartments at the Residences at Mandarin Oriental Mayfair, and when I visit its office, there's a table covered with weighty silver taps, slabs of glass and marble, super-soft carpet samples and fabric swatches it plans on using there.

This meticulous approach has clearly been replicated in the design of its own office. In a world of photo-fit WeWorks, it's refreshing to see an office that isn't even trying to be techy and trendy. If your standard co-working space looks like a child's playroom, this is the grown-ups' ►

► dining room where the best china is kept.

When Clivedale’s clients, who include some of the wealthiest families from both the UK and abroad, come to Brook Street, Laycock wants them to see “a world-class office building that reflects the quality we are delivering across our portfolio”.

The Mandarin Oriental apartments are going up on the site of one of Clivedale’s former offices in Hanover Square, which it vacated to move to Brook Street in late 2017. It also had a smaller back office on Bruton Street.

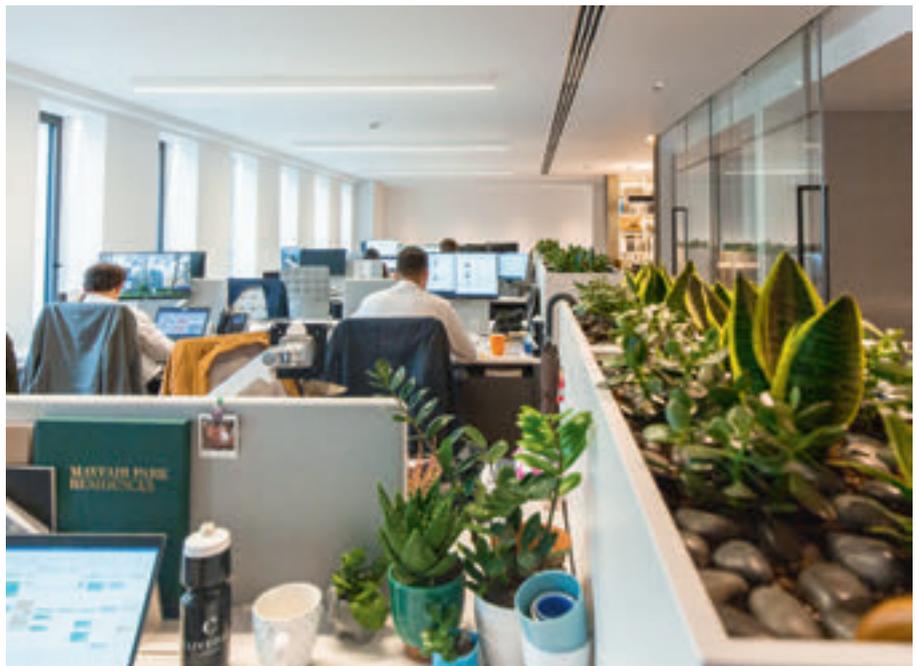
The Hanover Square space was more of a marketing suite than a workplace, and the larger floorplates at 73 Brook Street allowed it to separate these two functions on to different floors.

Another gripe with the old base was that, thanks to its location just behind Oxford Street, its “goldfish bowl” full-length windows and the fact that it was filled with pretty-looking models of houses, passing tourists would often let themselves in for a look around. Not ideal when you’re sitting down with a sensitive high-net-worth client.

Its new marketing suite, which takes up a whole floor of 73 Brook Street, is an intimate space designed for potential buyers to chat with the team one-on-one: think dark wood panelling, veined marble floors and plush soft furnishings in shades of slate and dusty blue. It also doubles up as an entertaining space, and Clivedale has held many a cocktail reception there. Laycock says he wanted the space to “mimic the look and feel of a five-star hotel,” and it doesn’t disappoint.

The centrepiece is a metal model of London with the location all of Clivedale’s developments marked out. Its stone and chrome plinth doubles up as a dinner table when the model is removed. It’s just one example of how it’s created a space which is, as Laycock describes it, “rich in design but completely functional.”

Laycock’s office is on the showroom floor, and, with its sumptuous grey carpet, marble coffee table and wood-panelled shelves lined with all manner of expensive-looking curios, it looks like a cross between an office from *Mad Men* and a swanky Mayfair members’ club. Accessed via an equally extravagant lift, which has a ripple-effect wall feature achieved by layering iridescent fabric



**Above:** One of the private offices in Clivedale’s headquarters; the main shared working space complete with planters; **Below:** A model of a Clivedale development; **Right:** The lift, which has a ripple-effect feature wall



behind glass, the fourth floor is where the behind-the-scenes work happens, or as Clivedale staff refer to it, where the “messy men” sit (there are women, too, though presumably they’re more tidy). Each bank of desks has a planter filled with succulents at the end, and a gardener comes by to water them every so often.

