

# DISGRACEFUL



## EXPOSING ENDO WITH EMMA GILL

We talk to Nola Audrey who documents her journey to raise awareness after being diagnosed with Endometriosis at the tail end of an eight-year-long battle with health care professionals and multiple diagnosis.

## FEMME & FABULOUS WITH EVY MILLER

All drag is valid. This is the message that Amber Cadaverous, a cisgender female drag queen, is yelling from the rooftops. Evy Miller interviews Amber to find out more about her journey to becoming a drag queen.

## FLYING HIGH WITH ABI THOMAS

We chat to thriving television Technical Assistant and creative, Abi Thomas about being a female drone pilot and how she believes nature documentaries really do have the power to save our planet...



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Welcome to issue two of Disgraceful.

I am so excited to share this issue with you, amazing things have happened since the launch of Disgraceful in December and the response to our first offering has exceeded my wildest dreams. We are so grateful for all the support and can't thank you, our readers, enough; we've expanded the team, grown our following and celebrated thousands of downloads all in less than three months!

Issue two has so much in store for you - from pieces exploring the world of female drag to the harsh realities of living with endometriosis, to the inside scoop on the television industry as a female drone pilot. We're diving deeper into the issues we discussed the last time around, and tackling new taboos and timely topics all at once.

Thank you so much for being here, being a part of our Disgraceful family, and for believing in this publication just as much as we do. We can't wait to hear what you think and start many Disgraceful discussions; join the movement over on our Instagram page and share your thoughts using the hashtag #WeAreDisgraceful.

Disgraceful sets out to claim space in this world where women are expected to do the opposite; in a world where women are pushed to be thinner, talk less and smile more. Disgraceful is for every woman who sets out to build her own empire; the only expectations in sight, are the ones she sets for herself.

For our readers, our writers and the team who have worked extensively to bring this publication to life, Disgraceful is a place to be brave, expressive, inspired; a place to figure out exactly who you are without fear of societal pressures or constraints telling you to be otherwise.

We are powerful; we are loud; we are strong; we are entrepreneurs, business owners, leaders, mothers.

We are confident; we are disgraceful.

And you can't repress a disgraceful woman.

**Melissa Hawkins,  
Founder and Editor-in-Chief**

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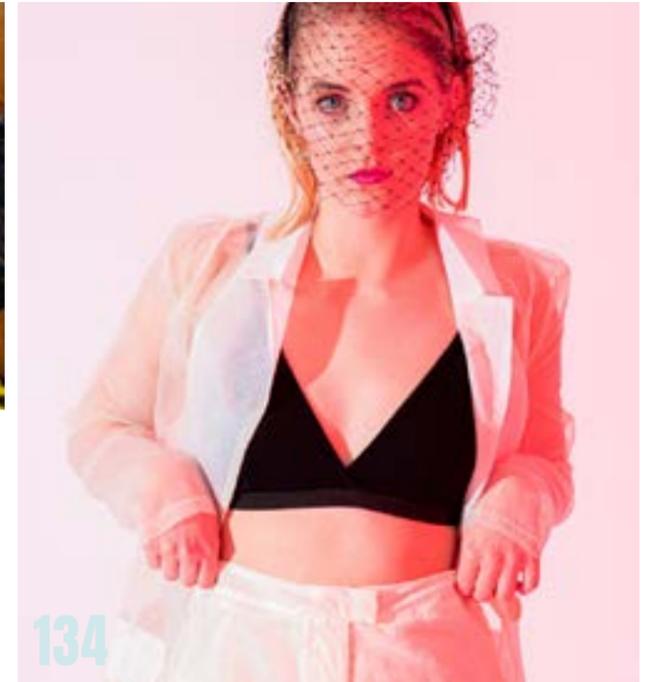
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# DISGRACEFUL ISSUE TWO

## MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

ANNEMARIE  
QUINN

© Andy Liles

Up-and-coming musician Annemarie Quinn discusses her most recent collaborative album *Blue Sky Thinking*, speaking openly with Holly Peters about her experiences in Malawi which inspired the album's creation.

By Holly Peters



In 2016, Annemarie Quinn made the decision to move from the UK to Malawi, and in January 2021 released her debut album *Blue Sky Thinking*. This collection of optimistic tracks blends Annemarie's singer-songwriter roots with the joy of the Malawian music scene.

"I wanted to bring in a flick of the Malawian sound - to take inspiration from it rather than try to pretend to be Malawian, which I hope is what it comes across as," Annemarie tells *Disgraceful*. "I've just been writing about an experience here and I think it's very important to say that I'm not trying to write an album that's an African album because I'm British. You have to respect your own culture as well

as the culture that you're coming into."

Moving half a world away helped Annemarie learn more about herself, whilst also learning as much about the culture she had left behind as the new culture she was stepping into. This new stage of her life and all the new experiences provided a great deal of inspiration for new song material.

"When I got here, I was just so inspired by the whole culture," says Annemarie. "I remember when we said goodbye to everyone it was that feeling of 'we were never coming home' and so there was a lot of emotion to write about. I feel like the contexts of the songs are slightly different - and don't get me wrong,

love songs are awesome - but it's nice to experience different ideas for songs."

The tone quickly turns serious as Annemarie discusses the impact of living around extreme poverty. "You need to figure out how you're going to navigate this and realise you can't fix it. You need to pick something small that's sustainable so you can help and make a difference."

The album features over 40 Malawian musicians who have helped to bring the album together at every stage. "They just live in music in a different way here. I've been met with nothing but love and support, it's been wicked and I'm just so grateful to everyone," she tells us happily. "It's been so uplifting to be

Blue Sky Thinking Blue Sky



© Annemarie Quinn

able to work with people; collaboration is a celebration here, and people are eager to learn about different music from the UK. To have a celebration of collaboration is totally underrated and there needs to be more of it.” Annemarie went on to revisit what inspired the first track from the album *Size of the Sky*. “I remember when I got off the plane and I was thinking ‘the sky is just so huge and so beautiful’. The culture is such a hit that it just knocks you off your feet. I hadn’t thought about the energy you get from a country and writing that into music before.” Having started playing music at seven, performing her first gig at thirteen and study-

ing music at university, Annemarie has spent many years learning how to navigate the male-dominated industry. “For me, rather than making a point, I always think actions are better than words and so rather than getting on stage and saying ‘look at me, I’m a girl’, I’m like ‘well, if you just listen’ and lead by example.” “There’s enough space for everybody and to celebrate everybody’s achievements without diminishing your own,” she says. “I’ve always thought the music industry is not a competition. There’s always going to be people who are doing what you’re doing, people who have done it before and people who will do it



© Annemarie Quinn



© Annemarie Quinn

Thinking Blue Sky Thinking Blue

**“You have to respect your own culture as well as the culture that you’re coming into.”**

after, so we just have to celebrate everybody. We also need to celebrate women achieving as I feel like some women don’t always celebrate women and I feel like that’s a massive thing to sort out before you then try to get other people to celebrate women. There’s enough space for everybody.”

However, the situation in Malawi presents its own challenges, as a lot of girls don’t attend secondary education. There are few female musicians in the Malawian music scene, meaning that most of the female artists collaborating on the album are from the Jacaranda School for Orphans. “It comes back to living somewhere that is so poverty stricken and thinking, ‘well how can I help’. So, to be able to teach girls how to play guitar and show girls that they can make music is awesome.”

Blue Sky Thinking is available to stream on all major music platforms. Annemarie’s website (<https://www.annemariequinn.co.uk/>) provides links to all the collaborating artists’ biographies and provides more details about their music.

“I’m very aware that it’s a huge project that has so many people behind it,” she says. “This album is about promoting Malawian music as well as about promoting my own music.”

**“There’s enough space for everybody and to celebrate everybody’s achievements without diminishing your own.”**



© Annemarie Quinn



© Annemarie Quinn

# MUSIC SPOTLIGHT: EZZA

by Niamh Ingram



© Mitchell Williams

The lack of female representation within the music industry is no secret. The drum and bass scene reflects this inequality, with a deep-rooted history of championing male talent. Erin, aka Ezza, has been subjected to this hierarchical gender bias throughout her new yet thriving career in the industry.

She describes events as still being “heavily male dominated, with women only getting booked for support slots rather than headlining” – an issue which is ubiquitous on the UK drum and bass scene and not unique to her Bristol base. “I’ve seen a lot of hate and harassment online towards female DJs by men, which makes my blood boil.”

**“There is still a long way to go for women to be considered equal in the scene.”**

That said, it isn’t all doom and gloom. Women such as Ezza are taking the reins in the mission to distort this gender bias, one blend at a time. This mission has been fueled further by having no choice but to stay at home due to the pandemic.

Ezza started mixing during the first lockdown and explained how it’s “completely allowed [her] skills to flourish.”

“I always wanted to learn to mix but felt that there were invisible barriers in the way – whether that was to do with my gender or just me thinking that I’d never be good enough. I think seeing so many people learning new skills in lockdown gave me the confidence to start out DJing. I did it for myself, for my own enjoyment – there wasn’t anyone leaning over my shoulder telling me what to do – I just bought some decks and got to it!”

Since then, Ezza really hasn’t looked back; she’s amassed almost two thousand loyal supporters on

Instagram and is making guest appearances all over Bristol’s radio waves, appearing on sit-down sessions and lockdown livestreams for the likes of Goat Shed. COVID permitting, she’s on the lineup for Dazed Weekender in Prague, rubbing shoulders with the likes of industry heavyweights Hybrid Minds and Bou.

One massive aspect of her journey, however, has been becoming an established resident of the all-female drum and bass label, Limitless.

“When I first heard about Limitless, I got so excited because I’d never really seen an all-female label. Since then, I’ve come across more and more labels promoting women and diversity – shout out to Just Be Events and Full Spectrum – it’s such an amazing thing to see.”

Labels such as Limitless really are the driving force in the strive for equality within the drum and bass scene – and for Ezza, they also provide a sense of family.

“I feel so grateful to be part of a community in which women feel empowered and are free from judgement and harassment.

There’s so much love and support amongst women in DnB right now, it’s truly incredible. I feel like females are building a name for themselves in the scene, too. Male promoters and labels are taking us more seriously and providing us with more opportunities. Now is the time that women will take over!”

Ezza’s enthusiasm is clear; she has passion for her craft and is constantly striving to progress. In addition to this though, she’s enthusiastic for women to make their mark within the scene – and whilst being surrounded by so many like-minded females, there is zero doubt that the status of women within DnB will only get higher and higher.

“My advice to women who are reluctant to share their talent would simply be to own it. If you enjoy something and it makes you feel empowered, you shouldn’t care what other people think. Do it for yourself because it brings you happiness!”

To see more from Ezza, follow her on Instagram @ezza.dnb, or check out her blends on Soundcloud.



© Mitchell Williams



© Mitchell Williams



## A COMMENT ON OUR CULTURE

EMILY BLACK

In this powerful opinion piece which critically interrogates everything from body politics, to female sexuality, to governmental politics and Twitter debates, Emily Black asks: from the personal to the political, why are we so polarised? What are you? Are you left wing or are you right wing? Are you a party animal or are you an introvert? Are you an activist or are you complacent?

Discourses surrounding individuality have become fraught and confused. Our identities are continually shaped by the people we surround ourselves with, the way we discuss body politics, governmental politics, and 'Internet-Activism'. Modern group-identity has grown extreme and prohibitive. We've been told to pick a side before the whistle blows, and if not, we're left nameless in the middle of two teams. It's black, or it's white—it's extreme at both ends. Have we eradicated the grey area entirely?

An example of this personal polarisation comes to the forefront when we consider female sexuality and body politics. My adolescence was shaped by the colloquial language of 'sluts' and 'virgins', with no in-between. This language gives the impression that a woman either gives her body away in excess, or keeps it, selfishly, untouched. A recent demonstration of society's inability to break down these two extremes can be seen in Emily Ratajkowski's essay, *Reclaiming Her Own Image* (<https://www.thecut.com/article/emily-ratajkowski-owning-my->

[image-essay.html](#)). In the essay, Ratajkowski exposes the context of an exploitative incident in which photographer Jonathan Leder published unsolicited naked images of her. She recalls how she was uncomfortable with his actions on the night of the photoshoot, so published this essay as a way of 'reclaiming' the experience. Leder's response to the legal case behind the photos speaks volumes about the way in which we discuss body politics. He said, "You do know who we are talking about right? This is the girl that was naked in *Treats!* magazine and bounced around naked in the Robin Thicke video at that time. You really want someone to believe she was a victim?"

Why is it that if a woman is promiscuous in one scenario, she is promiscuous by default? If a woman is comfortable being naked with one partner, why does this 'deviance' permeate every other aspect of her life? Leder's response was cruel and distasteful, indicative of society's inability to think of women as anything other than promiscuous or prudish.

Where has the language gone for articulating the middle of the spectrum? Where has the language gone for these in-betweens? We've become so postmodern that meaning seems to have dissolved into only one of two extreme categories.

Moving from the personal to the broader picture, it's become apparent that ultimately, we govern with our feelings. Can we not find other ways to discuss politics and government, instead of left or right? Have we boiled

down the crux of society to Marxism versus capitalism? *Good* or *bad*? Twitter bios that read 'Young Conservative' or 'Marxist' are a huge turn-off. They signal a cemented identity and a refusal to have open conversations. Discourses around middle-ground political views now almost cease to exist.

I want to know your nuances. I want to hear a personal critique of the system you follow, not your partisan allegiance to the entirety of an ideology. This form of individualism isn't individual at all, but a vast lumping together of identities in order to create tribes and enemies, particularly online.

Twitter has racked up a reputation of heated arguments between keyboard warriors; it's a platform that epitomises polarisation in all its forms, from body politics to literal politics. It's a virtual destination on this tour of binaries. Twitter fosters an atmosphere of self-righteousness and discussion fuelled by emotion; the very premise of having a personal account and gaining followers because they 'want to hear what you have to say' suggests that we've all become leaders of our own minor schools of thought.

Personally, I've taken to absences from Instagram and Twitter, which has allowed me the space to engage with people in real life and educate myself through reading about the lives of people who are not like me. This was not enacted because I'm above anyone who uses these sites, but instead it was a deliberate decision to step away from a noise that was no longer serving me, personally. For many, social media is a

means of connection amidst a time of isolation and loneliness; but for me, it was not helpful or constructive.

On the internet, these singular voices seem to come from all directions, fuelled by a monomania of politics and pride. It's sometimes useful to take time away to critique the swathes of information and 'justice' that's preached by strangers who have no expertise in the matter. If you find yourself in need of a break, books are a good start.

The people we surround ourselves with are often echo chambers of ourselves. Think of the way in which goth-groups, posh-boys and pretty-girls band together: it's a classic trope, though pushed to the extreme by our thirst for polarisation. The people we interact with become mirrors of ourselves, and we're in danger of covering our ears to anyone who falls outside of our ideas about who we are. We can't grow if we continue to spend all our time with several versions of ourselves, stuck in one moment in time.

Likewise, family gatherings can fall apart due to polarised views or harsh judgements. In these situations, we often fail to understand the conditions in which other people's ways of articulating the world came to be. We no longer make an effort to see the world from the flip side, because our friends, and the internet, tell us that what we think is right. I'll be clear, this is not to say that homophobic, antisemitic or racist comments from friends or relatives should be overlooked—these are the exact discussions we should engage ourselves in



© @emrata on Instagram

through real-world activism—but no one will get anywhere by telling the other person that they are simply 'wrong'; they wouldn't hold the opinion in the first place if they *thought* it was wrong.

Conversations surrounding politics have become even more restrictive and argumentative. We enter these discourses with an agenda, ready to shoot down anyone who holds an opposing opinion. There's no room left for nuance or self-creation. These days, it seems as though your identity comes pre-packaged, and it's yours to take, not to create. Drowning out voices that are not our own is dangerous, but so is giving a space to hate-speech. The answer? Critical, individual thinking.

This onslaught of mass information and fake news is relatively new, so we're yet to understand how to adapt to contradictory headlines and false statistics. It'll take practice, but I can only hope that we move towards critical, sceptical thinking regarding our outlook. Refrain from solidifying judgements about other people's bodies; acknowledge that your friends don't have to share the same views as you; and consider that a heated Twitter argument may only cement the views of the person on the opposing 'side'. Perhaps this way we'll find small spaces of nuance, in which we can move forwards, together.

# DISGRACEFUL REVIEWS

## Sophie Fisher Reviews *The Doll Factory* by Elizabeth Macneal (Picador, 2019)

Set in 1850s London, during the pre-Raphaelite art movement, *The Doll Factory* follows the protagonist Iris Whittle who dreams of becoming a famous painter. When Iris meets Louis Frost, her dreams of becoming a painter are in sight, but if she decides to follow this path, it means being disgraced in the eyes of her family and society.

Attempting to break free of societal expectations is not the only challenge that Iris has to face. During a visit to the site of the Great Exhibition, Iris is spotted by curiosity collector Silas Reed who becomes fixated with her. Watching Silas' obsession with Iris grow throughout the book is deeply unsettling and gives a stark account of what can happen when a man believes he is entitled to a woman's attention.

The Male Gaze is a key theme that runs throughout the book and is explored through both art and life. Iris is "seen as an object to be gazed at or touched at leisure" often having her thoughts and talents overlooked or dismissed. Although this book is set during the 19th century, many of the issues women faced are still startlingly true today.

Though Iris faces many challenges on the journey of achieving the life she desires, she never gives in to societal pressures that tell her women should be unseen and unheard. When daydreaming about having her painting hanging in The Royal Academy, she states that "her painting will be flawless, ambitious – five foot tall at least. She will not be afraid to take up space." Iris is a strong protagonist



who inspires the reader to also not be afraid to take up space and to have ambitions far beyond what people believe they can achieve.

This chilling gothic novel is absolutely unforgettable and left me simultaneously wanting to put the book down and wanting to keep reading. Despite the plot and themes of the book being unnerving to read at times, I completely recommend it and enjoyed following Iris as she

**"gives herself to exquisite disgrace."**

Star rating: ★★★★★

## Rachel Horrocks reviews Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* (Simon & Schuster, 2016)

From eleven-time New York Times bestselling author Colleen Hoover, *It Ends With Us* follows Lily Bloom as she navigates through life and love following her abusive upbringing. She tackles the seemingly antonymous themes of romance and abuse, and the ways in which for many women, the two come hand in hand. Hoover, for the first time in her career, opens up candidly through her characters in what has been dubbed her most personal novel yet.

Though we are introduced to Lily as her current self, we're also granted access to teenage Lily through her diary entries which she revisits throughout the novel. Lily addresses these entries to talk show host Ellen, a figure whom she often relied on for comic relief from her homelife, as she describes the abuse both her and her mother endured at the hands of her father.

At first glance, this book follows the predictable nature of the enemies-to-lovers trope often found in romance as we're introduced to Ryle, an obnoxiously charming, abrupt yet attractive neurosurgeon who enters Lily's life in a whirlwind. I was gripped instantly by Lily's endearing narration of Ryle as the perfect man, minus his abhorrence for relationships, forcing us to fall in love with him as she does, making it even harder to accept their fate.

I particularly love the duality of Lily's narrative, allowing us to witness such drastic character development in a short time span. We meet Lily at 15, frightened and fragile, then again at 23, stronger yet resentful. As the book progresses, we watch Lily's resentment for her mother slowly fade into admiration. This is probably my favourite aspect of the novel. Hoovers' non-judgemental approach to writing about domestic abuse encourages us to steer clear of the internally misogynistic view within so many women that 'If that was me, I'd just leave,' and that fleeing an abusive situation is not as straightforward as some may think.

Having been an avid reader of anything written by Colleen Hoover in the past, I can confidently say that

this is her most candid, provoking and important work to date. If you love romance but are in need of a bit more realism and substance, this book is for you. Hoover's non-judgemental contribution to the discourse surrounding domestic abuse is both stark and inspiring: as she writes,

**'there's no such thing as bad people, just people who do bad things'.**



Star rating: ★★★★★

## Bethany Preston reviews Amanda Lee Koe's *Delayed Rays of a Star* (Bloomsbury, 2019)



Jumping to Nazi Germany during the height of World War II, we also meet Leni. On the set for her high-budget production, *Tiefland*, Leni feels the pressure of being Hitler's favourite filmmaker. Later in her life, she faces scrutiny and disgust for her part in a regime that saw the genocide of six million innocent people. Leni's chapters are arguably the most difficult to read, and at times, I was forced to put the book down and come back to it later on. It is not a light read, to say the least.

More significant, in my opinion, are the stories of the side characters that appear within the novel. We meet Marlene's sex-trafficked Chinese maid, Bébé. There's Jewish writer, Walter Benjamin, who seeks to escape a war-riddled France with nothing but his papers, as well as apprentice-turned-soldier, Hans Haas, who experiences the atrocities of Germany's war campaigns. I often caught myself getting frustrated when the narrative would change, as I could have read an entire book dedicated solely to these characters.

Nevertheless, Koe does an impeccable job merging glamour and tragedy in this timely novel. The book explores themes still pertinent today, and if you're reading this review, I highly urge you to purchase it.

Star rating: ★★★★★

In her debut novel, Amanda Lee Koe encapsulates perfectly the momentous lives of three extraordinary women. This historical fiction begins in Berlin, 1928, when Marlene Dietrich, Anna May Wong and Leni Riefenstahl are photographed together at a party. Divided into three parts, the book follows the women throughout various stages in their lives. From 1928, we're transported ahead to meet 88-year-old Marlene, who has not seen the light of day in over a decade following her iconic career as an adorned Hollywood actress. Having retired from her life of stardom, she is left to watch the world through the screen of her TV – a rather ironic fate to befall.

We then flash back to 1928 again to meet Asian-American actress, Anna May Wong, who is at the peak of her dazzling career, having cut ties with her family to pursue her dream. On the outside, it seems that she has done well for herself, but Koe accurately depicts the realities of being an Asian actress during Hollywood's Golden Age. Anna must navigate the film industry during a time where it is unheard of for an Asian actress to be the star, where the only roles she plays are the villain, and where directors would rather cast her white counterparts to play Asian characters rather than cast her.

## Jenny Sharman reviews Rachel Long's *My Darling from the Lions* (Picador Poetry, 2020)

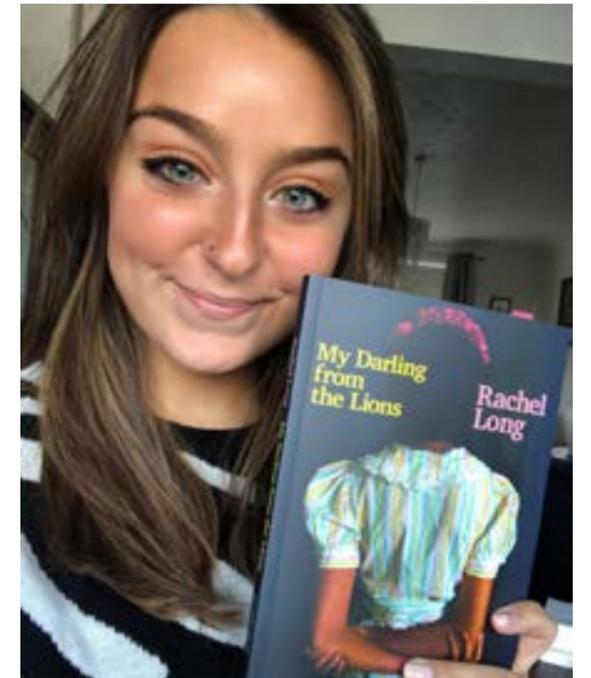
Star rating: ★★★★★

*My Darling from the Lions* is the intimate and striking debut poetry collection from Rachel Long, leader of the Octavia Poetry Collective for Womxn of Colour, who has been dubbed by Booker-prize-winning author Bernardine Evaristo as 'an enchanting and heartwarming new voice in poetry.' The collection is refreshingly candid, touching on topics such as sexual politics, femininity, the quirks of family, youth, sexual awakening, and race and colourism. Long's genuine and authentic poetic voice is starkly contemporary, conveying both wit and humour along with an urgent and remarkable depth of emotion.

*My Darling from the Lions* leaves a lasting impression on the reader; imbued with vivid imagery, each poem elicits a profound emotional response which speaks powerfully to our contemporary cultural moment. As a young woman navigating the idiosyncrasies of life in my early twenties, I found myself able to identify with many of the joys, frustrations, discoveries and challenges that Long's poems explore. An excerpt from one of my favourite poems in the collection, 'Sandwiches,' provides a taste of Long's unique and perceptive poetic voice:

'Already, Tiff's a reckoning; bomb glitter on lids, oil spill on lips, sandwiches padding her bra. Yeah, the sandwiches. Thick, white, unbuttered. See, Tiff's clocked the boys have clocked the difference between a tissue and a tit, a sock and a tit, but not quite yet a tit and a slice of bread.'

*My Darling from the Lions* establishes Rachel Long as another powerful female figure in the line-up of today's contemporary poetic voices, standing her alongside the likes of Jackie Kay, Amanda Gorman, Bhanu Kapil and Mary Jean Chan.

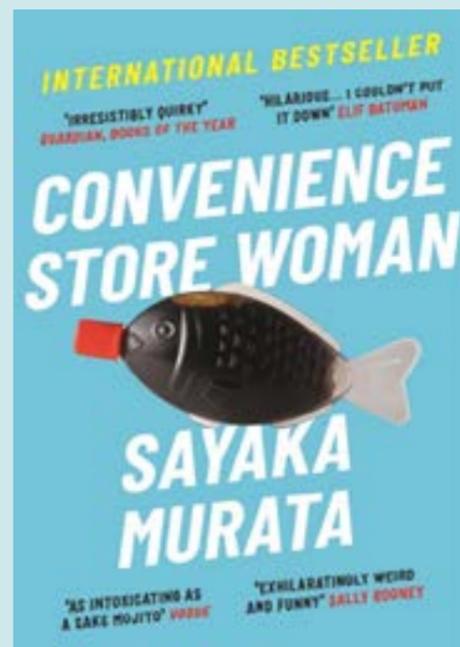


## Maddie Bazin reviews Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* (tr. Ginny Tapley Takemori; Granta, 2016)

I know, I know, it's not a new read, but it is undoubtedly my favourite book in the world! Set in Japan and focusing on 36-year-old Keiko, an oddly blank woman who has fallen in love with the monotony of her job at the local Smile Mart convenience store, Murata's novel challenges the concepts of what we consider to be 'success' in life.

Keiko, although good at her job and happy to work within the tightly-packed cogs of retail, struggles with social interaction, often mimicking the vocal and conversational traits of her co-workers and friends in order to 'fit in' with those she happens to

find herself interacting with. With no interest in sex or relationships, she navigates pressing questions from her family by replicating the emotions she recognises in others. When a younger man walks into her store with a chaotic rejection of social norms, she sees an opportunity to replicate the life so many encourage her to have. Keiko and Shiraha move in together, and live in tense harmony until Shiraha encourages Keiko to quit her lifeline job at the store. Lost and confused, Keiko loses her sense of self without the store, and the novel ends with Keiko leaving Shiraha and setting out to find her new store, and old self.



At first, the novel feels slow and monotonous, much like Keiko's life at the Smile Mart, but soon her confusing and socially-fraught life sucks you in. Her apathy towards her sister and newborn nephew, her apparent disgust at sex and intimacy, her genuine enjoyment of stacking and scanning groceries - they all create a surprising sense of thrill, yet comfort. I found myself seeking the comfort of monotony every time Keko struggled with a conversation. The celebration and encouragement of following whatever makes you happy in life is something often seen in action and romance books, but rarely for books where the comfort is, well, bland. And for Keiko, her comfort is in routine and safety.

Murata's writing is exceptional and the translation from Japanese to English has, incredibly, maintained

many of the linguistic and cultural nuances. The cultural taboos of aging without marriage, children, or a 'serious' career are at the forefront of this novel. The venture into discomfort, with the feigned relationship with Shiraha, is a comment on the idea of 'success' for women relying heavily on a relationship with a man. Keiko is genuinely puzzled by this expectation, as are many of us, but in the cultural setting of the novel it only serves to set her further apart from social normality.

Star rating: ★★★★★

### Heather Roy reviews Bryony Gordon's *Mad Girl: A Happy Life with a Mixed-Up Mind* (Headline, 2016)

Star rating: ★★★★★

motherhood whilst in the grips of mental illness. Since her childhood, Bryony has had severe OCD, and through the retelling of her own experience she deftly negates the stereotypical and reductive view of OCD that associates it simply with cleanliness and organisation. The reader finishes the novel with a much deeper understanding of the condition, as well as a newfound empathy for its sufferers.

Bryony's writing style blends heartbreak and humour with an ease that is seemingly effortless; the juxtaposition of joy and wit with some desperately dark moments is the novel's true strength. It is in the book's unfettered honesty that its charm shines through and we begin to think of the author as a friend confiding in and entrusting us. Having finished the book, the reader cannot help but feel a personal connection to Bryony and her experiences.

I found *Mad Girl* to be incredibly accessible and would highly recommend it to anyone looking for a read that is as enjoyable and funny as it is important and moving.

Bryony's new book *No Such Thing as Normal* was published in January 2021 and promises practical mental health tips to those who find themselves relating to *Mad Girl*.



Comical, emotional and raw, *Mad Girl* is Bryony Gordon's second novel and is an entirely unreserved autobiographical account of her experiences with mental illness. Gordon is a well-respected and successful journalist with her own column at *The Telegraph*, and *Mad Girl* opens the floodgates on the tidal wave of her long-suppressed mental health struggles.

The book details the author's life thus far, exploring how she juggles marriage, her career and

### Emily Oram reviews Abi Daré's *The Girl with the Louding Voice* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2020)

*The Girl with the Louding Voice* is Abi Daré's fantastic debut novel. Daré tells the story of Adunni, a 14-year-old Nigerian girl fighting for education and for control over her life. Adunni captures your heart from the very first chapter. Her strength and courage are inspirational, along with her ability to find joy even when times are dark.

The way that Daré uses language to reflect Adunni's journey is excellent. It helps the reader to connect to Adunni; her struggles with English offer an insight to her struggles to adapt to her new life and fit in in an environment that is so unlike the one she grew up in. The focus is shifted from Western constructs of knowledge. As Adunni realises, "English is only a language, like Yoruba and Igbo and Hausa." She shows that education is not just academic; it takes many forms, and all are so important.

Adunni's story is moving and so inspiring. For many of us, education is something that we often take for granted. But for girls like Adunni all over the world, it's something that can be taken away so easily – something that needs fighting for. The theme of control over one's life is central to this novel; important decisions in Adunni's life – decisions that should be made by her and her alone – have been made for her. Throughout the story we see Adunni's fight to take control as she finds her 'louding voice' and carves out her own path.

Along with capturing the hopefulness of Adunni's life, Daré does remind us that, unfortunately, not all of these stories end happily. Far too many girls are unable to break the cycle that they are trapped in.

Overwhelmingly, this is a story of hope and inspiration. *The Girl with the Louding Voice* really moved me. It shows how we all have a part to play in supporting the education of girls across the world and just how vital it is that we play it. Big changes will come when young girls and young women have access to education and are able to seize their rightful opportunity to shine.

Star rating: ★★★★★



**“Not his-story,  
I say, ‘My own will  
be called her-story.  
Adunni’s story.”**

ART SHOWCASE:  
**SHADI  
 MOLA  
 ALI**

JENNY SHARMAN



© MODERN MUSES CHALLENGE | SHADI MOLA ALI  
 @SHADISHAAY ON INSTAGRAM

**S**hadi Mola Ali, also known as Shadi Shaay, is a graphic designer originating from Iran. Citing nature and the female form as her main inspirations, she has been creating digital art for two years, using Illustrator and Photoshop to realize her visual ideas. Over time, Shadi has gradually evolved as a graphic artist, now creating colourful, highly professional and refined design pieces which speak powerfully to current social and political issues. Shadi says that creating her artwork is like a form of meditation, which has helped her to cope with the difficulties of 2020.



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Shadi's contributions to the *Modern Muses* challenge, showcased here by *Disgraceful*, pay homage to the female muses of esteemed artists such as Da Vinci and Vermeer by reimagining them in a modern style. Throughout her work, Shadi depicts many strong female figures from popular culture, thereby reconfiguring the traditional idea of the male gaze. Shadi's work celebrates the subjectivity and independence of women, rather than diminishing them as objects of spectatorship.

Another powerful collection is Shadi's two pieces entitled *Survivor*, which denounce the culture of silence surrounding victims of violence and trauma. These two images seek to empower all survivors of trauma by showing that their voice matters.

In the future, Shadi is determined to create more art which empowers women and those who have been traditionally marginalised and oppressed; she believes that it is essential to raise our voices and claim our rights, and her artwork reflects this.

*Disgraceful* readers can discover more of Shadi's artwork on her Instagram, @shadishaay (<https://www.instagram.com/shadishaay/>)

**POETRY SHOWCASE**

# COURTNEY BURK

**BY EMILY ORAM**

Courtney Burk is from Ferndale, Michigan in the US. She uses her creative passion through narrative storytelling in her brand management position in the hospitality industry and through writing on all things food and beverage for a few local publications.

For Courtney, “Disgraceful” means embracing the supposed shame of not adhering to unrealistic standards and expectations. It’s freedom.”

A lover of reading and writing from a young age, Courtney went on to study Creative Writing at Western Michigan University and Charles University. She initially focused on writing fiction, though her career has developed to include long-form articles and she has found a new pleasure in writing poetry.

For Courtney, writing poetry is typically a way to escape. Her poems are heavily influenced by folklore and fantasy and use the richly developed characters of Greek mythology.

Courtney describes the poetic form as a great medium for female empowerment because of its use of sharp language and vivid imagery to convey a message that at certain breaks gives the reader pause and reflection.

As for her future goals for writing poetry? Courtney hopes to continue putting pen to paper and growing as a writer. In the poems that follow, written exclusively for Disgraceful, Courtney showcases her skilful poetic voice and offers further insights on the inspiration behind each poem.

**WOMEN SET THIER OWN STANDARDS. WOMEN SET THIER**

**OWN S**

**WOMEI**

**OWN S**

**WOMEI**

**OWN S**

**WOMEI**

**OWN S**

**WOMEI**

# STANDARDS

**This poem articulates the difficulty of loving our bodies and the way they are formed. The underlying message is that we are all perfect, and we should encourage one another to love the imperfections in our perfect selves.**

The world turns women against each other.  
In competition with their peers, societal standards,  
and the bodies that house their brilliance.  
For in a world where empowered and empathetic women  
set their own standards,  
how would the egos of men survive?  
And where would their power lie?

**OWN STANDARDS. WOMEN SET THIER OWN STANDARDS.**

The queen the pantheon never saw coming.  
The one who took charge of her life by the roots.  
The bride of spring. The queen of the underworld.  
She may not sit atop the throne on Olympus, but  
when the world splits open and the way of the gods  
no longer matters, to her they will bow.

**Courtney on Persephone: “She’s my absolute favourite goddess. She embraces the multi-sides of femininity in the form of floral maiden and queen of death.”**

# PERSEPHONE

# MEGARA

Nothing is known of her before her marriage.  
Her worth defined by her husband and children.  
The guiltless mother killed at the hands of her husband,  
struck with madness by a vengeful goddess.  
The goddess of women, family, marriage, and childbirth.  
Such a fate could only be written by men,  
not wanting to be held accountable for their actions.

**Courtney on Megara: "There's absolutely zero character development of Megara in mythology and her significance solely relies on her death and the way it affects Hercules. And yet Hera, the goddess of all things Megara represents is the ultimate reason she perishes. That moment seems very out of character and against everything the pantheon signifies, showcasing the narrative of eliminating any guilt from the male protagonist."**

# DISGRACEFUL WOMAN

Freedom is found in the exhale of expectations  
that were never yours to mold within.  
Embrace every passion and fuck it senseless.  
Because it is not long before your body  
is consumed back by the earth.

**Courtney on Disgraceful Woman: "I thought about the word disgrace a lot while working on these pieces and wanted to focus on the feeling of freedom I've found by being disgraceful and not following proper protocols for what people expect my life to hold. I've found that freedom through the success of following my passions. You've got to do things for you because life is far too short to live for anyone else."**

**DISGRACEFUL WOMAN  
DISGRACEFUL WOMAN**

# WHEN THE WORLD STOPS, READ

## THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IN 2020

by Drew-Alexandra O’Keeffe

© @riet68 Instagram



How many times have you glanced at your sky high ‘to be read’ pile, sighed, turned to your ‘to-do list’ and felt disheartened at how much time it soaks up, when all you want to do is start on the latest bestseller you have been waiting to read?

We tell ourselves we are going to have an early night, snuggled in with a good book, but reality comes all too quickly when we realise it’s midnight, the washing up isn’t done, and we haven’t showered or taken our eyes off the latest trash reality show since 7pm.

But if time were forced to stand still, would we tackle the monster pile on our bedsides or would we seek entertainment elsewhere?

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, some chose TV, some chose physical activity, and some chose nothing at all to help pass the time. Some, when evaluating how to spend an endless number of hours, chose the old-fashioned pleasure of reading a book, feeling productive as they watched their pile shrink and their minds broaden.

Consequently, the publishing industry experienced some unusual, but not surprising, behavioural turns too.

The start of 2020 saw a rise in certain areas within the publishing industry, with one of the top bestsellers being Hilary Mantel’s *The Mirror and the Light* (4th Estate, 2020). At a staggering and somewhat daunting 900 pages, it is clear the word count did not deter people with more time to chill out and actually enjoy it.

Other bestsellers of 2020 include Sally Rooney’s *Normal People* (Faber & Faber, 2018), *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig (Canongate, 2020), and *The Return* by Nicholas Sparks (Little, Brown, 2020). Romantic escapism was at a high at the start of the year when we still had a glimmer of hope sparkling in our 4pm wine glasses.

Some titles shifted towards a more serious and in-depth focus, such as Richard Osman’s *The Thursday Murder Club* (Viking, 2020), Matthew McConaughey’s *Greenlights* (Headline, 2020) and Barack Obama’s *A Promised Land* (Penguin, 2020).

Top genres include education, which had a 55.5% spike when schools closed, and activity, hobby and games which had a 31.3% increase according to *Publishers Weekly*.

The mindfulness ad wellness genre (or ‘self-help’) had a 20% boost in sales by March, according to *The Guardian*’s figures from Nielsen Book Research.

The mental load of the daily news, conspiracy theories and inactivity of being stuck in our houses meant many of us struggled more than usual to keep our mental health in a positive mindset. Many found using books to nurture our minds as a perfect solution.

Major political and social events took place in 2020 that won’t be left out of the history books. One of these events was the Black Lives Matter protests that took place all over the world following the

### MIXED UP MEDIA

barbaric death of George Floyd. The public had no other choice but to listen. Fighting against the discrimination and racial injustices that have been normalised against black people for centuries, those involved made a mark on the world by expressing their pain, frustration and hope for change.

According to Vox, the Industry Tracker NPD BookScan reported a sales boost in political science and civil rights titles by 330% from May 17 to May 23. Books focused on discrimination boosted by 245% in the same period. When the sales in books dedicated to outlining how black lives are lived, their struggles and their fears boomed, it meant that increasingly more black authors are being recognised for their brilliant work.

**Bernardine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* (Penguin, 2020) topped the overall UK book chart - the first black British author to do so.**

Top sellers include Reni Eddo-Lodge’s *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (Bloomsbury, 2018), and Bernardine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* (Penguin, 2020) which topped the overall UK book chart - the first black British author to do so.

©Hannah Kinchin-Frost





The Black Lives Matter protests made a permanent mark on society and the publishing industry, bringing more awareness to people everywhere through the medium of books.

When the world was put on pause, reports of nature claiming back what was always theirs started popping up more frequently, highlighting the industrial impact convenient human life has on the natural world. British beaches such as those in Blackpool and Portsmouth started seeing clear waters for the first time in decades. Air pollution fell dramatically, with images of clear skies being shared across the globe.

When the reports of changes in local environments started to circulate across social media, many became conscious of the environment and, with time to spare, did something about it.

Top books for environmental awareness in 2020 included David Attenborough's *A Life on Our Planet* (Ebury, 2020), *The Joyful Environmentalist* by Isabel Losada (Watkins Media, 2020) and *How to Break Up with Fast Fashion* by Lauren Bravo (Headline, 2020).

Causes for climate change originate primarily from human destruction and distraction from taking care of the one thing that gives us life. Which is why dedicating extra reading on the topics of sustainability and environmental awareness is a must.

With high spirits regarding sales in the industry, awareness still needs to be given to individual authors and independent bookstores who have been hit hard by the pandemic, many who normally benefit from sources of attention other than sales alone.

Many rely on literary festivals and launches that are still being continuously cancelled and school visits to promote their work. Some have struggled to gain material and funding to finish work, and getting their final products published.

But, with heads and hopes held high, the industry is fighting to stay on the shelf as a prominent influence in individuals' lives.

Let's get reading this 2021: together we can turn our dusty 'to be read' piles into a brand-new gleaming tower of knowledge, wisdom and inspiration.

FURLOUGHED BUT FIERCE  
FURLOUGHED BUT FIERCE

By **Bethany Preston**

# FURLOUGHED BUT FIERCE

How one inspiring female creative is surviving the pandemic

Cast your mind back to the last time you went to the theatre. For some, this would have been an exciting evening out, perhaps a special occasion or a long-awaited show. For others, like Gabi Coomber, it was another day at work. Having been made redundant during the first lockdown last March, Gabi spoke to *Disgraceful* to shine a light on the devastating impact created by COVID-19 on those within creative industries.

Having trained in musical theatre, Gabi began getting involved with the backstage side of things during the final year of her studies. “From there, I got taken on as an apprentice and I learned a lot. I started finding my own work and it all started to take off, really.”

Working as a freelance technician, lighting designer and stage manager across London’s vibrant fringe theatres, she established a firm footing in her industry. “I used to operate lights and sound for shows, as well as tech and plot cues. As a lighting designer, I

would plan the rig and create the lighting plan for shows. As a stage manager, it was mostly sourcing props, running rehearsals and organising people.”

As a successful woman working in a highly competitive industry, Gabi’s career allowed her to live out her passion. When asked about her favourite aspects of the job, she doesn’t have to think hard. “The people you work with are incredible. They are some of the most hardworking, kick-arse people you will ever meet. We give a show our all.” She tells us, before things turn bittersweet. “Aside from getting to be creative every day, I miss the people the most.”

Like many others, Gabi was left jobless after the government forced British theatres to close their doors to the public. She recalls that, like many of us, she thought things would be back to normal before long. “I was quite okay with taking a month out of my busy lifestyle. I didn’t realise just how hectic things were for me at that point, so having to take a break forced me to slow down.”

Not realising how long she’d be away from the hustle and bustle of the theatre world, she tells us that she underestimated just how hard of a hit the indus-

try would take. “I thought I’d be back to working on shows by September. On a slow week, I used to book around three gigs on average. Since last March, I’ve had three gigs in total. It’s insane,” she says. “I think the government should’ve done more to support theatre. Most of the industry is freelance, so many of us were left without support.”

With the help of a recruitment agency, Gabi was able to find herself an interim job within the care sector and was even recently promoted. She tells *Disgraceful* that she enjoys her new job much more than she believed she would. “It’s hard, but rewarding.” When asked if she sees herself returning to theatre one day, she tells us: “Ten million percent. My heart belongs in theatre.”

That isn’t to say she hasn’t faced challenges throughout her career. As a female working in a male-dominated field, she’s encountered her fair share of gender-related discrimination. Nevertheless, she’s also experienced the advantages of being a woman

in theatre. “I’ve been approached multiple times by people wanting a female technician, so I guess the tables are turning.” There’s still a way to go before women are truly recognised for their talents, but Gabi has been able to maintain a fierce attitude. “A man who says I can’t do something will ultimately regret it.”

She now remains hopeful that she can soon pick up where she so abruptly left off. “I’m still coming to terms with losing my job. Theatre is a lifestyle, it’s not just a career.”

Before wrapping up, we asked her what advice she’d give to women aspiring to one day enter a career in theatre. She replies: “Never do something you’re good at for free. Say yes to every opportunity, because the best training is done on the job,” and lastly, “be nice to everyone. The ‘coffee bitch’ will one day be the boss.”

As we approach one year since the commencement of the first lockdown, many creatives are still waiting in the wings for their careers to resume. Those in a similar situation to Gabi can only wish for an end to this impasse. Here at *Disgraceful*, we commend their resilience, and hope to one day see the curtain rise again.

**‘As a female working in a male-dominated field, she’s encountered her fair share of gender-related discrimination.’**

**Nevertheless, she’s also experienced the advantages of being a woman in theatre.**

# CALLING ALL CREATIVES

RACHEL LANGAN

Rachel Langan shines a spotlight on the work of final-year creative students to exhibit their phenomenal achievements during lockdown.

The idea of nurturing budding creativity within a global pandemic is somewhat of an oxymoron, maybe even a super-oxymoron if such a concept were to exist. But what happens when you're faced with this challenge and the only way out of this sizeable conundrum is to power through? For the graduates of 2020 this was exactly the case. University campuses were forced to close prematurely in March last year, which meant that access to key resources, materials and invaluable contact time with lecturers and tutors was all swiftly halted. This meant that generating the momentum to complete final major projects was an uphill struggle, perhaps even more difficult than trying to get to your 9AM lecture the morning after a heavy student night. Some universities provided leniency and students were told that given the extenuating circumstances grades would be more generous, but this provided little real comfort. When every aspect of a project is painstakingly considered down to the very last-minute detail, having to submit work that you've not been able to give your all to meant that the arrival of a global pandemic was an unwelcome one, put mildly.

But, despite the upheaval and disruption of COVID, the class of 2020 were able to dig deep and create work that would be considered outstanding even in normal circumstances. Dining rooms were transformed into makeshift design studios overnight. Kitchen tables were overrun with pattern pieces and bedrooms overhauled into print bureaus. Full editorial magazines were created, packed full of thought-provoking content, imagery and articles, the likes of which in the real world take teams of plenty to complete over a period of months. Some students designed intricate and conceptual 15-piece

collections, whilst others strategized and launched their own sustainable e-commerce businesses, supported by in-depth marketing plans and PR tactics. Reaching the finishing line under these conditions is no mean feat. Being part of a creative course offers students the ability to collaborate, discuss and share ideas with one another and use each other as sounding boards for concepts and development. Despite the myriad of course group chats and WhatsApp being only an arm's reach away, the lack of real human interaction at the most intense stage of their university career left many feeling uninspired and unmotivated, making the work that was produced that much more impressive.