There’s also a sample-laden table, and desks littered with pieces of fabric and materials. A well-stocked bookshelf contains the usual hard-backed property brochures as well as books about cricket, Victorian Bloomsbury and the history of Vauxhall Gardens.

The five-star ethos of 73 Brook Street continues down in the basement, where employees can enjoy the perfect post-gym set-up: spacious, stone-tiled shower rooms with huge back-lit mirrors, shelves filled with piles of fresh, fluffy towels and an espresso machine for the first coffee of the day. And there’s no stashing grotty gym gear

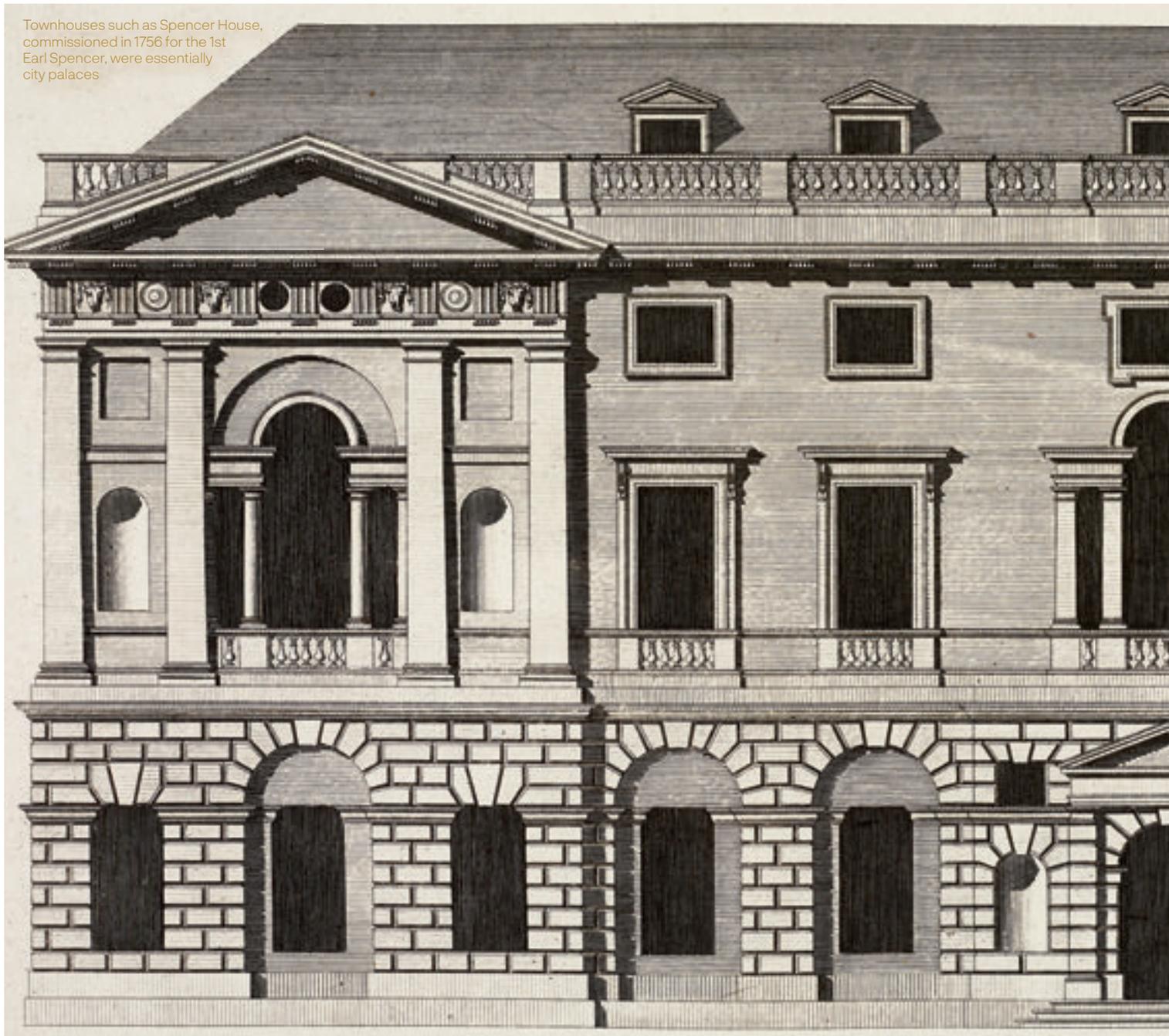
under desks, either: tucked away next to the showers is the staff washing machine, stocked with all manner of detergents.