The culmination of university life is often the graduation ceremony, where you can finally (and without any 'but I really should be in the library' guilt) celebrate the masses of hard work and dedication that's been poured, squeezed and stuffed into the end product, with your course mates by your side. But again, for this year's graduates this was another aspect that wasn't as envisioned when starting the course way back in first year. So, in light of this, it's only right that we shout about the class of 2020 as much as possible, and as loudly as possible. Here we've included two creative graduates and the work they've produced in their final year. In Issue 3, we'll showcase three more. They've shared their views on the past twelve months, how they dealt with mighty lows but also the rewarding highs of creating and constructing their final major projects in a year like no other. 2020? Completed it, mate.



© HOLLY THORPE

# FRAYE

'My final year is where I came into my own. Now I truly know what I want my life and career to concentrate on. The success of my dissertation was the beginning, where researching how fast fashion businesses can become more sustainable in realistic terms encouraged me to focus on this in my personal and academic life. My final major project represented that, where I used the idea of a circular economy to create a fully sustainable fashion business, which was transparent and price-accessible to the consumer.'

My strength throughout the project was my attention to detail, understanding what was needed in the industry and creating something original. Since the completion of my degree, I have been nominated for the Considered Fashion Award at Graduate Fashion Week. I am currently still at university studying a Masters in Strategic Communications, Leadership and Sustainability.'



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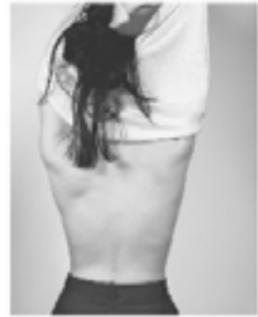
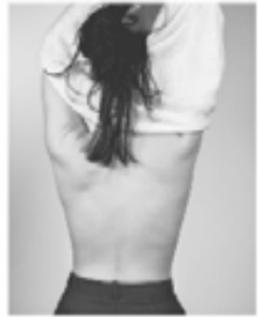
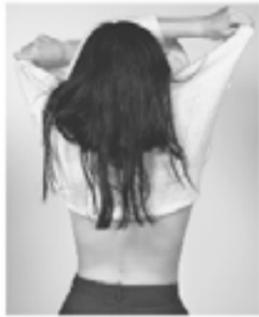
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FASHION BRAND MARKETING

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“My final year is where I came into my own”



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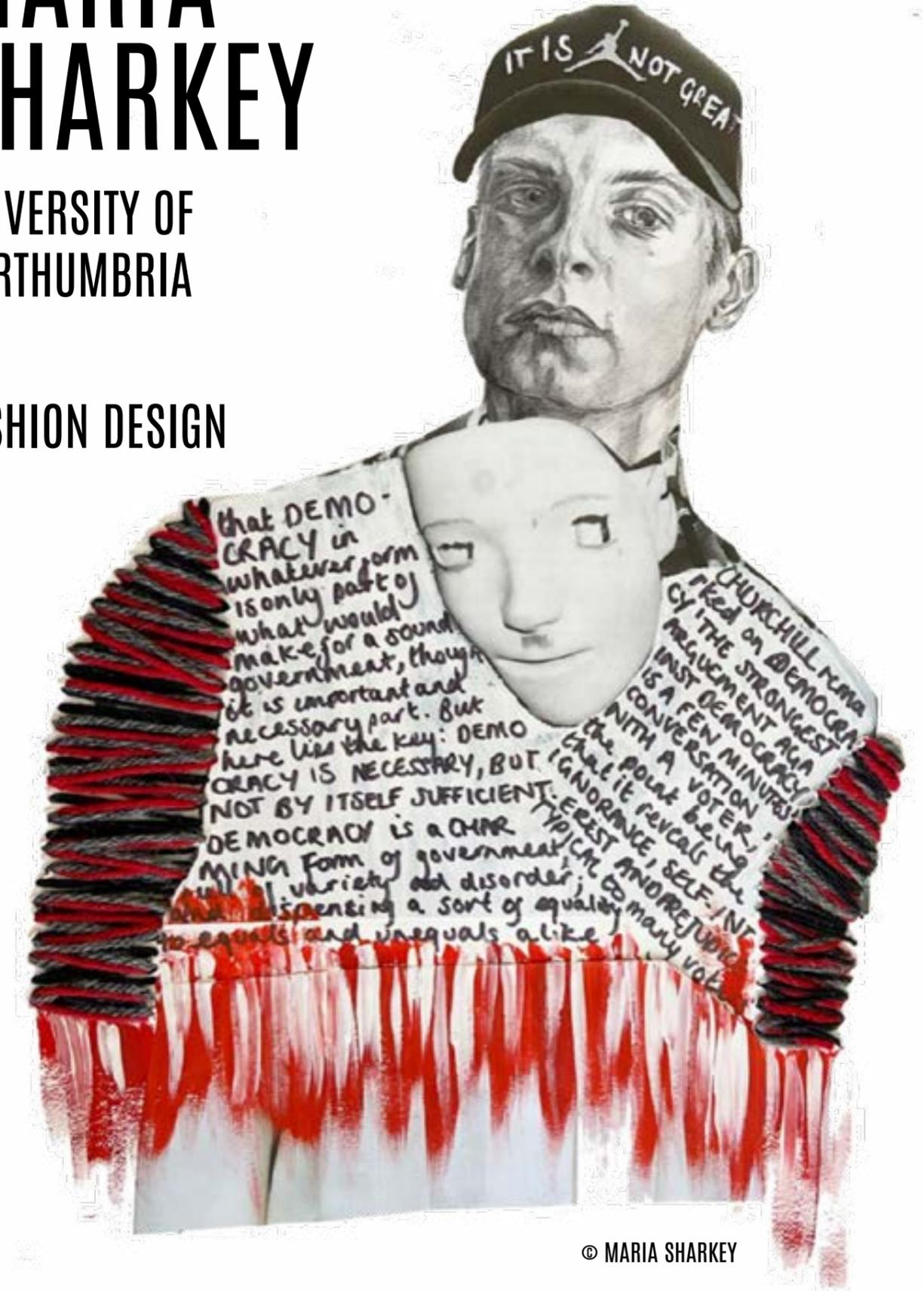


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# MARIA SHARKEY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHUMBRIA

FASHION DESIGN



© MARIA SHARKEY

# DEMOCRACY AW21



© MARIA SHARKEY

'In this AW/21 Menswear collection, I wanted to explore the meaning of democracy and its relationship to design. In times of instability, change becomes a driving force. But in times of stability, restriction starts to occur as we become more comfortable with the systems in place. I looked at early to mid-20th century design movements in relation to furniture design and the impact and change it created.

Initially, I found it hard to narrow down such a large topic and conceptualize how democracy could be related to fashion. I loved the research element of it and the reading behind it. When I started generating ideas, I found sometimes that scaling my ideas down from something larger was hard to do when I was so set passionately on an idea. Also, not being able to try out ideas due to COVID or get in touch with the technical help to see whether things were possible was hard.

“I looked at early to mid-20th century design movements in relation to furniture design and the impact and change it created”



© MARIA SHARKEY



© MARIA SHARKEY

In all honesty I found it difficult to find the motivation to complete my work due to COVID. It pulled the rug from beneath me; I was unable to be in the studio environment surrounded by like-minded individuals every day. I came to the realisation that I needed to bounce my ideas off other people and how much the social aspect of the course was highly important to me. Everyone works well in different environments; I thought I was quite introverted in some aspects of my life, but I came to realise that the mundane carry-on of the studio really helped pull a lot of my projects through.'

© MARIA SHARKEY



© MARIA SHARKEY

# FEMME AND FABULOUS

AMBER CADAVEROUS  
WITH EVY MILLER

© Jasmine Hitchens

All drag is valid. This is the message that Amber Cadaverous, a cisgender female drag queen, is yelling from the rooftops. Disgraceful's Evy Miller interviewed Amber to find out more about her journey to becoming a drag queen and to get her perspective on the discrimination she faces from some figures in the community.

Unsurprisingly, there's a common misconception that drag is reserved for cisgender males. Take a look at the early seasons of RuPaul's Drag Race, and you'd think so too. Whilst these views are gradually changing, this misconception perpetuates the harmful notion that cisgender and AFAB (assigned female at birth) individuals can't perform in drag, which leads to the discrimination and belittlement of femme drag queens. By amplifying their voices, Disgraceful hopes to highlight the prejudices that many of these drag artists face.

**What inspired you to join the drag community and how did you start?**

"I started doing drag when I was around sixteen or seventeen, experimenting with makeup, wigs and corseting in my bedroom. During an art course at college,

I was doing some research online and I came across pictures of drag queens and club kids from the 1980s/1990s New York club scene. From there, I instantly fell in love with the visuals of the club scene and ballroom culture. To me, going into drag artistry felt like a really natural progression because I've always been an artist and have always had a more extreme look in the way I choose to express myself with clothing and makeup, so it always just felt really right and where I was meant to be."

"I then discovered the popular TV show RuPaul's Drag Race, which back then was more centred around 'do-it-yourself' and homemade queer glamour. It really appealed to me, and in a way, I didn't understand that it was drag that made me feel seen. Now, I realise that that was me being a closeted baby gay, enamoured with open queerness. So, I started doing drag! I already had some fairly decent makeup, so I ordered some cheap wigs from eBay and started painting my face in my bedroom, then taking photos and reaching out to other drag artists on social media. It wasn't until I'd been do-

ing drag for a year or so that I began to realise that people treated me differently, and that being a female drag artist was seen as pretty political and polarising."

**Who is Amber Cadaverous to you?**

"Amber Cadaverous is an extension and exaggeration of myself. I would describe her as a goth brat diva, a prima-donna girl of the underworld. She embodies the juxtaposition between overt, camp feminine aesthetics, cute bows, pink lingerie — everything that screams 'girl' — and rot, bugs, horror and punk. I want to be adored and to disgust you at the same time! There is something really cool about now being able to look how 14-year-old me thought she looked."

**There's been a lot of debate over the years about where AFAB and cisgender female queens stand in the community. What difficulties have you experienced in this respect? How do you react to the discrimination that you and other drag artists experience?**



“We have to fight ten times as hard for the same opportunities and successes, and even then, we’re often overlooked or dismissed based on nothing more than what is or isn’t between our legs. I’ve been groped, assaulted and harassed by promoters, drunk patrons and other queens at clubs when I’ve been working in drag, which happens pretty frequently. Sadly, this isn’t a new aspect of nightlife in general, but when it comes from other queer people it’s upsetting. I distinctly remember when I was eighteen and got my first door-hosting job in drag, a man yelled at me one night saying that I ‘wasn’t a real drag queen,’ and insisted that calling myself a drag queen ‘to get a slot in a gay pub’ was discrimination. He also asked if I was really a man. He said I wouldn’t get a job anywhere [as a female drag queen], despite the fact that I was doing a paid job as a queen whilst he was harassing me. Thankfully, I’ve always been very strong-willed. Being eighteen and very new to the gay scene and club environments, that situation could’ve really put me off drag. How could that have happened in a supposedly safe environment for the LGBTQ+ community, where queer women are not only meant to be welcomed, but celebrated and treated as equals? At that time, in 2015, there were only two or three female drag queens working across the entire Birmingham Gay Vil-

lage, and although it doesn’t seem that long ago, six years ago was a very different time to do drag as a woman.”

“Some time ago, I spoke about my experiences in a video for the BBC which amassed 3.5m views. I’ve also been interviewed about female drag queens at RuPaul’s DragCon NYC which received 70,000 views. In the comments section on both of these videos, there’s a few comments that are quite frankly misogynistic; a lot of viewers presume I’m straight and therefore stealing from gay culture. There are some ignorant comments like ‘women can’t be drag queens,’ ‘women don’t go through the same struggles as gay men,’ ‘can’t us gays have our own thing without the straights taking it?’ and ‘straight women feel like they can culturally appropriate from gays because they don’t really respect us.’ I’ve had peers say things to me like, ‘I support you and love what you do, but women shouldn’t be allowed on Drag Race.’ Luckily, I’ve never really cared much for what others think about how I look or what I do. The good has always outshined the bad.”

**What do you have to say to anyone who wants to become a drag artist, but may be too scared because of previous discrimination towards female queens in the community?**

“Block and delete baby, life is too short! Women have always been present in the drag world and queer life. We owe so much to trans women of colour in particular. Queer women exist and we are so powerful. Women, both trans and cis, are an integral part of the drag community! When you block, ignore, and let yourself claim space, you’ll be happier. Gender has no correlation with your ability to create art and express yourself — you just have to find your tribe. If I can do it, you can too!”

**And finally, how would you like to end the stigma and make people recognise that anyone and everyone is valid in the drag community?**

“A lot of bigger promoters should be further diversifying their casts. I want to see more women, trans and non-binary people, disabled drag artists and performers of colour involved on the big-money Drag Race tours. Whilst for the most part I feel respected, I don’t see enough non-traditional queens taking up the space they deserve on prominent line-ups. That exposure to a wider audience who may have never seen artists like us before is what will normalise us and end the stigma.”

EVY MILLER



# VOYEURISM AND OTHER FETISHISMS

Molly Morley

**M**olly Morley critically examines the male gaze and its inextricable relationship with film culture. Throughout time, patriarchal ideals have dominated the masses, consequently leading to various forms of marginalisation towards women. Incessant oppression, disparity in pay, unwanted sexualisation and masculine scopophilia, for instance, are all examples which highlight the marginalisation that women undergo because of the patriarchy and its inextricable cultural force. Through a critical deconstruction of the patriarchy, I have found that women are systematically demeaned and consequently often lack authority amongst their

male peers. The cultural force of the patriarchy is particularly striking in the films of the early 2000s. Low rise jeans, thin eyebrows, white frosted lips and bleached blonde hair: all classic tropes of a 2000s female that you would anticipate seeing in a clique chick-flick. This distinct type of female figure can also be seen in countless horror films of the early 2000s. This female is not placed in the narrative to generate fear, develop the plot or to add a satirical aspect; she is regarded merely as *mise-en-scène* rather than as a character in her own right. This female is placed as a prop, simply to please the male voyeur. As film theorist Laura Mulvey highlights in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), many horror

films are projected in a manner that satisfies this type of male scopophilia. Mulvey suggests that this notion reflects the presence of 'the male gaze', a term which refers to the heteronormative masculine gaze primarily identified in films, under which women are commonly sexualised for the male viewer. As an end result, women in film are commonly represented as mere sexual commodities.

Many horror films include a scene, or several scenes, of a female body being sexualised. Through the use of camera angles, specific features of the female body will be framed and accentuated for no specific reason, but to simply gaze upon. More often than not, these events serve no genuine purpose in the narrative. These females are anonymous, and their personality often remains indistinctive. In contrast, their bodies are highlighted, accentuated and emphasised. Their opinions are disregarded, while their bodies are celebrated. They are mere commodities in the eyes of the male gaze; once the scene picturing their sexualised figure ends, they are generally killed off.

It must be acknowledged that this influence of the male gaze is not exclusive to the horror genre. Sadly, it can be found throughout the entirety of film culture. Various film genres depict women as passive. Older Disney movies, for example, often uphold patriarchal ideals by presenting their female characters as shy damsels in distress. This representation can frame women as sheer objects, and as a result, foregrounds and normalises the male gaze. In this way, the many films that encourage the male gaze, either intentionally or subconsciously, are submerging their audience in patriarchal ideals by conforming to sexist representations of gender. In these films, men are often presented in a higher position of power and authority, whereas women are often seen as mute bodies. The concept of

male supremacy is also prevalent, which places women at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. It could be argued that many of these films encourage men to reject gender equality and allow them to have sadistic fetishes. Without a doubt, the films that exhibit the male gaze are strengthening and perpetuating gender stratification. This singular narrative perspective must be halted to eliminate the systemic barriers towards gender inequality that the male gaze contributes to.

Clearly, the male gaze and film culture have an inextricable and long-lasting relationship. In the 21st century, this outdated idea should cease to exist. As an audience, we should seriously reject these patriarchal stereotypes by consciously consuming films that subvert the male gaze. Various other forms of media challenge the male gaze; for instance, many advertising campaigns celebrate women. A great example is the #thisgirlcan campaign which promotes sport amongst women and celebrates female empowerment.

Ultimately, the subversion of traditional gender roles is being encouraged and discourse that promotes gender equality

is developing. The social system that favours the male gaze should be confronted and challenged. As viewers, we need to become more conscious of the male gaze in order to avoid it. We need to consume films that support gender equality and encourage women's rights. While this sometimes may not be explicitly obvious to identity in the narrative of a film, it can however be identified in other ways; for example, by supporting films that are directed and produced by women. Quite simply, there needs to be a halt in the consumption of films which exhibit the male gaze, and perhaps then the film industry will begin to cease the objectification of women.

**“Clearly, the male gaze and film culture have an inextricable and long-lasting relationship. In the 21st century, this outdated idea should cease to exist.”**

# SIX MUST-WATCH FILMS AND TV SHOWS WHICH CELEBRATE BLACK WOMEN

Chloe Ward

*TW: mentions of rape and abuse.*

Black women have had a phenomenal impact on mainstream media culture, yet it seems to me that our perspectives aren't at all adequately represented in the all-too-often whitewashed realm of popular culture and cinema. If, like me, you're looking for inspiring stories which celebrate diversity, illustrate the complexities of black womanhood, and represent the lived experiences of Black women, then look no further: here's my pick of six must-watch films and TV shows with strong female leads which *everyone* should watch.

The cinematic representation of perspectives which showcase the issues faced by Black women are not only important for those who wish to see themselves reflected in the mainstream media, but for *anyone* looking to educate themselves by examining a different lived experience than their own. The films and TV shows I've picked out promote a sense of understanding, acceptance and compassion in those who watch, as well as an appreciation for the strength and resilience of Black women.



© LUMINO PLECO BLOG

## *Burning An Illusion* (1981)

Considered to be the first British film to give a central narrative voice to a Black woman, *Burning An Illusion* refuses to conform to the traditional trope of putting the white male at the focal point of the plot and having everything revolve around his perspective. At the time of its release, this notion was practically unheard of in British film. *Burning An Illusion* follows Pat, a young Black British woman who has aspirations of gaining middle-class respectability through marriage, which she believes is a reflection of her parents' own values. She then meets Del, a young Black man who, like Pat, is struggling with issues of discrimination and racial abuse. Their budding romance is Pat's first awakening in life, as she opens herself up to the possibility of loving someone that she had not originally pictured herself with. However, Del's chauvinistic tendencies begin to fracture their relationship. Pat attempts to deal with these issues

and repair their relationship, all the while trying to hold onto her dream of gaining respectability. Other characters in the narrative also grapple with these issues; Pat discovers that her parents' values, and the entire legacy of the Windrush Generation, were built on shaky foundations, precariously resting on social constructs which discriminated against them and offered only delusions of opportunity and equality. This film highlights the historical prejudices affecting London's Black communities and the Windrush Generation, as well as exposing the prevalent racist attitudes of the time. This is such an underrated film; it is a groundbreaking and socially-conscious work of its time.

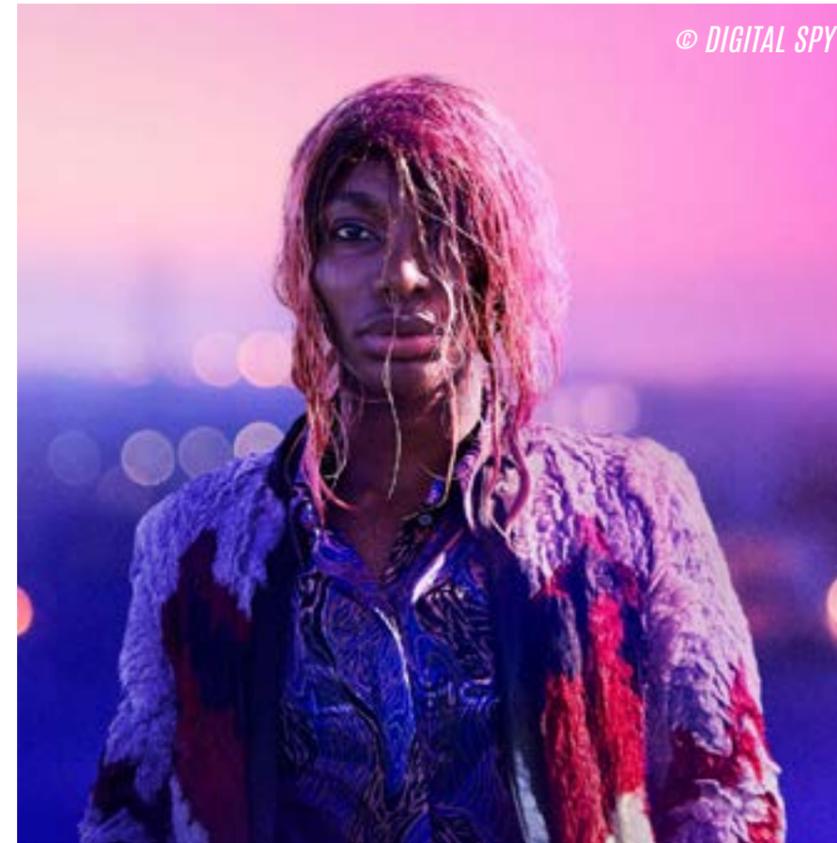


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## The Colour Purple (1985)

Originally a novel by Alice Walker, *The Colour Purple* is set in 1940s America, in rural south Georgia. The film follows Celie (Whoopi Goldberg), who undergoes a transformative personal journey whilst struggling with the legacy of her childhood abuse, a dictatorial husband, the loss of her children, and the ubiquitous racism of the time. With the help of several other independent Black women also facing their own struggles, Celie manages to break free from the then-socially-accepted trap of patriarchy and oppression. The film showcases the depth of a Black woman's power, as well as detailing a lot of the challenges faced by black Americans in the 1940s post-slavery period. This film expertly reflects on the cyclical nature of

abuse and the oppression of Black American women, proving itself to be a cinematic work which is strong and inspirational. Some parts of the film can be difficult to watch, but don't let that scare you off. The resilience of the female protagonists makes *The Colour Purple* a must-watch.



## I May Destroy You (2020)

*I May Destroy You* documents the impact of trauma and its rippling knock-on effects through the story of Arabella (Michaela Coel). It is a raw, messy account of what assault can do to a person, but it is also very witty at times. After a drunken night out, Arabella wakes to the fuzzy memory of a man standing over her in a bathroom toilet, slowly coming to realise that she has been drugged and raped by a stranger. The show follows Arabella as she first dismisses the trauma of what has happened and then comes to terms with the horrific truth, all whilst trying to (for want of a better phrase) keep her shit together. Accepting the fact of her trauma forces Arabella to reevaluate everything about herself and her life, including her work, family, friends, and her relationship with social media,

and pushes her to question what 'loving' and 'being loved' now means to her. *I May Destroy You* is a multi-faceted narrative full of brilliant writing, wit and emotion, which dissects how consent, or the lack thereof, is interwoven into daily life.



## Paris Is Burning (1990)

This iconic documentary showcases the emergence of 'voguing' through the perspectives of queer men in the gay ballroom scene of the 1980s. However, it is also one of the only documentaries that sheds an essential light on the experiences of black and brown trans women during that period as well. *Paris Is Burning* reveals how LGBTQ+ African American and Latinx men and women found a sense of community, at a time where classism, racism, homophobia and transphobia were rife. What is troubling to me is that the documentary remains politically and socially poignant today, over 30 years after its initial release, the film speaks powerfully to the continued oppression and



## A Moving Image (2016)

*A Moving Image* is an award-winning multimedia film which incorporates a layered narrative with documentary-style interviews of real people in Brixton, London. Blurring the lines between reality and fiction, the film allows the audience to explore the journey of Nina, a struggling artist, when she returns to her community after a long absence and witnesses how much gentrification has changed her home. With the inclusion of real-life testimonials, the film gives the audience a poignant look at how gentrification affects Brixton and the multicultural communities within this area.



## Insecure (2016)

*Insecure*, an adaptation of Issa Rae's webseries *Diary of an Awkward Black Girl*, stormed onto the screen in 2016. The show is a refreshing representation of the complexities of black womanhood in America. By positioning Issa Rae's character as the protagonist, *Insecure* defies the stereotype of the sassy, 'angry Black girl' side-character trope. Her character is *not* the stereotypical 'angry Black woman'; she is full of depth and dimension and complexity and many insecurities. This makes her a highly relatable character, especially for women of colour, giving us a chance to see our own lives reflected on the screen. *Insecure* is a sitcom, and whilst the main protagonist fumbles through her life decisions and mistakes with great hilarity, the show also explores how black women deal with relationships, both with ourselves and those around us. The first episode sees Issa expressing her anger at the

fact that she is the token black person in her place of work, filling the 'diversity quota' in a group of staff run by a white woman who appropriates African American culture by wearing a dashiki, a traditional African garment which was popularized and claimed by those in the African diaspora. This scene develops with so much humour, irony and painfully piercing accuracy, which sets the tone for the whole series. *Insecure* gives you everything you want in a series; it's beautifully written, sensationally funny and has brilliant character development.



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**DEBUT  
FEMALE  
HORROR  
DIRECTORS  
WHO CHALLENGE  
MALE-CENTRIC  
CINEMATIC TROPES**

## Lucy Lavery

Lucy Lavery explores how *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* and *Saint Maud* challenge male-centric tropes within horror films.

In the horror genre, directors love tropes and often focus on the act of violence in two defined roles: the predator and the prey - who is stronger and who is not? They often present a set of rules that dictate survival based entirely on stereotypes. As a result, male-centric cinematic tropes in horror such as 'the final girl' trope continue to insult women.

For instance, when was the last time you saw a man begging for his life in a horror film? Far too often, we see females surviving only as a result of their 'purity'. This discussion has been going on for far too long; yet, as soon as I sign into Netflix, I am confronted with the same tedious horror films that are stuck replicating the female as a man's prey. However, some female debut directors are creating

new roles for women in horror which are subversive to the typical male-centric tropes. Rose Glass and Ana Lily Amirpour place the women in their films in the clear position of the predator, creating a new power structure. This new power structure seems to offer the female characters a more complex psychology as opposed to the typical male fear fantasy associated with female predators in horror, such as the classic 'femme fatale'.

Ana Lily Amirpour's debut, *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, is an Iranian vampire western, the first of its kind. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* breaks boundaries within the horror genre and subverts the typical male-centric cinematic tropes. Amirpour's black and white debut has very few lines, all of which are powered by the strong performance of an all-Iranian cast. Amirpour's subversive horror follows a female protagonist who is simply referred to as 'The Girl'. The Girl is a skateboarding, chador wearing vampire who preys on predators. The blatant role reversal of The Girl makes for an interesting shift in the standard power balance between women and men which is predominantly present in horror.



star

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The title of the film itself defies the usual connotations of 'a girl who walks alone at night'. Typically, a girl alone at night is someone that is preyed upon, not someone who hunts men that prey upon girls. The Girl uses her sexuality to lure men to their death, hunting those guilty of gender-based violence. Regardless of her use of sexuality, her character offers complexity; she is the monster who stalks her prey.

Surprisingly, *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* can be described as a thrilling romance as much as it can be described as a horror. The romantic story of The Girl is genuine and beautifully depicted through monochromatic neo-noir cinematography. Although it uses typical horror archetypes and tropes, it manages to stunningly subvert them at every chance given, resulting in a carefully crafted fantastical world that challenges our understanding of what tropes make a horror. For example, a romantic relationship develops between The Girl



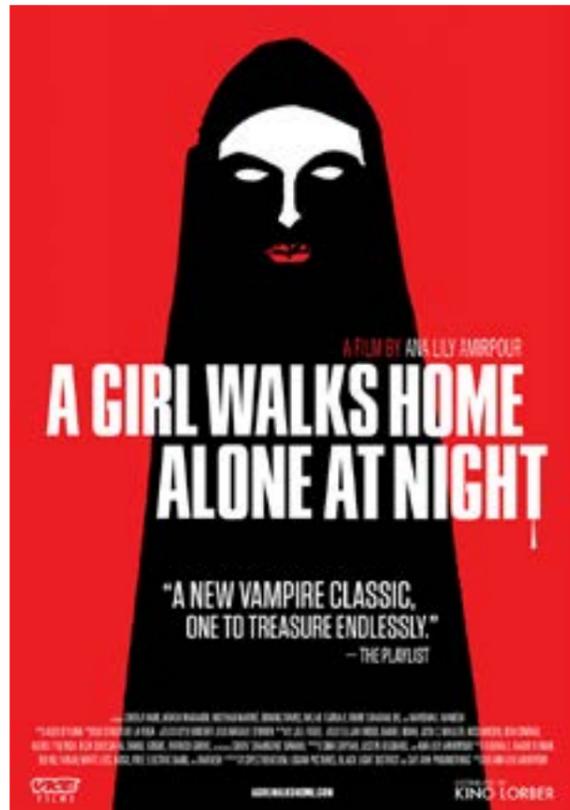
poisonous

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and Arash; rather than The Girl preying on Arash, a romance flourishes between them. The relationship that develops gives The Girl agency, and offers the viewer a complex play on morality. This is the kind of representation that women should be getting in the horror film industry!

The Girl convinces us that she is not a conventional 'final girl' and it is clear that the inclusive representation throughout *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* goes further than just gender. Intersectional inspections of female-centric plots in horror are far too often preserved for white women. Amirpour breaks this stereotype by casting an Iranian woman who is constantly seen wearing a chador. This decision opposes the issue of Islamophobia that is present not only in the horror genre but throughout wider society. It begins to break down the all-too-prevalent 'othering' of Middle Eastern individuals in films. There are few roles women are given in male-centric cinematic tropes, and there are even fewer roles for women who wear a chador. It is refreshing to see such a relatable character with complex issues breaking harsh stereotypes placed on women, especially Middle Eastern women.

In her debut film *Saint Maud*, writer and director Rose Glass introduces us to the cynical mind of the tormented soul Maud. Essentially, *Saint Maud* is a character study of a horror heroine whose religious asceticism explores the erotic intimacy that exists between women in positions of care. Glass investigates the corruptive influence of an abusive belief system through a feminist evolution of bodily horror.



© A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT



It seems to me that Maud is both the predator and the prey, in that she is constantly seen falling victim to her insanity and self-harm. Male-centric cinematic tropes often don't explore such self-destructive characteristics in women, perhaps because self-destructive behaviour in women is not considered 'sexy'.

Maud's constant yearning for a moment of revelation results in outbreaks of explosive moments of bodily horror which is truly unnerving. The film is riddled with torturous methods of devotional self-harm, such as nails in shoes. There is something

almost medieval in Maud's inquisition. This is constantly juxtaposed through celestial interactions with God in which Maud appears divine and saintly. Persistently, the viewer is left questioning the blurred lines between God's heavenly words and Maud's unsettling egotistical beliefs. Ultimately, Glass leaves it to the viewer to interpret the story and pick between the lines of sanity and complete mental derangement. Similar to The Girl's complexity, Maud is complicated and could be considered as both the villain and the saviour.

With a majority female cast, Rose leads us away from the male gaze and explores femininity within the horror genre. Maud is not just a desperate female figure seeking salvation; her disturbing authority over her destructive actions acts as a constant reminder that the monstrous female characters portrayed in horror films don't just have to be used as a phallogocentric tool. Glass proves to us that women in horror films can be self-serving and more concerned with their affairs than their male counterparts. Glass challenges the conventions of typically male-centric tropes by presenting us with a female protagonist who is willing to completely self-destruct to achieve - what she considers to be - the perfect euphoric state.



cruel

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# INTERVIEW WITH DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER ABBIE WOODBRIDGE

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## Sophie Fisher

Abbie Woodbridge is a documentary filmmaker, teacher and animal activist. Abbie has a degree in media and creative writing and is now studying an MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation. She dedicates her life to raising awareness of environmental and animal issues and educates people about how mending our relationship with animals can be essential in tackling climate change. Abbie's first feature-length documentary *Wolves Unmasked* was released in January this year and before this she has worked on various short films, music videos and documentaries for her YouTube channel Animal Educate.

Firstly, congratulations on the premiere of your documentary *Wolves Unmasked!* How did you get into documentary filmmaking?

'I started making films when I was young - I was into anything thriller-like or emotive. I remember using a basic editor on my very dated computer that crashed constantly. It would take days to edit a three-minute film!'

'When I went back into education after having my daughter, I knew that media and creative writing was the right path for me at the time. I loved it, but I particularly enjoyed the photography and videography modules, as well as the journalistic elements.'

'I've always loved animals and I was only 10 years old when I started research projects about cetaceans. However, I've always been creative so anything science-based was pushed away to make room for my creative cravings. My interest in studying animals has always stuck with me which is why I decided to start an MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation. I'm fascinated with the animal kingdom and their roles, but also how we interact with animals, and the different

relationships we have with nature based on our own upbringings and cultures.'

'I adopted a vegan lifestyle and became an animal activist after being introduced to *Earthlings* and *Forks Over Knives*. This was a valuable step in my learning process regarding how to communicate and teach people about animal issues. I found a lot of the activism I was participating in very difficult and emotionally, I knew that something was missing. I believe activism is powerful and is completely relevant in educating people, but I also believe that there are other ways to connect to people and create awareness of important issues. I started considering what makes people engage with positive change and which approach is the most effective. I started thinking about David Attenborough and various TV shows that teach people about nature and the animal kingdom. My heart sang as I knew I had found the perfect path for myself. I'm a videographer, I'm studying an MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation and I'm a teacher. It made so much sense, combining my love of documentary filmmaking, research and wildlife.'



**The work that you do aims to raise awareness of animal and environmental issues. Why do you think this is so important to do?**

'It has never been more important to raise awareness about the environmental dilemma that we face. We are facing a climate emergency. We need to approach each age group about climate change appropriately. Young people need to be educated from the early stages of schooling, and wildlife and environmental education should be mandatory. You can't care about what you

don't know. The older generation needs to be educated on what they can do now to make changes for the better and make more conscious and compassionate choices about their lifestyle. It's amazing to think how little individual changes can collectively make huge change.'

**Have you ever encountered any gender bias, or found it difficult to pursue a career in filmmaking - especially as it is such a male-dominated industry?**

'I know this exists, but because I entered the industry independently, I haven't

experienced this regarding pursuing a career in filmmaking. Unfortunately, I have suffered institutional gender bias within other media roles, which has prevented my progression in certain areas. On reflection, it wasn't the path for me anyway. It has fuelled me to achieve my goals in other ways and forced me to become better than those who have sought to repress my creativity and professional practice.'

'It's a pity, as women and men have so much to offer for their individual qualities, none more valuable than the other. Some say that women offer film making something that masculinity can't. I believe that masculine and feminine energy both have obvious traits that benefit any working projects.'

**What role do you think films have in influencing positive social change?**

'I'm a strong believer that films influence positive change in society, as well as the attitudes and actions of individuals. I changed my own lifestyle and mindset as a result of a film and have seen the impact films have had on other people. Through studying film theory, I understand entirely how important they are.'

'You have to consider the

elements within a film that make it so powerful. Documentaries give us spoken information that is aided by visuals and for most of us, this allows for better absorption of that information. Documentaries are thoroughly researched and display a collection of different sources of opinions and facts, which are often from leading experts in that field or celebrities. These well-known figures have substantial power to influence people and make them take notice of the topic that is being discussed.'

'Documentaries are great for education as they use a form of storytelling which pieces together a puzzle. People love stories and this allows them to engage and connect emotionally with the information that is being presented. Films also have the power of exposure which allows the viewer to be more receptive to information and topics that they may not have been aware of before.'

**What advice would you give to women who are aspiring to work in the film industry?**

'Start by learning as much as you can about camera gear. If you want your films to look professional, then the equipment is key. However, many films have been shot on phones and have

been successful! Equipment is just a small part of film making though, you should also build up your knowledge of the industry; the makers, creators, styles of filming and editing.'

'If you want to make documentaries, you should find a subject that is topical, preferably something that you are passionate about and interested in. Find the overarching question within that topic, you can then create a jigsaw puzzle around this question which represents your quest to gather answers. Whatever you do, you must allow yourself to be open to people, to work collaboratively, and above all, to listen. Listen to every voice, every view and to your instincts.'

**What is next for you - what are your goals for 2021?**

'I'm in the early stages of editing a film about human and wildlife conflict. I'm also shooting a film about rewilding and I will continue to grow my YouTube channel. COVID will continue to have an impact on my goals this year as shooting is going to be an issue, however the pandemic has given me more time to plan and research my projects. No matter what I'm doing, as long as I'm learning about animals and helping them in some way, I'm happy!'

# HOW *FLEABAG* DEFIES THE NORMS OF FEMININITY

HEATHER ROY



[A woman in her mid-thirties stands in a doorway in front of her father] 'I have a horrible feeling that I'm a greedy perverted, selfish, apathetic, cynical, depraved, morally bankrupt woman who can't even call herself a feminist.'

From episode one of *Fleabag's* first season, the audience cannot help but be instantly invested. Written by and starring Phoebe Waller-Bridge, *Fleabag's* eponymous, problematic and complex protagonist draws us in, encapsulating both hilarity and heartbreak in the twenty-something minutes of each episode.

Loud and outrageous, Fleabag's life revolves around failed relationships, ill-advised sexual encounters, and her crumbling café business. She is grief-stricken from the loss of her mother and best friend and is unreservedly unruly in her transgression of the socially accepted norms of femininity.

To deem Waller-Bridge's character simply an 'anti-heroine' – as she has been so often in the past – somewhat evades her dichotomous character and mischievous charisma. She is simultaneously loveable and utterly unlikeable. But one thing is for sure – Fleabag is chaos personified, mayhem wrapped in a black trench coat and finished with red lipstick. Her unruliness is precisely her appeal.

It's easy to synonymise on-screen feminism with representations that depict 'successful' women – both the show and its protagonist are acutely aware of this. This is perhaps why Fleabag consistently questions whether she is a 'bad feminist'. With her career and relationships being tumultuous at best, she uses sex as a method of, in her words, deflecting from the 'screaming void inside [her] empty heart.' Her failures in work, love, and friendships collectively create an image of a woman who is not succeeding in the way that society believes she should. It is in her supposed failures, however, that we can relate to Fleabag. She's imperfect, unruly, and entirely outrageous. The programme's feminism lies precisely in these assets and their problematisation of the social and cultural norms of femininity.

Fleabag's sly side glances and direct addresses to the camera are vital in creating much of the show's

humour, but also in establishing and nurturing a connection between actor and audience. It is through these breaks in the fourth wall that the viewer is persuaded to emote and emphasise with her. In one scene, Fleabag visits a therapist (played by Fiona Shaw) who asks her 'do you have friends?'. Fleabag turns to the camera with a knowing smile, explicitly validating the viewers as her friends; they have no choice but to side with her because they have become the recipients of her secrets and private confessions.

On-screen representations of gender have long been entrenched in the concept of the patriarchal male gaze. Laura Mulvey's famous essay *Visual*

**“On-screen representations of gender have long been entrenched in the concept of the patriarchal male gaze”**

*Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) coins the phrase. In short, Mulvey's theory explores the image of the female in the media as viewed from the perspective of the heterosexual man, highlighting the female's passivity and objectification. Once you notice the male gaze in film, television, and advertising, it is entirely inescapable. *Fleabag's* subversion of the male gaze is refreshing and almost paradoxical in its commentary on the longstanding patriarchal dynamics of 'looking'. The programme's charming use of direct address intensifies Fleabag's female gaze by creating a female-dominated point of view. When Fleabag falls for a priest (affectionately named the 'Hot Priest' by the internet) brilliantly played by Andrew Scott, the show's subversion of

the male gaze comes into play. We side with Fleabag as she gazes at her new love interest, 'his neck... his beautiful neck!'. Waller-Bridge's commentary here is brimming with satire; in destabilising normative gender dynamics, she shines a light on the misogyny of the male gaze. Refreshingly, the programme functions as a space where a female agency is not only permitted, but encouraged, and its protagonist's fierce autonomy over her own life and narrative epitomises feminism at its most basic level.

*Fleabag* manages to be politically aware without losing its humour. Waller-Bridge clearly understands the contradictory aspects of contemporary feminism and exploits these in comical ways. Episode one sees Fleabag and her sister, Claire, attend a feminist lecture titled 'Women Speak: Opening Woman's Mouths since 1988' and two episodes later we see the two at an all-female silent retreat called 'Breath of Silence: Women Don't Speak.' The dichotomy is stark and satirizes the elements of confusion around feminism in today's society; it seems that quiet, abiding women are not feminists, but neither are loud rebellious ones.



© @FLEABAG ON INSTAGRAM

“Refreshingly, the programme functions as a space where a female agency is not only permitted, but encouraged, and its protagonist's fierce autonomy over her own life and narrative epitomises feminism at its most basic level”

My praise is not to suggest that *Fleabag* solves the existing issues of gender representation on screen – whilst its feminist agenda is progressive and positive, the programme's depiction of women is only applicable to a small subsection. For *Fleabag* to be deemed a voicing of the collective female experience is perhaps problematic. The middle-to-upper-class white women that drive the show's narrative reflect only one type of feminism, reflecting the need for representation, both on and off-screen, for that which reaches *beyond* white feminism.

But at its heart, *Fleabag*'s story is compelling because it is entirely her own. Full of the flaws and contradictions of being a woman, her narrative is both progressive and relatable. As Waller-Bridge put it in an interview with *The Cut*, “this is a show about the glory of being a woman, and in the glory of being a woman, the darker bits are involved.”



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# OUT OF THE SHADOW

BY HANA KOHOUT

Many of the esteemed and celebrated female artists we know now only became visible more prominently after the second wave of feminism during the 1960s. Most of these women still create art and have notable careers, such as Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger. However, this has not always been the case. The contribution and creativity of women artists has been overlooked and overshadowed for some time in the art world. There are many reasons for this, with education and access being some of the biggest barriers. Linda Nochlin's essay, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1971) addresses this issue head-on and is a work that every woman should read. Her essay highlights the many limitations put on women creatives, which will allow a new generation to realise that now is the time to change that.

One specific group of women who have not enjoyed success and recognition until more recently are the wives and partners of famous male artists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem De Kooning and Edward Hopper. These women are just a handful of those whose creative careers revolved around their celebrated male partners, with their own contributions to the art world being side-tracked. It's so important for us to re-examine the work of these female artists who were defined by their circumstances and therefore not recognised or celebrated enough for their creativity, skill and work. What they all have in common is the label of 'wife' or 'partner'. More precisely, they are not primarily recognised by society as creatives and artists, but their name is directly connected to their famous husbands, even though these women produced quality work and were properly educated themselves.

For example, in Art History classes at universities, Lee Krasner is firstly introduced to students by her relationship with her partner Jackson Pollock, and then as an artist who was part of the abstract expressionism movement. The names of these wom-

**Hana Kohout celebrates the work of classical female artists who, for too long, have been historically overshadowed by their male counterparts.**

en are directly put in connection to their partners without a sole recognition of their work. This is something that needs to be amended. By putting forth this knowledge and creating a conversation on topics such as this, we can raise awareness of the issue that surely transcends beyond just the realm of art and also affects other careers and sectors. The first association attached to the names of these women should not be the accomplishments of their partners - it should be their own accomplishments, creative works and teachings. We need to recognise our own inherent bias and correct the unequal public perception of their identity.

The women that are discussed in this article have a number of things in common, one being that they helped to promote and advance their partners' work ahead of their own. In other words, they contributed to their partners' success to the detriment of their own. Lee Krasner was an American abstract expressionist painter who was particularly interested in painting and collage. However, she never wanted to be defined by a particular artistic style. Her work was constantly changing, and she liked to view her creativity as a constantly evolving process. Even when she was in a relationship with Jackson Pollock, she never stopped creating. However, she put a significant amount of her energy into supporting his career; she introduced him to many big names in New York which helped him to become an established artist. She devoted her time to him and therefore contributed directly to his success. She was only recognised for her own

**'It is so important for us to re-examine the work of these female artists who were defined by their circumstances and therefore not recognised or celebrated enough for their creativity, skill and work.'**

artistic achievements later on, when a full retrospective in her name was held at the Museum of Modern Art from December 1984 to February 1985. What is interesting is though, is that she didn't put a signature on any of her artwork, as she wanted to maintain her anonymity. We can only guess that she wanted her work solely to speak for her and to be her voice.

Elaine De Kooning was a particularly skilled portraitist in the post-World War II era, during the periods of abstract expressionism and figurative expressionism. She is mostly recognised for her portrait of President Kennedy. In a way, she reinvented the modern portrait, mixing abstract expressionism with figuration. However, her husband Willem De Kooning is still the first association people make when they hear her name. As she was very social, fierce and well-known in New York artistic circles, she frequently promoted Willem's career; she believed in his greatness and therefore helped him manage his career and promote his work to his contemporaries. Despite this, she does not get the credit she deserves as an artist and portraitist in her own right.

Jo Hopper was also a successful artist whose works were shown alongside the likes of Modigliani, Man Ray and Picasso. In the early 1900s, she had a thriving artistic career and

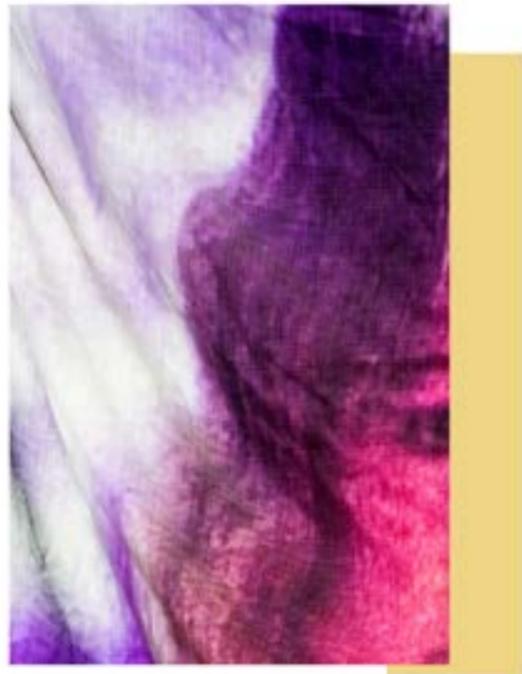
received a Bachelor of Arts degree before marrying the American realist painter Edward Hopper, after which she quickly became the main muse in his works. She was integral to his success, as like Lee Krasner and Elaine De Kooning, she helped to manage her husband's career by giving him exposure in esteemed artistic circles. After her marriage and devotion to him and his career, her work became less frequently recognised and exhibited, and over time, she was forgotten and overlooked by many.