Clivedale is now in the process of developing another, adjoining office next door, which will make the building 73-77 Brook Street and where it will invite other companies to come and bask in its luxurious glow. It’s bringing its facilities up to the next level of luxury, too, with plans including a humidior, gun storage and a dumb waiter, with stops on each floor. And it might not stop there. Scarlett says he wants to make “Clivedale quality products” on a larger scale, delivering “the highest standards of architectural and interior design” to more potential clients. He thinks this is crucial if companies want to keep their staff around.

It just goes to show you don’t always need a slide or a beer tap to keep the people who work for you happy. Sometimes, a really nice office with a washing machine will do. ■

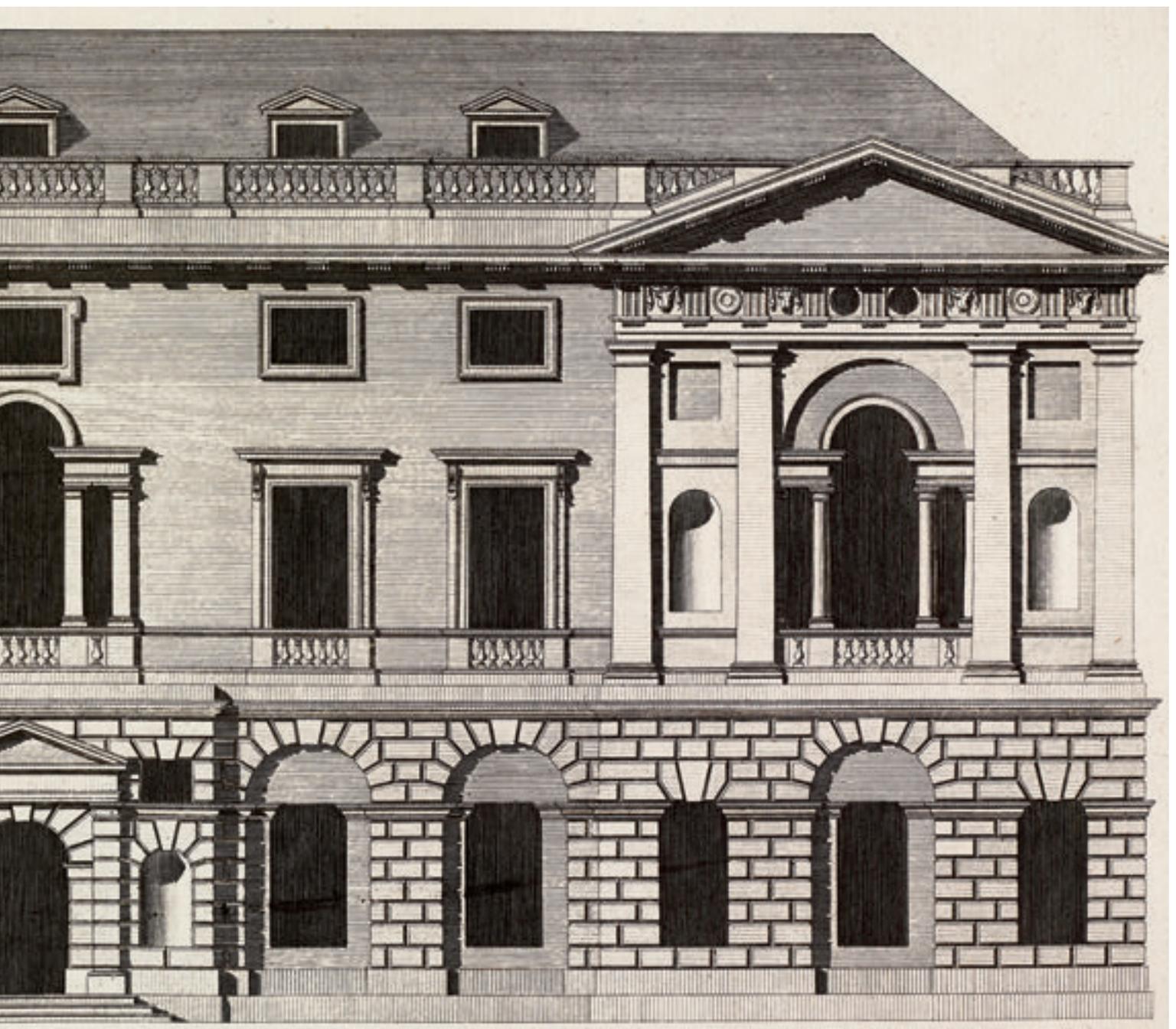


Townhouses such as Spencer House, commissioned in 1756 for the 1st Earl Spencer, were essentially city palaces



# THE NEO TOWNHOUSE

It's been an architectural staple of London streets for hundreds of years and its popularity has never waned. **ELEANOR DOUGHTY** explores how the classic London townhouse has adapted to generation after generation - and asks where it might go next.