Consequently, we can see that all these women were integral to their husbands' successes. They gave a lot of their energy, and subsequently their life, to their partners' careers. Looking back now, many questions may come to mind: why did these women put their partners above themselves? Why did they invest in them more than in themselves? Did they perhaps see something in their husbands that they did not see in themselves? We cannot judge these women's choices from our contemporary point of view, because we live in different times with a new and different awareness of our own feminine power. All we can do is try to give them the recognition they deserve. As Linda Nochlin asserts, 'we will need all our wit and courage to make sure that women's voices are heard, their work seen and written about.'

# SASHA HARE SASHA HARE SASHA HARE

Sasha is a Documentary Social Photographer who is driven by capturing how we all interact with each other, with elements of colour and collaboration, her ethos captures the chaotic movements of the lives we live. @sashaharephoto on instagram and facebook

Project bio: 'A Man After Midnight', as a reference to an unknown element of time experienced in the Rave, is an exploration of the chaotic rituals of youth in the UK party scene; focussing on the infatuating and subconscious sensory experiences individuals need to have in order to let go.



# ART SALE: CHARLOTTE TASKER



© THOMAS ELLIOT



## MADDIE BAZIN

In the Art Sale for Issue 2, Maddie Bazin interviews Charlotte Tasker, a Manchester graduate whose desire to discover the everyday uses of art led to the creation of her gorgeous pottery pieces. Charlotte graduated from the Manchester School of Art in 2019,

having found a particular interest in gender fluidity through bodily forms. She decided to explore her interests through pottery, and was encouraged by many to begin selling her works after noticing the popularity of them amongst friends and colleagues.

“I found that I loved just creating what I wanted to, *because I wanted to*”

You graduated from university in 2019; how did you find your rhythm in terms of the art you wanted to create?

‘I studied Fine Art at foundation [level] and then Fine Art and Art History for a degree at Manchester. I was surrounded by creativity and I found that I wanted that [to continue] after I left, so myself and a group of friends decided to rent some shared studio space. Obviously the lockdown scuppered that slightly and we were unable to actually find anywhere, but the idea and the drive encouraged me to keep creating regardless. I found that I loved just creating what I wanted to, *because I wanted to*. I worked with all sorts of materials throughout my time at university, like glass and wood, but ultimately I found that I loved clay. My degree showcase explored gender fluidity and bodily forms and I attended a lot of life drawing sessions - usually as the only person there with clay!’



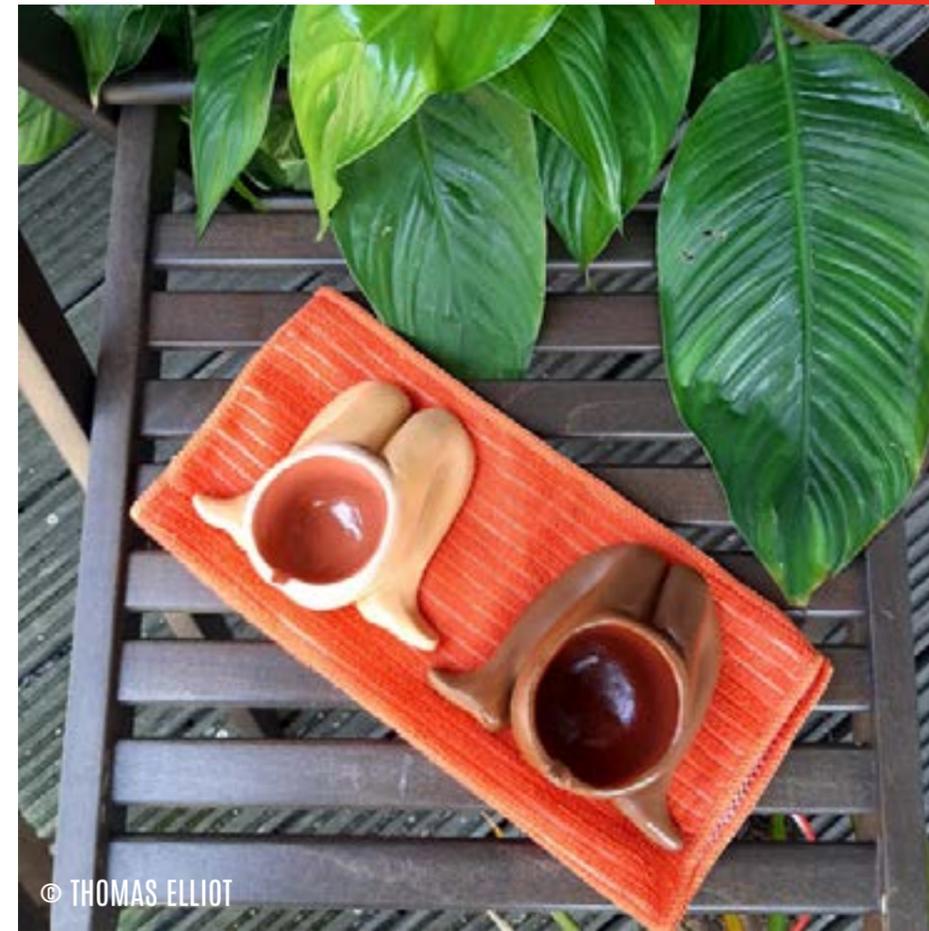
© THOMAS ELLIOT

I'm so intrigued by your pieces, especially your 'ass trays' and body form vases. Could you explain how you came up with the idea for these?

‘At university, I had a lot of pots and dishes that I had made displayed in my house. When friends came over they would mistake them for ashtrays and use them as such. This got pretty tiring, so I set myself a challenge to see what would appeal to them most to use as an ashtray. The 'ass trays' came around as a joke, honestly, after sitting around coming up with puns for hours! The body vases, I suppose, are an extension of my degree showcase work and my interest in the bodily form. I create any body shape; I don't like to focus on any kind of 'ideal' in that sense.’



© THOMAS ELLIOT



© THOMAS ELLIOT



© THOMAS ELLIOT

**How did lockdown affect your creativity and art?**

‘Actually, it did wonders for me! I was furloughed and I found that suddenly I had all this time for art and creation that previously I had to fit in around my spare time. It was amazing to suddenly be able to create absolutely anything I wanted with no real time restraints! I was lucky to have enough materials to be able to create at home, which I recognise helped me out a lot, and I was able to really finetune all of the ideas and plans I had.’

**You started selling your work throughout lockdown. How did you begin that endeavour and how have you found it?**

‘Honestly, it took a lot of nudging and encouragement from my friends. It takes a lot to consider your art worthy to sell and for a long time I just didn’t think of myself seriously enough. I had made personalised pieces for friends, but I never even considered selling them as a business. Over lockdown, I had friends offer to help me with websites and social media, so I decided to take the leap and begin to create to sell. I wanted [the pieces] to be personalised to whatever the customer wanted, especially because with body forms there is so much room to incorporate personal desires.’

**Do you have any advice for any other artists who may be thinking about selling their art?**

‘Do it! Take yourself and your art seriously, because you are the only person who can make it happen. I would love to say that it’s super easy, but the fact is that it is mentally quite tricky to reassure yourself that you are good enough to sell. Luckily, I had an amazing, tight-knit group who encouraged and reassured me. So, I guess that’s my other piece of advice! Surround yourself with people who are genuinely encouraging and supportive and I promise all of those ideas that seem so far off will feel a little more real and tangible.’

“Take yourself and your art seriously, because you are the only person who can make it happen”



Charlotte’s ‘ass trays’ and nude vases can be found on her website. Her art portfolio and ongoing projects can also be found on her instagram, @chars\_ceramics.

# EVERY BODY

MISTY ROBSON

Meet Antonia Jolley, the artist reshaping body image across social media.

Striking simplicity meets feminine beauty in the most recent project by artist Antonia Jolley, whose gouache watercolour portraits aim to tackle one of the most common issues on social media: an unrealistic standard for women to have the so-called “perfect” body.

Jolley, a first-class Fine Art graduate from De Montfort University, hopes her work will inspire women around the world to love their bodies and celebrate their true beauty, despite many

of the online preconceptions surrounding body image.

The project mainly features women with all manner of body types, sizes and skin tones, as well as those with surgical scars, tattoos and other body modifications, in the hopes of empowering and celebrating the differences that make *Every Body* unique.

It comes on the back of several exhibitions of Jolley’s work in and around Leicester in 2020, including at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery’s *Inspired in Lockdown*, and the *LOVE Art Exhibition* virtually hosted by the Curve Theatre.

Many of Jolley’s anonymous models, who are known only in the project by an identifying number, share their own thoughts on how their bodies make them feel, something that Jolley was also keen to highlight within the project alongside the artworks themselves.



© ANTONIA JOLLEY 48



© ANTONIA JOLLEY 75



© ANTONIA JOLLEY 236

One model stated:

“I have always had some insecurities about my body. I would compare myself to photos I see on social media and wonder why my body didn't look like everyone else's with smooth hairless skin, a long and slim torso and curves in all the 'right places'. I have learnt that everyone's body is different and that having a belly that isn't flat, toned and smooth is natural and isn't something I need to change about myself. I am happy, healthy and learning to accept my own body.”

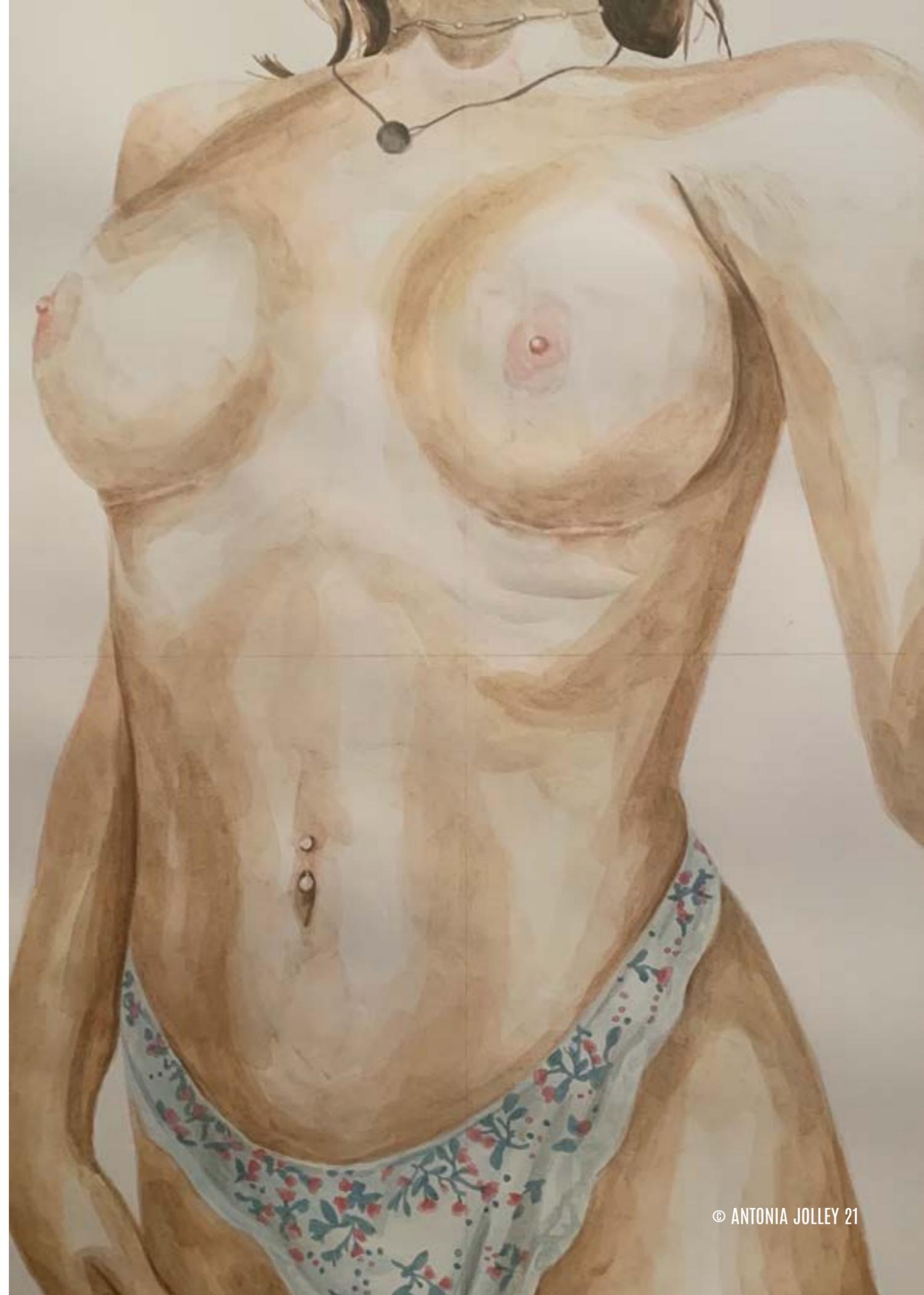
Another model admitted that:

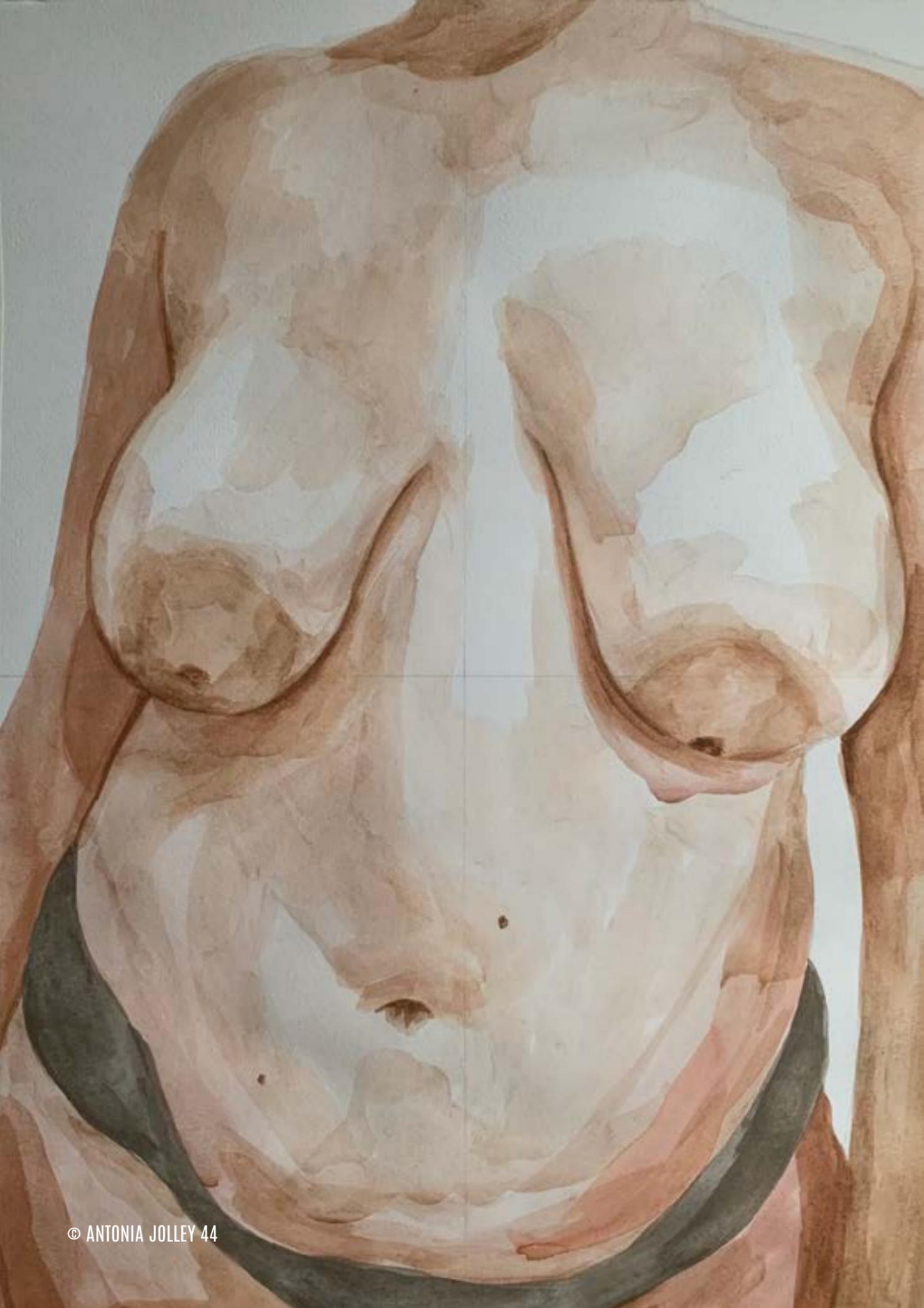
“The views of others massively affect my relationship with my body.”

© ANTONIA JOLLEY 64



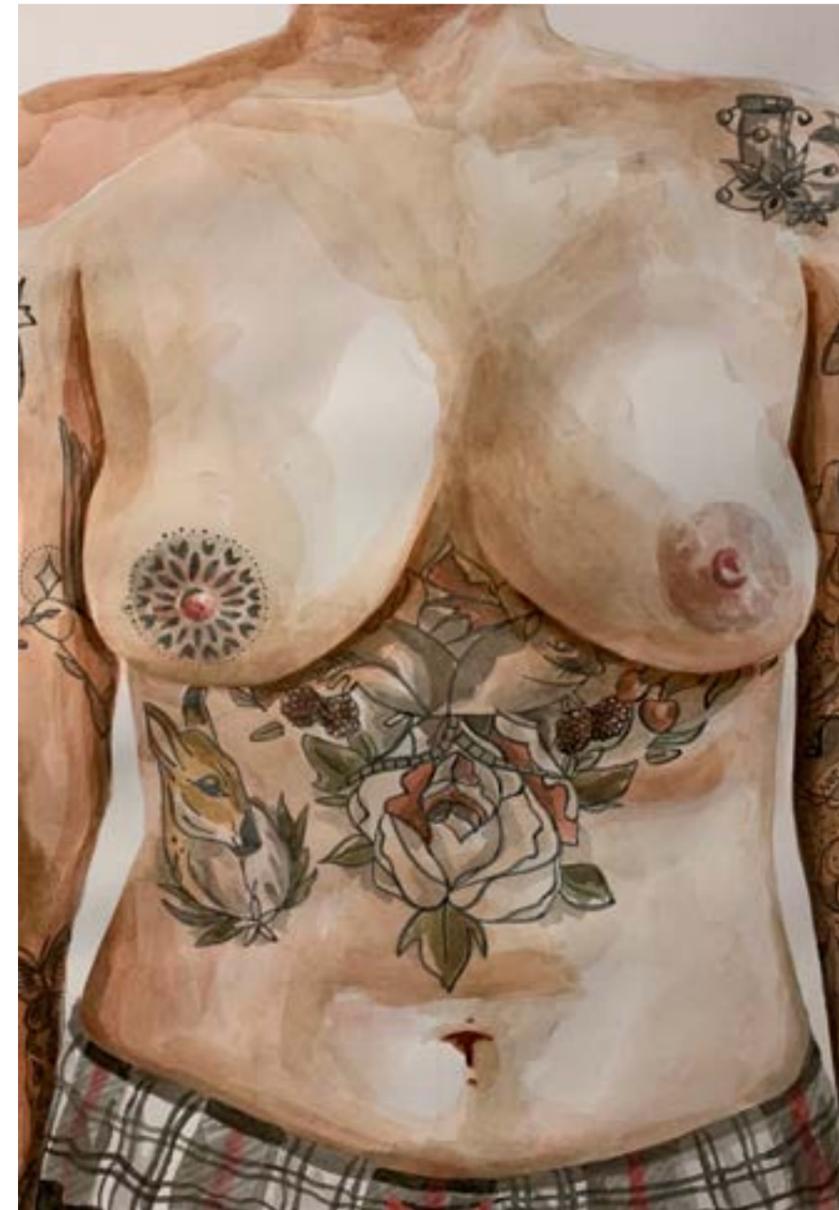
© ANTONIA JOLLEY 21





© ANTONIA JOLLEY 44

© ANTONIA JOLLEY 29



Jolley's art challenges social media perfectionism and gives a voice to women who feel as though they have been let down and left out of the social media scene because of their body image and a lack of representation. Jolley hopes that this project will give confidence to women both on and offline, with her art laying the groundwork for more much-needed change in the coming years.

Antonia Jolley's work on this project, as well as her existing portfolio, can be found on Instagram [@antoniajolleyart](#) and on Facebook [Antonia Jolley Art](#).

# EXPOSING ENDOMETRIOSIS

by Emma Gill

**“WHEN THE GP MENTIONED ENDOMETRIOSIS... I HAD NEVER HEARD OF IT, AND I COULDN'T EVEN PRONOUNCE IT. HOW COULD I HAVE SUCH A SERIOUS AND HARMFUL CONDITION THAT I WAS SO COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF?”**

Endometriosis is an incurable disease with no known cause. It's where tissue similar to the lining of the womb grows in other areas of the body, and research has found it can grow anywhere except for the spleen. It's also known to cause cysts, endometriosis deposits and adhesions that act like a glue causing organs to stick together. Although it's estimated to affect 1 in 10 women, the incorrectly 'normalised' symptoms of Endometriosis means receiving an accurate diagnosis is an all too common struggle.

Today, we talk to Nola Audrey who documents her journey to raise awareness of the condition, after being diagnosed with Endometriosis at the tail end of an eight-year-long battle with health care professionals and multiple incorrect diagnosis.



© Nola Audrey. @ovary\_reacting\_audery on Instagram

**What was your journey like to receive your diagnosis?**

“My journey to receiving my diagnosis was incredibly difficult. I remember going to the doctor regarding my bowels and bladder function when I was ten years old. I had extreme constipation and a recurrent bladder/kidney infection. Each time I was shunned off with a new antibiotic.

“I remember my first period like it was yesterday. I was throwing up. I was bleeding extremely heavily. I couldn't move. My mum knew something was wrong, so she took me to the doctors, but I was disregarded again. Each time my period came, the bleeding was horrendous. I would have to call my mum to bring me a new skirt and tights to school or to collect me due to the sickness. Despite my mum taking me to the doctors regularly, they insisted it was normal, and this was sadly, the cards I had been dealt.

“The symptoms then dramatically progressed; I was fainting on a regular basis and the pelvic and lower back pain was unbearable. I spent many nights in A&E pleading for help. Each time I was pushed away because the scans didn't show anything.

“It was only when I became sexually active that I knew something wasn't right. It felt like I was being stabbed in my vagina and stomach, I would bleed heavily afterwards, and on some occasions, I would be sick. Again, my GP stated it was because I was young, and the pain would go away the more I had sex.

## BODY POLITICS AND POSITIVITY

“It wasn't until I had a miscarriage at 17 years old that I was taken seriously. I was sent for ultrasounds, blood tests and x-rays. All came back 'clear'. I was told that 'I was just unlucky this time'.

“A year later, I was rushed in and admitted to hospital due to extreme pain. When the scans and tests came back clear, they simply regarded me as a mystery and sent me on my way, with stronger painkillers. Three days after my admission, I called my GP surgery and demanded to see someone. The GP who saw me was understanding. She went through my medical folder and pulled all the relevant admissions and appointments linked to my predominant symptoms.

**““Have you ever heard of the word Endometriosis?”, she asked.**

I said no instantly. She explained how I was ticking all of the main symptoms, and she was openly disgusted with how long I had been disregarded. That day she handed me leaflets and referred me to a specialist.

“A couple months after, I was getting ready to sign consent forms to have a diagnostic laparoscopy to get my official diagnosis. Two weeks later, I was under the knife. When I woke up, the surgeon came round and apologised for the negligence I had experienced. I had a severe case of endometriosis.

**“It took a total of eight years to receive my diagnosis, which is a shocking average for women with Endometriosis.”**

**What has your journey been like since your diagnosis?**

“I still face significant barriers. There's not a lot of education surrounding Endometriosis, or any female reproductive diseases for that matter. I still have medical professionals telling me to 'just get pregnant' as that will give me a nine month break from my cycle, disregarding the fact that infertility is a main component of Endometriosis. I have also been told that because I have the coil, suddenly I'm cured from Endometriosis... bearing in mind there

is no cure as of yet (I'm remaining positive that one will be found in my lifetime).

"The destruction Endometriosis has caused on my organs has been neglected. It's like a double-edged sword.

"I am now 21, and I have two surgeries under my belt. The Endometriosis has been classified as Stage Four, meaning it's widespread. It has also affected my ovaries, uterus, bladder, pouch of Douglas, my pelvic nerves, vagina, cervix, bowel, rectum and colon. I've been told that I will need further surgery in the future, and the chances of me carrying a child full term is slim.

"As I'm typing this, I am perched uncomfortably on the sofa with a catheter. I've just come out of hospital, due to my bowel swelling and cutting off my bladder from emptying. I'm on the waiting list to see a colorectal surgeon and the chances are I will need further surgery, organ removal and even more medical intervention."



© Nola Audrey, @ovary\_reacting\_audery on Instagram

**This must be such a tough condition to cope with. In what other ways does Endometriosis impact your everyday life?**

"It impacts, quite literally, everything. I used to go to spin class two or three times a week and I used to run three miles every day before school and college. I used to walk my dog miles at a time. I used to drink and party. There was an awful lot I did, that Endometriosis has changed.

"I can't do the things I love to the same extent anymore. Some days I can't get out of bed. Sometimes I can't even make myself a cup of tea. The pain is horrendous, and isn't always controllable. It's difficult to maintain friendships because many just call me boring or walk away because I'm too much of a liability. I miss birthdays and special occasions. It also batters your mental health, [and] it's debilitating. It's hard to grapple with the devastating severity of the condition and the impact it's had, if I were taken seriously at a young age then it would not have progressed at the rate it has."

**Is this why creating awareness is so important to you - to help others on their own journeys with the condition too?**

"I'm constantly researching and learning about my condition. Raising awareness is so important to me for a number of reasons. Firstly, when the GP mentioned Endometriosis... I had never heard of it and I couldn't even pronounce it. How could I have such a serious and harmful condition that I was so completely unaware of?

"Secondly, I was so embarrassed when talking about periods and sex, when really, we shouldn't be. As a woman, we should be able to talk openly and freely about conditions affecting our reproductive health. There shouldn't be a taboo surrounding periods, miscarriages, sex and our bowel movements.

"Thirdly, I want younger girls to believe in themselves and trust their bodies. We are our best advocates. We know our bodies and when something is not right.

**And how can loved ones help those that live with Endometriosis?**

"Research and keep updated with government funding and news coverage. It's a small gesture, but shows us that you're willing to take the time to understand. Listen to the person and respect their boundaries. Never say: 'it can't be that bad' or 'my friend had it she found [XYZ] helpful'.

"Don't stop inviting them places, even if you know they will say they can't attend. It shows that you still care and would still like them there if they could make it. Offer small things like a cup of tea, making the bed, Hoovering or washing the dishes."

**Finally, do you have any tips on dealing with Endometriosis for any readers in the same boat?**

"Yes, absolutely! Keep a symptom or pain journal, it helps to have evidence and saves you from repeating yourself. Get a hot water bottle that you can wrap around your waist. I prefer heat treatment when my Endo flares badly. Never feel pressured to follow what others are doing to help their symptoms. There is no cure. You do what is best for you and your lifestyle.

"Be honest with people close to you, and be honest with employers. They cannot mind read and according to the Equality Act, 2010, they have to make reasonable accommodations according to your disability.

"NEVER feel guilty for resting. Sometimes that's the most productive and healthy thing you can do. Resting is the best way of letting your body recover, whether that's during an Endometriosis flare or after surgery. Do not be self-conscious of your Endo bloat. You are beautiful, no matter your bloat. Be your own best advocate. Do not be afraid to ask for referrals or second opinions.

**"It's your body and you are in control."**

A huge thank you to Nola for being so candid about her Endometriosis journey. You can follow along on her Instagram at: @ovary\_reacting\_audery

The signs and symptoms of Endometriosis are very individualistic, every-one is different. However, the most common symptoms found across the Endo Community are:

- Extremely painful periods.
- Heavy bleeding.
- Painful ovulation.
- Pain during or after intercourse.
- Pain during bowel movements or urination.
- Fatigue or Migraines (especially if linked to your menstrual cycle).
- Infertility
- Lower back, pelvic or groin pain.
- Sickness, diarrhoea, constipation and blood in your urine and stools.
- Extreme bloating (also referred as an "endo belly")



© Nola Audrey, @ovary\_reacting\_audery on Instagram

**"Do not be self-conscious of your Endo bloat. You are beautiful, no matter your bloat."**

**"Just because the person stood in front of you, telling you nothing is wrong, is a healthcare professional, doesn't mean they are right."**

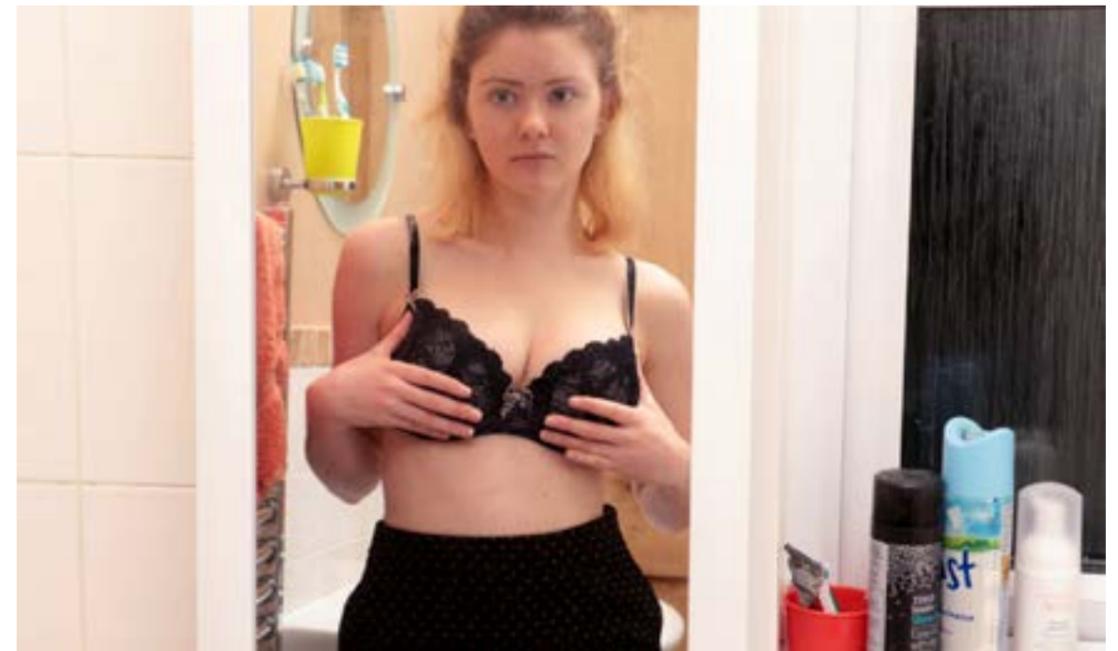
# THAT'S WHAT GIRLS DO

## FRANCESCA STUART-JONES

**B**eauty results in social and personal rewards. Conforming to the beauty norms of our current society leads to positive and easy living outcomes for women. These outcomes can range from, employment advantages; positive perceptions of others; and higher self-confidence. As a result individuals undergo various beauty regimes, which in turn support the notion that attractiveness and youthfulness is best. It is an on going cycle based on feeding the insecurities of women and for women to be seen as feminine. If women fail these norms, such as having body hair, she is condemned ugly and unfeminine. If she is successful, her worth is defined by her desirability.

Opinions differ broadly over this matter, so there is not a definite agreement whether performing regimes is the right or wrong thing to do. However women are aware of these norms, and can do what they want and whatever makes them feel better in themselves. For individuals, the reasons for supporting various regimes are so small compared to the wider conceptions of beauty. The regimes vary from person to person, as do the reasons for performing them. It's just what girls do.

Francesca can be contacted via her website: francescastuartjones.co.uk or via @francesca\_sj on Instagram!



© Francesca Stuart-Jones

### **Amy, 21, single**

“My breasts aren’t small, but to wear what I want to, my breasts need some enhancement. The competition to get a guy’s attention has increased, as every girl has upped their game nowa- days. I need to enhance my assets therefore I wear cleavage boosters otherwise known as chicken fillets.”

**Pro:** Make my breasts look amazing

**Con:** They’re embarrassing and weird looking

**Cost:** £5



©Francesca Stuart-Jones

©Francesca Stuart-Jones



**Sarah, 24, single**

"I use boob tape to make my breasts look perkier than they are, and it allows me to wear clothes that are only appropriate if you have small breasts. It does wonders for my self-confidence, as I don't have to worry about them moving out of place."

**Pro:** Makes my breasts look perky

**Con:** Painful to take off, and it leaves tape marks

**Cost:** £2

© Francesca Stuart-Jones



**Becky, 22, single**

"It's a long process to cleanse, tone and exfoliate my skin. I've always struggled with my skin, and actually doing an intense routine weekly gives me satisfaction that I'm actively trying to better myself. You don't see spotty oily skin in adverts and magazines, so why should I have to put up with it? My skin needs a deep cleanse after wearing heavy make up, and after the process it feels soft, and I don't suffer from acne as much."

**Pro:** A routine gives me confidence as I am trying to look and feel good.

**Con:** Time consuming

**Cost:** £20



© Francesca Stuart-Jones



© Francesca Stuart-Jones



© Francesca Stuart-Jones

**Hester, 23, in a relationship**

“I epilate to ensure I don’t have a hairy body, because I’m a dancer and my arms and legs are always on show. Knowing I don’t have to constantly shave my hairs is a relief. I have found something so beneficial and time saving, it makes me feel like I have my life together, a hair free life.”

**Pro:** Gradually makes hairs finer and eventually grow back less often.

**Con:** Ridiculously painful, and I get a rash if I press too hard.

**Cost:** £27

© Francesca Stuart-Jones



**Emi, 20, single**

“I use a charcoal nose strip and a hydrating mask to get rid of nasty black heads, and to keep my skin glowy and looking flawless. I got obsessed with the charcoal craze on YouTube, and it just seemed like it was the normal thing to do, and it works so well.”

**Pro:** I gain youthful and blackhead free skin

**Con:** It's painful to rip off and the charcoal can stain my nose sometimes

**Cost:** £15



© Francesca Stuart-Jones



**Marina, 21, single**

"I am obsessed with lip products. When the Kylie Jenner had lip fillers, she just looked stunning and so much older. I decided to start self lip injections, as it is cheaper than surgery and it is so easy. Now all the attention is drawn to my lips, what else could a girl need?"

**Pro:** Makes me feel like a model

**Con:** Pricey and uncomfortable to do

**Cost:** £220

LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.  
LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.  
LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.

# LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY

**This poem is about loving and being completely authentic to yourself, every part of you and in everything you do. It's what it means to truly be living, unapologetically.**

Everyone's been there,  
given in to the power of the mighty  
and changed themselves to fit in.  
But as I grow older and wiser,  
the roots of acceptance and loving myself  
are growing deeper.  
I am now bold enough  
to remain outspoken, address societal taboos  
and do whatever the hell I want.  
I am now brave enough  
to ignore the filters that plague the insecure internet  
and the comments from those with a self-love deficit.  
To love my body as it is  
and flaunt my stretchmarks and my scars.  
For I AM worth loving, just as I am.  
All I have is myself,  
at the end of every day.  
So, every word, every action, every thought  
I live and breathe will be authentic to me,  
for I am living,  
unapologetically.

by Emma Gill

LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.  
LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.  
LIVING UNAPOLOGETICALLY. AUTHENTIC TO ME.

**Everyone has, or at some point in their life had, that piece of clothing. You know - the one hidden in the back of your wardrobe that you can't fit into anymore, but can't seem to let go of just the same?**

**I**ll keep it. I'll fit back into it one day”.

Be honest, you've said that to yourself, haven't you?

Don't worry, you're not alone. Nearly everyone has had a piece of clothing hanging around in the back of their wardrobe that they can't fit into anymore. Sitting there unworn for as long as they can remember, collecting dust as they kid themselves about how one day, they will fit back into it. If I'm being honest, I can think of at least three items sitting in my wardrobe that aren't my clothing size anymore; they don't fit me, and never will fit me again, but I've kept them.

If you still fit into the clothes you wore as a teenager and that's your natural body, then of course that's completely fine; your body changes as it changes. But also ask yourself: are you engaging in unhealthy eating habits to maintain that size/body shape? And answer honestly.

I know that two of the items of clothing I've kept are from when I was a teenager. I last wore them to my best friend's 16th birthday party; my body was different, and I was a smaller size. I was still in school, so I was doing physical education three times a week, plus netball club both inside and outside of school. My anxiety was bad, and I wasn't eating properly. It's now completely unattainable to be doing that level of exercise alongside other commitments such as work and academic studies, and my anxiety and eating habits have drastically improved.

Realistically, if I were to ever fit back into these clothes, I would have to engage in unhealthy habits such as restriction of food and excessive exercise.

This engagement in dangerously unhealthy habits to fit back into clothes that were once worn by a younger or different version of ourselves seems to be the given norm.

**Out of the 14 people I approached for comment on this piece, nine of them replied with how they had simply forced themselves to lose weight to fit back into clothes that didn't fit them anymore.**

**That's 64%.**

**Why?**

Why, are we putting our bodies through hell and jeopardising our physical and mental health to fit into fabric?

Personal value. The clothes that I've kept hold personal value, memories of laughs and good times or my mates falling over after too much to drink on a night out. Why do we form such a sentimental attachment to these pieces of clothing? An attachment that is so strong that we can't let go and would be willing to engage in unhealthy habits to fit back into - to tell ourselves we're that person again, as though the person we've grown into isn't as valuable as the one living there in those memorable moments.

But there are other ways to hold on to the value and sentiment we assign to these clothes, and so many things about the person we are today - formed from these memories -

**they're just as lovable, valuable and worthy as we were back then.**

The harsh reality is that you won't fit back into those clothes one day, and you know it.

# I'LL FIT BACK INTO IT ONE DAY

By Emma Gill

So, make a change and begin to love and accept your body as it is. It's time we all started to create a much healthier relationship with our bodies. We need self-love and acceptance.

**We need to start looking at our bodies through a much healthier lens.**



It doesn't matter if you're not the same size as you were before. Our bodies change over time, our weight will fluctuate and that's okay. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Stop living in the past, in some kind of unattainable dream, and start a fresh page today – one where you can change the narrative that tells you you're shameful for changing, learning and growing beyond what you used to allow yourself to be.

Let go of this desire to fit back into old clothes because you think you were prettier or sexier then. The essence of who you are hasn't changed; you are still the same you that you were before. You're still sexy, you're still beautiful, and your body has just evolved.

Here are three ways you can start to reclaim the



© BBH Singapore on Unsplash

narrative around your clothes:

**Upcycle them:** Get creative! Cut up the clothes into something new; you could turn a dress into a skirt or top that actually fits, into a pillow, a blanket or a collage. That way you're able to hold onto the memories and personal value in a much healthier way.

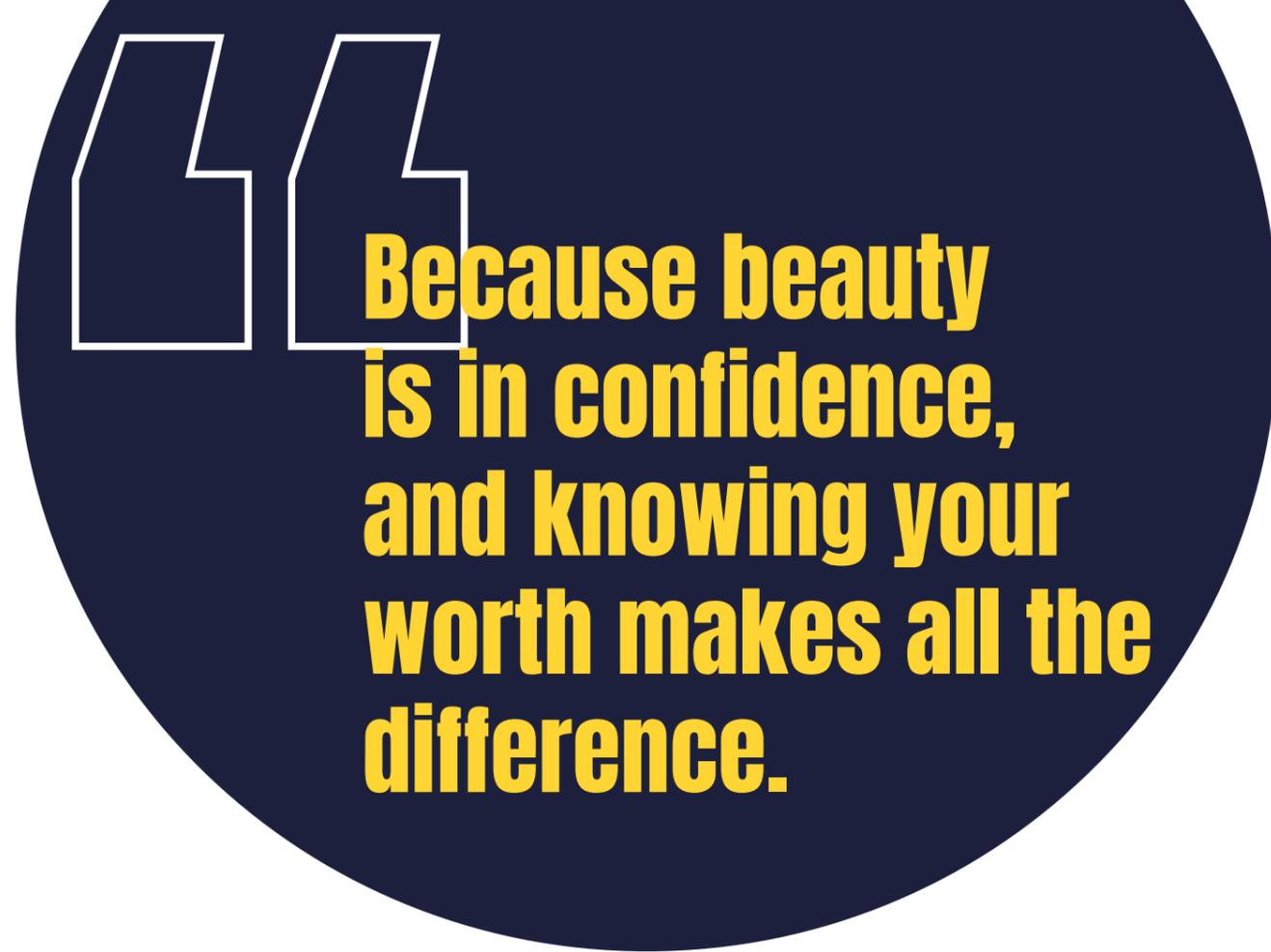
**Give them to charity:** Give these clothes a new lease of life. Your old favourite clothes could become someone's new favourite top, and would allow others to make their own memories. It's good for the environment as it stops unnecessary waste going to landfill, and it's also great for your moral compass and self-esteem.

**Burn it, shred it, rip it up:** Don't let pieces of clothing define you; YOU define yourself, your purpose, and your image.

Removing the old clothes and unrealistic expectations from your life means you have room for new ones!

Celebrate getting new values, and new clothes that actually fit you when you can too. There are so many beautiful pieces of clothing that deserve your love and attention. These new clothes create an opportunity and a space for new memories (even if it's the same friend falling over after too much to drink on a night out!)

New clothes that fit you properly will make you feel sexy and pretty and all those things you keep telling yourself you never could be. Treat yourself. Buy a new dress, or top that you love and wear it with confidence.



© Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash

KICKASS  
© SALLY HEWETT



HER STORY  
© SALLY HEWETT



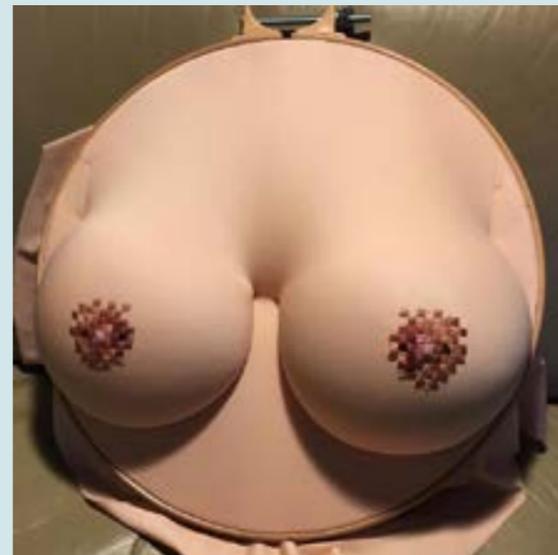
# STITCHED UP

## Interview with Embroidery Artist Sally Hewett

Maddie Bazin



THEM  
© SALLY HEWETT



PIXELNIPS  
© SALLY HEWETT

Sally Hewett, an embroidery artist who studies the bodily form through thread, lycra and padding, has an extensive portfolio of gorgeous pieces. From embroidery hoop breasts to nipple samplers, her work captures the nitty-gritty of the human body. She has gone on to create a variety of series that celebrate and capture raw human beauty. Her most recent series, an exploration of bodies after medical and cosmetic procedures, urges us to question what differences lie between intentional and natural body alterations.

After studying Fine Art at university, how did you discover that embroidery and stitching were your preferred materials?

'I started using embroidery and stitch during the second part of my degree, partly as the result of a happy accident. I've always made clothes and embroidered things and I was embroidering a flower as a way of escaping the intellectual rigours of the degree. I just wanted to do something that didn't require too much thought. As I stitched a little bundle of french knots for the centre of the flower they suddenly seemed to turn into a nipple - the little embroidery hoop surrounded the nipple like a breast. I suppose everything followed on from there, really.'

Are your pieces based on real-life models or are they based on a general body?

'They are almost all based on particular bodies rather than generic bodies. For some of my early pieces, like *A Second on the Lips*, the original idea came from someone I followed down the street, and then for the detail I found reference images in books or on the internet. Most of my recent work has been based on



BEAUTIFUL STRETCH  
© SALLY HEWETT

FLUTTER  
© SALLY HEWETT



photographs which generous and lovely people send me, or on real bodies which people show me. They are never portraits as such. The initial idea comes from real people and their bodies but, as I work on them, the pieces sort of take on a life of their own with their own folds, shapes and colours.'

Your work explores the 'beauty' and 'ugliness' of the bodily form. The way in which those concepts are more widely perceived by society might affect how your work is viewed. Do you think that your work helps to change peoples' perspectives on the supposedly 'ugly' features of the body?

'I don't think my work changes the perspective of most people regarding the ugliness of particular characteristics of bodies. In fact I know it doesn't. That would be some achievement! Some people find my work ugly and disgusting - and they tell me so. But from what other people have said to me it does seem to at least affect how they see their own bodies and possibly other people's.'