**L**ondon is an architectural patchwork of cottages and terraces, mansion flats, mews and tower blocks. And then there's the townhouse. Definitions vary for this apparently all-encompassing name – for what is a townhouse? Is it no more than a house in town? If so, what is a “town”? Or is it a particular kind of house? Can it be terraced, or is it a standalone property?

And now London has a few more townhouses. Earlier this year, the long-awaited Chelsea Barracks site launched 13 townhouses as part of the £3.5bn new neighbourhood. With roof terraces, orangeries, underground parking and staff accommodation, prices for the properties, which range from 8,000 to 15,000 sq ft, start from £37m. Few such as these, with their own front door and garden, are built today.

Historically, a townhouse did what it said on the tin – provided a house in “town” for a wealthy family who also had property in the country. For the grandest families, these houses were palaces such as Spencer House, commissioned in 1756 for the 1st Earl Spencer

(and still extant at 27 St James's Place), and Devonshire House on Piccadilly, built in 1740 for the 3rd Duke of Devonshire. Most, though, were built as terraced houses, sometimes around a garden square, with three or four storeys. Being relatively tall and thin in appearance, their rooms stacked logically on top of one another. They had basement kitchens, with high-ceiled reception rooms on the floor above, accessed via a set of stairs from the street, an iron railing separating the public and private. Upstairs were the main bedrooms, and the servants' quarters above those. These terraces were, and are, workable, liveable, homely – efficient, even.

For some buyers, this kind of property – the townhouse in its pure form – is a marker of success. “I had a client who worked in commodities and he knew exactly what he wanted – a townhouse in Mayfair,” says buying agent Thea Carroll. “He was about to do the deal of his life, he was coming into a lot of money and wanted to mark that with a townhouse.” Not all high net-worth individuals have the same aspirations, of course, and townhouses don't work for everyone. ▶



The archetypal townhouse is not hugely practical. The wealth that has come to London in recent years puts convenience above all else, and that means lateral living

► “The archetypal townhouse, as found on streets such as Wilton Place or Wilton Crescent,” says Carroll, “is not hugely practical. A lot of them need lifts to be installed for the kind of buyers we see. The wealth that has come to London in recent years puts convenience above all else, and convenience has become synonymous with lateral living.” A four- or five-storey townhouse, then, is not so fashionable.

There are still plenty of townhouse devotees, however. Mark Parkinson, a founding partner of property search firm Middleton Advisors, sees a growing number of people who actively want to live in townhouses in regional towns “rather than move out to the middle of nowhere”. He defines the townhouse as “a house in a town, which could be semi-detached, or terraced.

A townhouse can be any style of house in a town that is not a cottage.” Brendan Roberts, director at London estate agency Aylesford International, agrees that the townhouse needn’t be too grand. “When I think of a townhouse I think of something fairly modest. A townhouse suggests an efficient way of living in town without a particularly excess amount of space.” For Roberts, the London streets that immediately spring to mind include those to the west of Sloane Square, such as Bywater Street, “where there are terraced cottages over two or three floors with up to four bedrooms.” These properties still command significant prices, “starting in excess of £3m, but for a townhouse just off the King’s Road that is what you would expect,” says Roberts. Such properties exist further out of “town” too – on the charming streets off Northcote Road in Clapham. “Those houses perfectly qualify as townhouses – they’re just not as central as others,” Roberts adds.

It isn’t just in London that the townhouse is still well utilised. John Stuart, the 21st Earl of Moray, whose ancestors built part of New Town in Edinburgh, is one of a handful of significant townowners building towns. For the last decade he has been planning Tornagrain, a new town outside Inverness, that will,





Opposite: The new Chelsea Barracks development, the archetypal “neo” townhouse; Above: Wilton Crescent in Knightsbridge

when it is complete in 50 years, be home to 12,000 people. Townhouses are a key part of the plan for Tornagrain. “With a large development like ours, as you move into the centre of the town the townhouse becomes more prevalent in the environment,” says Lord Moray. “We haven’t delivered many yet but they will be one of the dominant house types.” Down in Hampshire, Mark Thistlethwayte, former Cazenove banker and heir to the Southwick estate, which has been in his family since 1539, is building Welborne, a 6,000-house garden village between Southampton and Portsmouth. John Beresford, Thistlethwayte’s managing director, champions the townhouse.