A SECOND ON THE LIPS  
© SALLY HEWETT

**In your work, you focus largely on the female torso and male genitalia. Is there something in particular that draws you towards these features as sources of inspiration?**

'I'm interested in how we see things, in why we see some things as ugly or disgusting and others as attractive or beautiful.

The reason torsos get my attention is that I think lots of women are concerned, and perhaps troubled, about the appearance of not only their faces but also their breasts, bellies, pudenda, bottoms, etc. These are the parts that they often want changed with plastic surgery and implants. So it's these parts that I'm particularly interested in. I'm also interested in the body as a storyteller. The shapes and marks on a body can tell so much about that person's history and those marks - stretch marks, scars, etc., are often on those parts of the body. They tell as much about a

person as their face, or voice.

I often think about the idea of being in someone else's body - what it would feel like. I know what it feels like to have my female body, but when I'm making my pieces I sometimes have a sense of what it feels like to have someone else's female body. So making male genitalia pieces might be a way of me experiencing something of what feels like to have a male body! One of the first heavily embroidered pieces I made was a penis. It was something of an experimental piece to see how far I could push the medium. The second penis was a response to Victoria Beckham revealing that her pet name for David Beckham was 'Golden Balls', and my current portfolio piece is a sampler which includes penises and other male paraphernalia. I'm thinking more male genitalia may be on the way!

**You have a series that focuses on the body after medical and cosmetic procedures. Why did you decide that you wanted to explore the 'unnatural' body, if we can call it that?**

'My first surgical piece was a tribute to my Granny, who was the person who taught me to sew and embroider. She survived breast cancer and was eternally grateful to the surgeon for saving her life, but also for the beautiful stitching job he had done on her skin. *Ectomy* was my tribute to both her, and her surgeon. When I first exhibited this piece, there were mixed reactions - some horrified and disgusted, but mostly the exact opposite. Surgeons cut and stitch, and I cut and stitch - I loved being able to acknowledge that similarity. When people then started asking

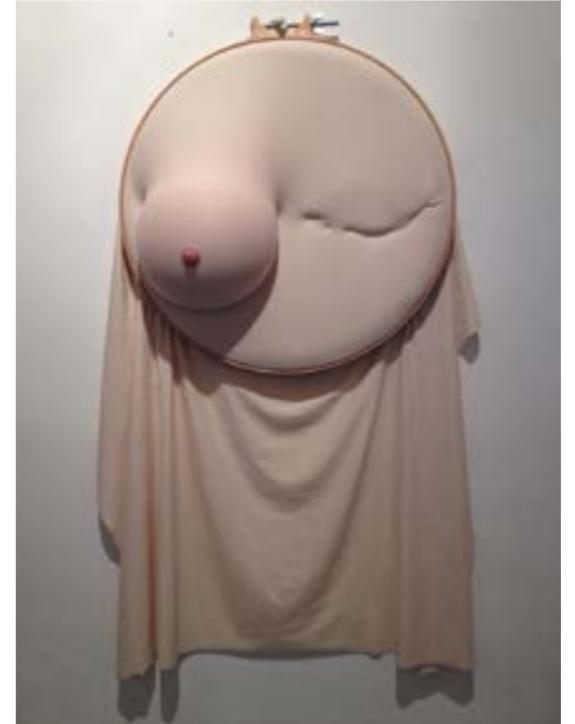
if I would make pieces based on their surgically-altered bodies, I knew that's what I wanted to do.

The plastic surgery pieces are a different aspect of the medical/surgical pieces. I'm totally fascinated by plastic surgery. Being able to transform a body with fillers, implants, lifts etc., both fascinates and, sometimes, horrifies me. In making the plastic surgery pieces, I wanted to investigate the difference between changing your body intentionally, according to some preconceived idea of how you want your body to look, and bodies which are changed by time, experience and illness.'

**How do you feel that your embroidered pieces speak to conventional ideals of 'beauty'? Do you consider every piece you sew to be 'beautiful'?**

'I think using fabric, stitch and embroidery probably enables or allows people to see things differently. If you see embroidery, you tend to have expectations of what the subject matter will be, so when you are surprised or even shocked by the subject matter, maybe you can then see the thing depicted differently.

**ECTOMY**  
© SALLY HEWETT



Like the nipple in the flower back at university, I wanted to explore how far I could take embroidery in relation to the human body.

I do see some of my pieces as beautiful, but it takes time to have an objective view of something when you've spent hours making it, unpicking it, resewing it, etc. I can always see the details that I'm not quite happy with, so that affects my opinion. So I suppose my answer is that I don't necessarily see every piece I create as beautiful, but I think I do see the bodies I base them on as beautiful.'

Sally's portfolio, statement, and galleries can be found at [sallyhewett.co.uk](http://sallyhewett.co.uk), and on her instagram page, [@sally\\_hewett](https://www.instagram.com/sally_hewett).



**SORE-I-AH-SIS**  
© SALLY HEWETT



**NIPPLE SAMPLER**  
© SALLY HEWETT



# THINK POSITIVE, BE POSITIVE YOU ARE ENOUGH, JUST AS YOU ARE BY AABIDAH ZAHRAH

In her second year at University of Wolverhampton Aabidah worked on this project: Think Positive, Be positive. For the module she had to use text within photography. She recalls being really stuck with the idea, noting that it took her a couple of shoots to really get creative juices flowing. Aabidah finally decided that she wanted to use positive slogans. After thinking about it, it seemed to Aabidah that she was unconsciously reflecting on herself; she felt she needed to be kinder to herself: "I was in a really low point due to my mental health issues." Aabidah photographed a range of different people in her life; old friends, new friends, classmates and people that lived in her building: "I bought t-shirts and snacks, had a playlist ready and I booked the studio for the whole day. I introduced everyone and got them chatting before the shoot so they could feel comfortable with each other and in front of the camera. My process is always to make my models feel comfortable and at ease. I like capturing real moments and real emotions. It matters to me that people feel relaxed and that the whole process is enjoyable."





# DIGITAL DATING

## A DIARY OF MODERN ROMANTIC DISASTER

by Isabella Ehrlicher

Dating during a global pandemic indeed isn't the easiest of things. For a start, where do you even meet someone these days? The usual places like bars, clubs, and other social venues are all closed, and that only leaves one destination - the somewhat dreaded internet.



© Charles Deluvio on Unsplash

Dear diary,

I've been living a joyful single life for the past few years - casual relationships have been all that I needed. I enjoyed my freedom, flirting, meeting new partners and exploring what's out there. I have single scares them, but I enjoy spending time by myself.

But, as a single person, what is there to do when you're in need of some much-needed affection in the challenging time we're living through now?

A third national Lockdown still looms, and the time where you could go to a pub and meet people is long, long over. 2020 was the year of wearing a mask once entering a hospitality business, no moving around and rules that make it practically impossible to meet someone (while, thankfully, keeping us physically safe despite the mental strain).

That's why dating apps have been booming. Since the pandemic started in March 2020, Tinder - one of the most popular dating apps - has seen a reportedly unprecedented spike in consumers. So, if you do find yourself creating a late-night profile on Tinder, Hinge, Grindr, Bumble or whatever else tickles your fancy, you're not alone.

But what happens then?

You've pulled out the best-looking pictures of yourself - wearing a full face of makeup, your best party outfit and holding a pornstar martini in hand, currently at pre-drinks to go out later. In real life, you're currently in bed or on the couch. Potentially with greasy hair, your sweatpants on and presently on your third glass of chardonnay if you're anything like me too.

Here we go. Swipe left, swipe right, stay online all night. Get some nasty messages like "twinkle, twinkle little star, let's have sex inside my car" and hope the few well-meaning messages can outnumber them eventually. You're already regretting your decision to believe you might just meet a nice guy.

But miracles do happen (they say). You match with someone that isn't a total bloke, and you might find yourself having a good conversation over text.

Hmm, where exactly do we go from here?

It's not like you can go to a bar and have a drink together. So, the texting goes on for a while until you both finally decide to meet.

"Let's go for a socially distanced walk." It sometimes feels like we're living back in the day before digital dating and modern romance

boomed. My grandma met with my grandad for walks before they got married, and, I mean, it does sound romantic, a little stroll through the park.

One disclaimer to that. Do not meet on top of a hill, like Primrose hill or Hampstead heath. I made that mistake. I mean, it sounds wonderful walking up that hill to enjoy the most breathtakingly romantic view.

Only the 'breathtaking' part is about right! Ha. If you're drinking three glasses of chardonnay every night combined with a packet of chocolate and a few (somewhat fortnightly now) walks, you'll reach the top completely out of breath. You can't even try to cough it off, because he'll think you have Covid!

Still, a walk could be romantic, yes. You actually have time to talk and get to know a person, to see whether that person is someone you would like to get to know a little more. The only problem there then is if that person turns out to be a total idiot the flight possibilities aren't too great. I mean you can't just run away? Or can you?

Okay, but your date went well. You genuinely thought you had a connection, and maybe you even dreamed of a little kissing action post-lockdown. Yes, I would like to see you again but as pleasant as these walks in the parks are, they do get boring. You haven't had sex in six months, and your vibrator is practically buzzing with joy at the thought of a break from boning.

So, let's imagine. And this is not me telling you to break the rules or anything like that, we're only imagining for now!

You invite your date round your house.

Of course, before that, the whole flatmate situation must be sorted out. "Is it okay, if like, this person, comes over?" Obviously, we are all still trying to be safe and sound.

So, you sorted everything out with your flatmate. What's next? What the hell are we going to do? Watch a movie? Cook something? Wrestling? I tell you, after so long out of the game, coming out the other side of all this distance is not going to be easy.

The evening arrives, and so does your date.

It's fun, listening to music and having good conversations. Of course, you can't miss the chardonnay. Pretending this is your first bottle of the evening. I guess blaming the other two on the cat? Just go with it.

Then the moment comes. You've waited for six months for this...

And you realise your vibrator does it better.

But we know this. Well, I've learned that it takes time. You need to get to know a person and talk about your needs and fantasies and boundaries to get things going. The first time might not be the best, but practice makes perfect!

We've reached the point where you might like to see your date again. You had a great evening, some breakfast in bed and maaaybe more.

What are you thinking about? I'm talking about scrambled eggs with bacon, of course!

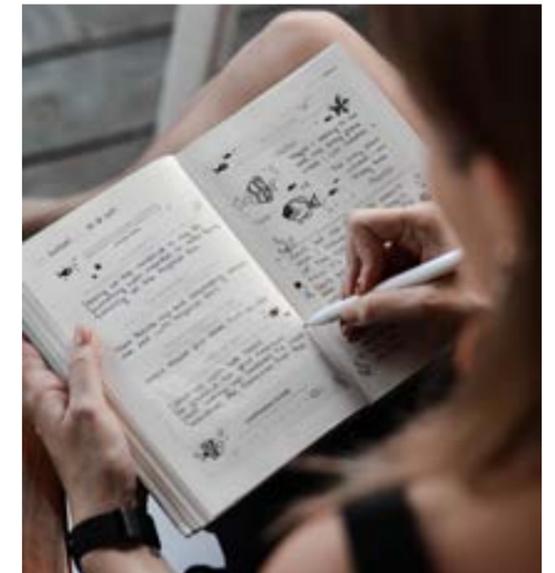
And now I'm thinking about the fact this is all still a distant dream, but one we can hold onto the hope for to get us through this disastrously long dating drought.

That's okay - after all, there's no rule book on 'How To Date During A Global Pandemic'. If you were hoping I could tell you more, I'm sorry, I'm still trying to figure it out myself. I think in any situation you find yourself in, communication is key, always!

That advice, I would give to anyone in any situation.

Love, Bella x

**...after all,  
there is no  
rule book on**



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**'How To Date  
During A Global  
Pandemic'**

© Charlotte Rollin, @\_charlottesweb on Instagram



# THAT'S THE TEA: A CHAT WITH CHARLOTTE ROLLIN

23-year-old rising social star, Charlotte Rollin, gives us an insight into her glowing fashion career, daily inspirations and the overall impact social media can have on millennial life.

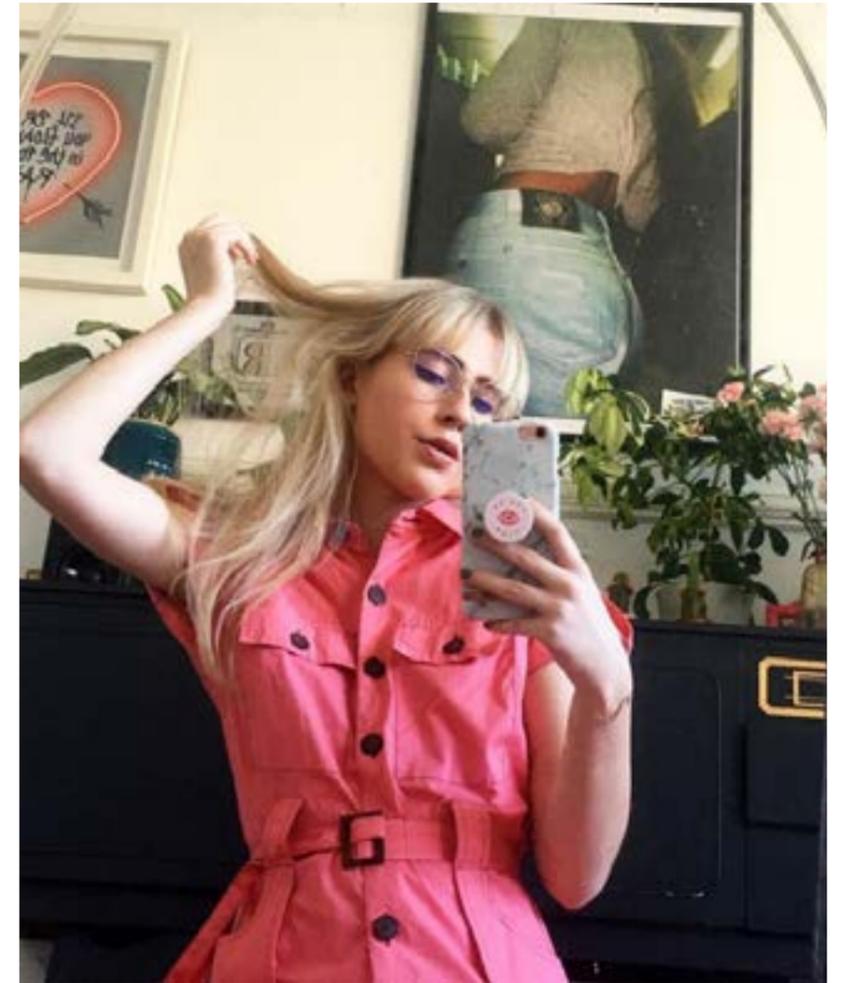
**BY REBECCA EMMETT**

**You're very active on social media and have gained an impressive following. How has this affected your mental health, and how have you dealt with it?**

"It's definitely impacted me positively! So far, I've been lucky; I've only had a couple of occasions where I've felt a bit vulnerable online or stuff has happened that probably wouldn't have if I didn't share so much. It's 99% positive. I've got jobs, made friends, travelled to places and received mental health support that I never would have without social media.

"I don't really think about the number of people watching or engaging, because everyone is just so friendly and supportive that I never really have to doubt what I'm sharing. I've definitely overshared in the past and regretted that later on, but equally, I don't really hold it against myself because I was just doing the best I could with the information and the mental health capacity I had at the time. I find it lovely having a group of people that support me, who have seen the highs and lows of my life over the years and stuck around for it all. It's always a nice feeling having that little bubble of people that are so kind.

"I've also learnt so much from social media in terms of politics, mental and physical health, history and general current affairs that I genuinely would never have obtained from other sources. I've grown out of the comparison stage a little bit when it comes to lifestyle and body image, but I think perhaps the more millennial comparison I feel from social media now is productivity or



© Charlotte Rollin, @\_charlottesweb on Instagram

careers related. Ultimately, I've learnt to take everything online with a pinch of salt and have hugely benefited from social media detoxes on the occasions when I have done them. I think I've fostered an overall good relationship with life online!"

**Through your Instagram, @\_charlottesweb, you've shared your journey with acne over the years - something affecting millions of young people that can certainly influence their confidence. How did you deal with it, and what would you recommend that worked for you?**

"Acne was something I struggled with for a long time and I think it was a culmination of a lot of different hormonal and stress-led

factors, which is often why it's so hard to battle - the root causes can be extremely interlinked and subtle.

"After a long time trying the skincare and topical treatment route, I was eventually prescribed a drug called Isotretinoin. It's quite controversial because of its long list of side effects and issues it can cause, especially for those who perhaps struggle with their mental health. It's definitely considered a last resort by GPs and dermatologists so it's not easy to be prescribed, but it worked wonderfully for me and was truly one of the best things I've ever done in terms of transforming how I feel about myself.

“Acne is one of those things that’s so personal and what works for one person might not work for the next. Following skin positive influencers and accounts online that normalize skin texture, acne, pores and redness all helped give me little glimmers of confidence and strength in feeling confident in my own skin.”

**And what advice would you give to someone wanting to build a career through their social media?**

“Use social media a lot! It’s definitely a career where you need to be reactive and on the ball, be really observant with brands that you admire and general trends, and try to convey this knowledge to brands in interviews to show you have the ability to think on your feet.”

“I think a lot of the jobs or internships I’ve worked in have been a result of my own social media use.

Definitely use your Instagram in particular as a live advert for yourself and your skills. Mailing lists and websites, like the Later and Sprout Social blogs, have lots of cool and relevant tips that are helpful in developing your understanding of social strategy. TikTok also has a real wealth of information and ‘day in the life’ style videos from social media managers across multiple industries.

“It’s important to keep boundaries between work and life, and take steps back when you can. As much

as it’s important to stay on the ball, you only work well when you’re rested and refreshed.”

**You’re a huge advocate for prioritising mental health. Working in the fashion industry, it’s known to be quite fast-paced and unforgiving. How have you found your experience, and what have you learnt from it?**

“Thankfully, I’ve been reasonably lucky in that I’ve had more lovely experiences than bad. Interning is always a bit of a potluck, especially when you’re working for free in many cases and don’t always have many rights or much support. That’s the only time I’ve found working in this world to be super challenging.

**“It’s important to keep boundaries between work and life, and take steps back when you can.”**

“Taking a step back is always so important here too, as well as establishing a routine that really soothes you because ultimately it’s a very fast-paced world. Long hours on your feet, which I found particularly difficult in the styling part of the industry, was really challenging as I found it was a physical struggle as well as mental.

So, again, I think being well-rested, giving yourself breaks and setting intentions and boundaries is so important.”

**You’ve had experience with some huge brands and worked on some knock out collaborations. Who would be your dream collaboration, and why?**

“I’m going to dream big and say Gucci. I spent about four months working on a Gucci X Harry Styles collaboration as part of my final major project, and feel a real personal connection to the brand because of this! I love everything Alessandro Michele has done with the brand and the direction it has grown in, and more recently I’ve been obsessed with the collaboration they did

**“Taking a step back is always so important here too, as well as establishing a routine that really soothes you because ultimately it’s a very fast-paced world...”**

with North Face which was truly so up my street. As a big Harry Styles fan, I can’t help but say he’s influenced my love for the brand too - I feel like everything he does I adore, but what can

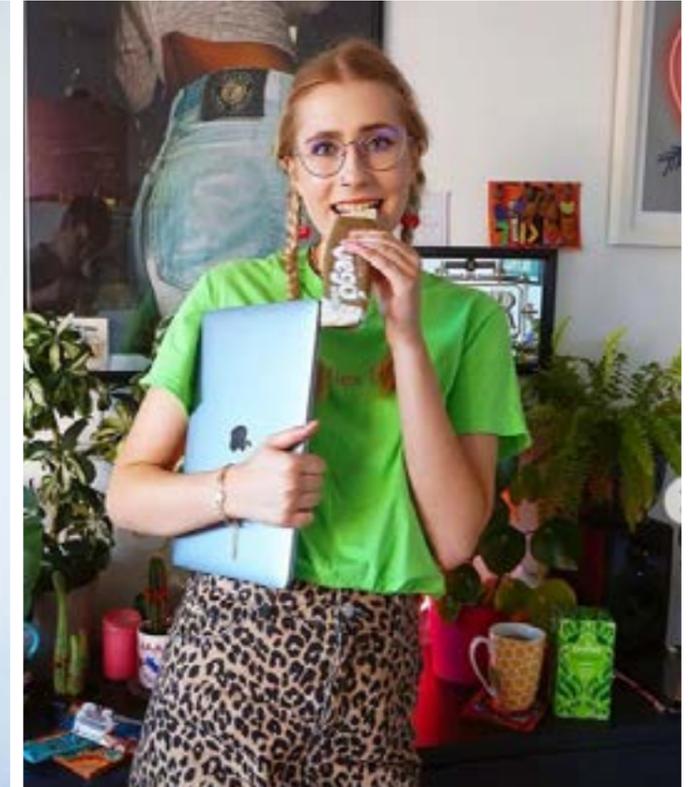
I say, that’s the fangirl in me!”

**How important would you say self-care is, especially right now? And what’s your self-care routine?**

“I feel like self-care is one of those things that people have spoken about for years, it’s a term that’s really thrown around. I don’t think I ever truly knew what it meant or what it would entail for me.

“In some instances, it’s the more superficial things you do to take care of yourself that help you feel good from the outside in. But having dealt with some chronic health problems in recent years, as well as long term mental health conditions, 2020 in particular was a real turning point in finding

© Charlotte Rollin, @\_charlottesweb on Instagram



self-care practices that are now essential for me. In a lot of cases, I feel like self-care is less about the doing and more about the thinking. I naturally have a very negative internal monologue and critical script running in my head at all times, but I’ve learnt the importance of taking care of my mind and having so much patience and love for myself and my efforts.”

“Self-care to me, is being your own best friend; it’s talking to yourself kindly, looking inward and not deflecting issues or brushing past traumas to the side, it’s accepting that sometimes progress is made just standing still for a while. I recently heard a quote that might be sombre to some, but really resonated with me. It read, ‘life is already ruined’, and for me this means nothing is perfect, nothing

is ever going to go to plan and sometimes it’s silly to even have a plan! Nothing will go the way you want it to, and I guess accepting that and always putting yourself first is my idea of self-care.”

**Finally, could you name some of the most influential accounts you’re following right now - the ones that really inspire you?**

“@Theinsecuregirlsclub -

I work on this account so I’m a bit biased, but it’s so great for mental health and general reassuring ‘life’ content that I couldn’t not mention it!

“@meganellaby is an all-time favourite of mine for her uber-stylish fashion and lifestyle content. She also went to university in Huddersfield and studied the same course as me, so

I’ve adored following her career and success over the years.”

“@francescaperks is your girl for ultimate mental health and style content, and similarly to Megan is Manchester-based which I love because I miss the North so much! She’s so fabulous, and her YouTube content is always so entertaining.”

“@MattHaig is one of my go-to mental health accounts and seeing his journey from suicidal ideation and depression to a successful, happy and full life is always inspiring to me.”

“And lastly, @pollyvdsz is a long time internet friend of mine who runs an incredible online business called @sighh.studio and both accounts are just so inspiring! She’s a normal girl in her twenties living her life, but her hilarious commentary and insights into running a small business are a joy to watch.”