“They will be used in areas where we are trying to achieve a denser form to the development, and also where they will be fronting landscaped spaces. We have a big central park – if we put two-storey homes around there, it might feel weak, so we’re going to need three- or four-storey properties there.”

The townhouse isn’t always the easiest sell, says Beresford. Put a three- or four-storey terrace next to a traditional two-storey house with a garage and a drive, and “people will always opt for the traditional house,” he says. “Since the credit crunch, developers have

generally avoided townhouses for that reason – it’s not economic. The downside is that you end up with monotonous developments. You see the big-volume house builder schemes, and all of the properties are on the same level.”

That is where Beresford hopes that Welborne can make a difference. “We might not get the best pound per square foot for a townhouse but it can add value to a wider area – you can frame key spaces in a development using townhouses.” It is a handy tool to have in the architectural box. “It’s like a Sunday roast,” says Beresford. “You want the right proportion of meat and veg. If you had a whole plate of townhouses it wouldn’t be as appetising.”

In Oscar Wilde’s 1895 play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, conversation revolves around the perceptions of town and country. “When one is in town one amuses oneself,” says upper-class Jack Worthing, who lives in the country. Later, the mother of his would-be lover Gwendolen Fairfax, upon hearing that Worthing has a country house “with some land, of course,” says, “You have a townhouse, I hope? A girl like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.” So might be the case for the rest of us. ■



## THE BACK PAGE

STEVE HOGARTY

# OVER THE CLOUDS, UNDER THE WEATHER

The dreaded airport flu is an unavoidable risk of travel.  
Here's what airports are doing to combat it.

**M**y nose is running. My legs are shaking. I am simultaneously too hot and too cold. My skin is itching like it's made of old brillo pads, and something deep inside of me is shivering uncontrollably. I am clammy, and sticky, like a carp that's beached itself in the sun. The new Casper mattress is ruined, having absorbed more pints of sweat than the warranty permits. I can do nothing except stare at the ceiling and wish for death's sweet kiss to save me from this living hell.

I have a mild cold. This is partly my own fault, as a lost decade of eating curry chips and playing World of Warcraft in the dark has compromised my immune system, which is now less Seal Team Six and more local Community Support Officer. Rather than attacking an incoming virus, my antibodies are more likely to give it directions to my respiratory tract on the promise that it will behave itself when it gets there.

But also to blame is my recent trip through the most bacteria infested place this side of a festival portaloo. Airports are notorious breeding grounds for pestilence. Self-service check-in screens are smeared in a greasy layer of human biology. A 2018 study by the University of Nottingham found that airport security trays carry more germs than airport toilet seats (presumably because the trays are cleaned so infrequently, rather than anything to do with hurried passengers relieving themselves in them). You might as well cut out the middle-man, tap your fellow passenger on the shoulder and politely ask them to pop their fingers into your mouth.

And even if you do manage to navigate this assault course of disease without succumbing to every strain of influenza known to science, your reward is ten hours in a hermetically sealed tube sat next to a rancid

crowd of spluttering germ-bags – and that's just your own family. It's frankly a miracle anyone can travel without falling ill. Planes should just land at nearby hospitals and let us disembark straight into ICU.

But this is beginning to change. The volume of passengers passing through a terminal makes it impractical to install hand sanitising stations, but electronic passport gates and boarding card readers reduce the number of strangers who need to fondle your papers. In the sky, Boeing's new Dreamliner 787 planes use the same grade of air filtration used in hospital operating theatres, so you could in theory have your appendix removed on the red eye to London. And back in May, one US company launched the first antimicrobial security tray, which it hopes to roll out across airports in North America by the end of the year. Who knows, by 2021, you could be eating your dinner out of one of these things.

The hidden war on germs is definitely the least glamorous aspect of modern air travel, but it's an important one. As passenger numbers increase, new and innovative solutions will have to be found to combat the spread of lurgy. Perhaps we'll have disposable, single-use terminals, or airports might flood the gates with a tide of Dettol once every four hours, like the blood elevator from *The Shining*.

Whichever solutions we find, one day we'll look back at the airports of the early 21st century as we do the effluvia-spattered slums of Victorian London or modern day Croydon on a Saturday night, and wonder how we ever managed to make a journey without first wrapping ourselves up in that big roll of clingfilm they use for oversized baggage and breathing through a Brita filter on the end of a straw.

Failing all that, you could just pack some wet wipes.

● Steve Hogarty is a germaphobe, hypochondriac and travel editor of *City A.M. The Magazine*



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