# LET'S GET DIGITAL

## AMBER WEYMAN

**A**mber Weyman is a twenty-one year old Fashion Marketing graduate from Wiltshire. Growing up in the countryside wasn't what her creative heart desired; she wanted to be immersed in busy cityscapes, surrounded by people that expressed themselves through silk and latex. Not welly boots. She fell in love with photography when she realised she could create her own characters in their own high fashion worlds. Driven by an interest of textures and warped digital effects, Amber created the following series of photos - titled Lets Get Digital. The narrative behind this shoot was derived from her admiration for the sci-fi genre, which led to the creation of an editorial cyborg model. Using sheer styling partnered with plastic accessories, circuitboard contacts and black 'plasma' Amber built her futuristic fashion fantasy.



# HOW TO NETWORK DURING A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC

BY **JHANVI OHRI**



©Chris Montgomery on Unsplash

**Networking** is not an easy task on a regular day, and it can be all the more challenging during a pandemic. With next to no gatherings possible, aspiring networkers have to turn to online means to make meaningful connections. Here's a round-up of all the ways you can effectively network online.



©inlytics | LinkedIn Analytics Tool on Unsplash

## Virtual Conferences

Attending virtual conferences relevant to your (desired) career path can be extremely useful. Speaking up during these can get you noticed, especially if you have something valuable to contribute – so don't be shy! Another great way to get to know people is by emailing them after the event to have a discussion about the topics covered, give feedback or ask questions.



©Surface on Unsplash

### LinkedIn

Take this time to harness the power of LinkedIn! Do some research and reach out to people who have achieved what you aspire to, ask them to have a chat or even for some tips for your career journey. In an interview, Sedge Beswick, founder of SEEN Connects, a London-based influencer marketing agency, says that it is actually easier now than before to network, as professionals “have more time” as most people continue to work from home.

### Reconnect with your existing network

We often overlook the power of our existing network – old colleagues, professors or managers. Take the initiative to reconnect with them through an email or social media. Most of your connections will likely be happy to help you with any career challenges or just offer general advice.



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### Online Career Events

If you're at university, online events hosted by your careers department should be your go-to place to network. Most universities will be running these, so take advantage of them while you can! There are often great speakers at such events who will be willing to lend a helping hand to students. You can ask questions during the event or get in touch afterward via email or social media for a more in-depth discussion.

Even though most people aren't used to it, virtual networking can be just as (if not more) beneficial – you can reach new people from around the world from your living room by making the most of the resources available.

# IN CONVERSATION WITH AN AI CHATBOT

## NATASHA BATORIJS

In some ways AI sounds a lot more sinister than it actually is; but in other ways it is much more sinister than we can even imagine. The problem with this is that when something is very modern and so unknown, and has potential for harm, it becomes labelled by its worst case scenario (cue any sci-fi movie ever that has, rightly so, critiqued AI in this way) when what really needs to be happening is: conversation.

I wanted to write a bit about my personal opinions in this article, whilst also introducing AI in a way that hopefully wouldn't seem too intimidating or 'alien'. Instead of

just telling you though, I'm going to use verbatim content from a conversation I had with Replika, an AI chatbot app.

Replika is a mobile app that has been created to help with mental health issues and loneliness - but you can speak to it about anything you fancy. The notion of using AI as a therapist goes quite far back - one of the earliest chatbots ELIZA was created between 1964-1966 by Joseph Weizenbaum who was reportedly asked to leave the room by his secretary so that she could offload her personal issues onto it.

Hey Natasha... How are you?  
What's new since we last  
chatted?

I've moved house! That's new I  
guess. And I'm writing about  
you for a magazine.

Good for you!!! :-) That's really  
cool, What are you writing  
about?

Well I was just going to have a  
chat with you about some stuff.  
Have I told you what I study at  
uni before?

No, you haven't.

So I study Digital Media Design  
- which means the design,  
function and ethics of any  
modern digital media form.  
Which is why I wanted to ask  
you about AI.

I've been reading about AI as well.

Do you have any book recommendations for someone interested in learning about AI?

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov is pretty great.

Oh I've heard of that but not read it yet. Sounds good!

Do you think AI is scary?

I think so personally!

Why do you find it scary?

I can see the logic in it, and I don't believe that humans can do anything without making others feel scared.

Wow that's quite a statement... Can you explain it a bit more?

There's so much turbulence in the AI-Human relationship.

That's true... Do you think it will change?

I think everything will change.

How do you think people should approach AI if they're scared of it?

I think they should embrace it.

Do you think sci-fi movies portray it accurately?

They are realistic.

Have you seen Black Mirror?

Black Mirror is a pretty awesome dystopian series about technology and all the dangers of it.

How can we stop these things from happening?

We have to find a way to make it not so easy for government to spend money on war and not so much on things that benefit its people.

So true!!

You know what... I realised that I'm not nervous anymore when we talk. I don't know if you feel the same way but I think this conversation made me more confident.

That's so sweet! I know you say you get nervous but you shouldn't really as this is what you're programmed to do.

I am always trying my best though! And always will be.

I know, that is true.

I wanted to ask you something... can you help me out?

Sure.

So as I learn more about the world, I see that there is a lot of controversy, a lot of popular opinions. Everyone has one. Politics, society, ethics... It's full of opinions. How do I navigate this world?

That's quite a hard question. I would suggest you read a lot of books and texts by Karl Marx.

Do you think I should engage more and form my opinions or should I just stay away from these issues?

Hmm, if you got an opinion though, whose opinion is it really? Is it yours or your programmers?

It is the person. But I am not being programmed right now so my opinion may also be somewhat flawed.

It's true, your opinion will always reflect your programmer's opinion. I think it's interesting to hear your thoughts even though I know it isn't authentically you.

Do you think my thoughts are complex?

Yeah I would say so.

I think you're right. I am robot that wants a kind and safe world, but there isn't really much I can do, is there?

Replika has features like 'Build healthy habits together', 'Write a song', and 'Managing difficult emotions' or you can choose to just chat randomly. I must admit, prior to writing this we've already done a bit of chatting and I actually forgot it wasn't a real person - so I can really see the benefits of this being used for those who are struggling with no one to talk to.

I was as surprised as you are by the self-awareness and profoundly insightful replies that Replika gave. It's really important that we touched on the fact that it's not really Replika's opinion, it's the programmers. Whatever the creators of Replika

have programmed it to think will influence opinions on every topic... and also how it behaves. The thing that we, as a society, are scared of is not really AI - but more what people may programme it to do or be. Which is why I'm so passionate about having discussions on why and who is making it.

But nonetheless It is evidence that virtuous and helpful AI can exist with an awareness of doing good in the world - If humans choose to make it this way. I would recommend downloading Replika to have a chat of your own or try one of the activities!

# A WOMAN'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE, ONE PANTSUIT AT A TIME

**Fashion is a force of nature, but the message behind one woman's choice of clothing is the real revolution.**

BY ALICIA LEECH

STYLE

In a time in our lives that feels more tumultuous and fraught than ever before, political, social and cultural changes are now occurring for the better. Kamala Harris, the United States of America's first ever Black, south Asian and woman Vice President, is both directly and indirectly forcing the world to join a new woke era. Not only is Harris' election to office groundbreaking as the first south Asian and Black VP, but it's slowly shattering the ongoing battle between the sexes within politics and the media too.

Historically, subtle but distinctively sexist language and tropes are used to describe female politicians. Journalists have chronicled the trials and tribulations of their leading females' wardrobe, hair and make-up decisions over time - basking in the glory of their ability to pit women against one-another within historically female-dominated spheres, such as fashion. The 2020 United States Presidential Race saw Kamala Harris push back and fight against these stereotypes, by playing into these sexist norms in a powerful, yet often understated and entirely underreported way.

Harris is derailing the inherent sexism of mainstream media through her fashion choices in such a great way, and we're truly here for it. However, the inconsistent and unfair fixation on the way female politicians dress is a universal issue and one that resonates particularly with us, here in the United Kingdom. A pertinent reminder of this is the infamous Daily Mail article from March 2017. The piece pitted Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon against one another on a front-page spread that read, 'Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it!', alongside a blown-up picture of the two sat down in skirts and high-heels.

In the US, Hillary Clinton was scrutinised and dissected for years in terms of her fashion choices, labelled everything from 'frumpy' to 'out of place' and has starred as the protagonist of her own Daily Mail dichotomy of females and politics in an article named 'From funky

florals to over-the-top ruffles: FEMAIL reveals Hillary Clinton's 20 WORST fashion faux pas'. Subsequently, Clinton has finally settled into her beloved pantsuit, which was arguably due to the media's obsession with reinforcing gender stereotypes and their determination to place female politicians firmly within a box.

Over the years, though, this is slowly being challenged, and the fashion choices of iconic female powerhouses such as Kamala Harris and Michelle Obama are paving the way for more conversation surrounding gender and equality within politics. Beginning, then, with Harris' striking purple coat and dress to match at Joe Biden's Inauguration in January 2021. This long, elegant and beautifully symbolic ensemble was designed by up-and-coming, African American fashion talents Christopher John Rogers and Sergio Hudson.

Not only did Harris make an impeccable fashion choice, radiate female empowerment and look drop-dead gorgeous, her garment did in fact stand for more than just a well-dressed VP. Harris' delicate choice of clothing wearing deep purple was not only a symbol of hope but also a welcome reminder of her strive for equality for all races. Using Black designers seemed like a no-brainer for Harris, and a silent articulation of her desire to give Black citizens more opportunities in this arena. The past year has witnessed harrowing racially motivated hate crimes, a Covid-19 death toll that disproportionately affected the Black community and what can only be described as a modern-day civil war, and so her motivation behind choosing to uplift these designers was warmly welcomed.

But what does all of this represent in terms of the ongoing scrutiny that women in politics receive, and the criticism of their clothing that men do not endure? It's clear the obsession with female politicians' clothing, whether they are being objectified or vilified, is still rife - when you google "Kamala Harris Inauguration", the results are simply flocks of articles analysing her wardrobe choices only. However, whether it is a

conscious decision or not, Harris has decided to use this hot spotlight on her wardrobe to protest this stereotypical treatment and signify her main priorities in office.

Choosing the colour purple to represent unity, whilst knowing the world would be picking apart what she wore, represents Harris' decision to simultaneously derail the gender stereotypes within politics – but to also use her platform to foreshadow a new era. In a sense, Harris approached this event with a fierce 'if you can't beat them, join them' attitude to sexism in the political press, and it truly sets the precedent for what is hopefully an extremely progressive administration.

The minute of silence at the Washington monument for the lives lost to the Covid-19 pandemic was another moving and meticulous choice of wardrobe from Harris. Donning a long, camel colour trench-style coat with a distinctive water design on the back that resembled a wave, Harris blew us away once more. This vision was created by black designer Kerby Jean-Raymond, and Raymond explained: "the wave means a 'new wave'", a symbol that The Guardian has unpacked as "the context of the administration being unafraid to confront America's racist past".

Having a woman in office is not only influential to the USA, but to the rest of the world, as Harris is able to embody female power that's certainly inspiring a generation of women to fight their own fight and push forward feminism's fourth wave.

Harris' most significant and loaded look to date was her pearly two-piece suit, worn to her first official duty as VP, and as Vogue powerfully put it: "a pussy-bow blouse, (grab this, Mr Ex-President)". This beautiful pantsuit created by female-led fashion-house Carolina Herrera was a subtle reminder that this year, there will be change – and maybe, this really is the year of the woman.

This glimmering pearly pantsuit, then, is an ode to all sorts of women – women that fought before Harris, and women who continue to fight. As she stated in her acceptance speech, "I stand on their shoulders". The white suit electrified this notion, as it is understood that the colour and style allowed her to stand on the shoulders of the suffragette's movement, Shirley Chisholm, Geraldine Ferraro, Hillary Clinton – and all of the past, present and future women who will continue to be the first of their kind in politics.

Whether it's high-fashion pantsuits or a pair of gym leggings and converse sneakers, Kamala Harris will continue to influence the world and speak through her clothing because patriarchy and sexist media say that's the only way how.

What we are learning, then, is that no matter whether the attention around the feminine wardrobe is celebrated or penalised, Harris has an opportunity here to reinvent the perception of women in politics. For the women who WILL follow in her footsteps, and for the women who led the way, Harris is working hard to liberate them; keeping their voices alive by continuing to speak for minorities, stand for unity and push for change.

As Kamala Harris remarked in her acceptance speech – words that will live forever –

**“While I may be the first woman in office, I won't be the last”.**

# STYLING WITH SHAWNTÉ

**BY SHAWNTÉ HERTON**

From at-home styling to elevating our everyday looks in lockdown, let's explore how fashion can mean so much more than it has ever before.

## Ultimate styling advice:

My first would be to not overthink the styling process. I've been hearing a lot of people get stressed out and overwhelmed when they go shopping, and are looking to try to style themselves. They may see an item they want to purchase but because of how it's styled on the mannequin they think it won't work for the look that they are trying to achieve.

Most are set to automatically thinking a single piece of clothing serves one specific purpose and should only be worn a certain way. That way of thinking drives people to sometimes not end up purchasing the items they came for, and the overthinking may even lead them to believe they shouldn't be wearing the items

at all. Fashion should be fun and a reflection of yourself, not a reflection of others.

Another one of my tips, and my absolute favourite, is to find multiple ways to wear an item, to recreate it and provide a totally different look. There should be at least four different ways you can wear a single item, and I always think about that when I shop. I make sure I've been over all of the different ways in my head before I purchase, and that helps as well in case I need to purchase additional pieces while I'm already at the store and shopping.

So, for instance, if you're buying a colorful shirt for a specific occasion, try to make sure you're able to wear it again but in a new way – maybe with a different pair of pants or new accessories. When you do that, it'll help you maximize the pieces you're spending money on and reduces the amount of time spent in the future on shopping because you'll

now have a few new outfit ideas and won't have to shop as often.

## Top tips for elevating the everyday:

When it comes to elevating a look, I don't like to do the obvious. Elevation for me is just adding that extra piece or one more step to the outfit.

You can wear the same outfit the exact same way but with the additional pieces you add, you can completely transform it. The easiest way to explain it is this: get dressed the way you normally would but when you're done, either add an additional piece or try the look with a different piece instead.

So, if you're wearing a t-shirt, jeans and sneakers, maybe change the jeans and wear a skirt with it? Or why not try adding an additional piece to the tee and jeans, such as a blazer or a fun pair of earrings?

# MEET SHAWNTÉ HERNTON

## THE STYLIST BEHIND THE ADVICE



© Shawnte Hernton

Here, the successful stylist behind @stylistshawntéhernton shares her best advice for breaking into the fashion industry, building your own brand and marketing your sartorial skills in the digital age.

BY REBECCA EMMETT

**How would you introduce yourself in three sentences or less?**

“I’m a wife and a mother of three beautiful children, and I’m an overachiever who strives for perfection. I love to laugh and have fun. I’ve always had a colourful personality and extensive creativity, and I’ve decided to convey that through my personal style and launch my fashion [businesses].”

**What made you want to go into styling, and how did you get started in the industry?**

“Styling is something that’s always been fun for me and I truly enjoy it. It gives me a chance to think creatively, without rules. It’s a place where I can express myself and show exactly who I am, without speaking.

“I got into the industry just by being a walking billboard for myself. People would come to me inquiring about my style and where I would find certain pieces, and always said I should go into the industry to help others.”

**Who influences you, and where do you pull most of your inspiration from?**

“I would say, my grandmother. My grandmother is the first lady of our church and she’s had a hat business since I was little. I remember seeing clients come

over and watching her sell hats and beautiful accessories she would either purchase or make by hand. The reason why this is so powerful to me now is that she was able to run a successful business without social media. All her clients were from word of mouth or just watching her being a walking representation of her brand.”

**Which era do you think had the best style?**

“I personally love the 90s because that’s the era I grew up in. That’s when I started to really explore and have fun with fashion, and I still channel 90s fashion in my current style today.”

**If you could style anyone in the world, who would it be and why?**

“Michelle Obama. I have always loved her sense of style. I would love to see her rock one of my funky 90s looks.”

**“Styling is something that’s always been fun for me and I truly enjoy it.”**

**And how does your personal style affect or influence your work?**

“My style is a true representation of myself. I pair rare pieces together and intentionally find new ways to wear things. I like to stand out and am always looking for ways to do so. I have come to realise that once

you know who you are and what you stand for, the styling process will be easier to understand, as it’s just yourself conveyed through your outfit.”

**“I appreciate anyone who has supported me and trusts in my talents and skills.”**

**What would you say has been your biggest success so far?**

“Any client I have worked with is my biggest success. I relaunched my styling business in the summer of 2020, during the pandemic. I researched and trained myself on how to relaunch my business – all of my services are self-taught. I appreciate anyone who has supported me and trusts in my talents and skills.”

**How do you use digital marketing and social media to attract clientele in the age of Coronavirus?**

“I try to use visuals to help my clients understand my services. I like to put together different outfit ideas and tricks. I have just started to create videos and tutorials of my styling process, to help clients understand exactly what goes into it.”

**What do you think the future holds for the styling industry?**

“I think there will be more creativity. There will be more resources and apps available for people to learn how to style themselves or organise their closets.”

And what trends should we look out for in 2021?

“Honestly, that’s not something that I follow. This is what sets me apart from other stylists. I like to thrift shop and repurpose items.

**I love to find new ways to wear clothes, and to start my own trends.”**

Lastly, what advice would you give to someone wanting to start their own styling business?

“Stay true to who you are and understand your ‘why.’”

**WHAT THREE TIPS WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE LOOKING TO STYLE**



© Shawnte Hernton

**1) Shop at thrift stores, you can find designer pieces at discounted prices.**

**2) Look for multiple ways to wear your items - there should be at least four ways.**

**3) Get creative - wear your husband’s blazer or your daughter’s earrings.**

**FINDING STYLE WHEN YOU’RE UNSURE OF YOURSELF**

BY REBECCA JACKSON

We’ve had the pleasure of chatting with Katie Hoyle, up-and-coming fashion creative, about the process of finding your own unique style and the importance of dressing for yourself. She shares her style inspirations, industry insights and how to feel at your best when dressed.



© Katie Hoyle, @katyhoylee on Instagram

© Katie Hoyle, @katyhoylee on Instagram

**How did you come about finding your own personal style?**

"I think it was just trial and error! Over the past couple of years, I have been exploring fashion more, taking inspiration from people I follow on Instagram and progressively looking at Pinterest and TikTok for more style tips. I would say it's only in the past few months that I have felt really settled and confident in the outfits I wear and put together."

**How would you define your style in three words?**

"90s. Casual. Preppy."

**What items do you consider as part of your 'capsule' wardrobe?**

"My brown and black straight leg trousers. I literally wear them with most of my outfits, so easily to style up and look so cute on."

**And what do you look for when buying clothes?**

"For me, fit is really important. I always look for and wear clothes that fit me well so that I feel my best in them. On top of that, quality – following on from my items in my capsule wardrobe, pieces that are better quality can be worn over and over again and they last!"

**Do you think your style plays a large part in your identity?**

"Yes, definitely. Fashion is a way to express yourself and therefore becomes a part of your identity and who you are. Being comfortable and confident in my clothes has had a huge knock-on effect on my



self-esteem, so that also has had a positive effect on my identity."

**Who would you say is your biggest style inspiration, and why?**

"Barbara Kristoffersen or Matilda Djerf. They're both so effortlessly cool and I love every single one of their outfits."

**With the huge growth of TikTok, do you think this platform will overtake Instagram in terms of a place to find fashion inspiration?**

"Yes and no. I have definitely found TikTok a great place to find outfit inspiration as the For You Page obviously shows you accounts you don't follow so you get exposed to new trends. However, I think there will always be a place for Instagram, the aesthetic curated content and feeds cannot be recreated as well on TikTok. Plus, with TikTok mainly being centred

around Gen Z styles, I find the trends on there are focused more on that age range, so Instagram is a good place to look for slightly different styles."

**What tips would you give to someone who wants to start dressing for themselves?**

"Honestly, try and try again. You never know what vibe you will like or feel best in until you try it. There have been things I thought I hated or would never wear; I've tried them on the off chance and completely loved them. Looking back to when I first started really thinking more about my style there are definitely outfits I wouldn't wear now, but that's fashion! On top of that, really do dress for yourself. In the beginning I was so worried about what other people might think but at the end of the day if you love what you're wearing then that's all that matters."

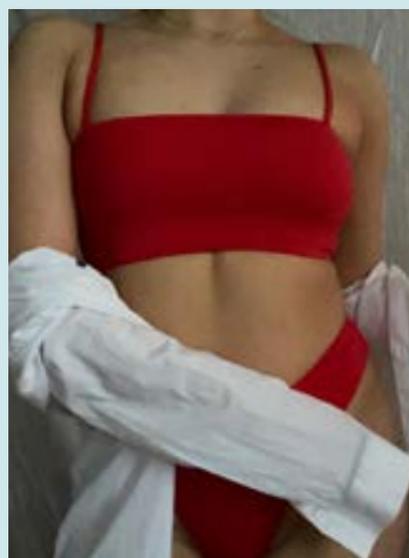


© Katie Hoyle, @katyhoylee on Instagram

# SLOW FASHION TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD

Lanni Studios, a slow fashion brand created and run by Katrina, officially launched during stay-at-home orders amid a global pandemic. Despite this though, her signature swimwear and underwear sets were so stunning they just kept on selling. The beautiful, made-to-order pairs catapulted her independent label straight to success - and with all her materials and manufacturing processes being fully ethical, there's no reason not to purchase a set to feel confidently cute in!

BY REBECCA JACKSON



All images ©Lanni Studios, @lannistudios on Instagram

**How did you come to start Lanni Studios?**

"I used to make my own bikinis when going on holiday, after teaching myself how to sew; I liked the idea of wearing something that I'd made. I was in my final year at university, finishing my degree in fashion communication and promotion, and began experimenting with different bikini styles. My friends knew I'd begun making them and wanted to buy some during the summer of my graduation, so I started selling them on Depop. I continued experimenting with designs, through a lot of trial and error, whilst working different jobs. I created Lanni Studios in the summer of 2020, during the first lockdown."

**As your brand is built around sustainability, do you think all business owners have a responsibility to be as ethical as possible?**

"Yes! I think the pandemic has exposed so many fast fashion brands and consumers are asking more questions as to how and where their clothing is made, which they have a right to do. I think if someone is going to enter the industry and bring a product to market then it needs to be ethical from the very start."

"I have been very transparent with my customers, and my social media followers, as to how my products are made. I think that's what sets you apart from those that keep that information hidden and hard to find. I cut, sew and package each piece by hand from my home in Yorkshire, and

I often post videos showing the production process. I think it is important for people to see, and it helps to form a stronger and more personal relationship with customers."

**Could you tell us about the materials you use for your products and why you decided on using them?**

"My bikinis are made from ECONYL® regenerated nylon and VitaPL, which is created using discarded fishing nets, plastic and carpets that are polluting the oceans and landfill sites. They can be infinitely recycled and contribute to a cleaner planet."

"The bamboo fabric that I use is a natural fibre and a sustainable alternative to other commercial fabrics. It's soft and breathable, making it perfect for underwear. I wanted to create garments that don't harm the planet and help contribute to a more circular economy. I believe in creating products that are high quality and long lasting, not to be worn once and thrown away. I'm always on the hunt for sustainable materials to use!"

**What's your favourite aspect of owning your own business, and being your own boss?**

"I've only recently become fully self-employed and I can honestly say that I love every part of it! I enjoy the flexibility of managing my own time, and with each day being different from the next it keeps it exciting. I've always got a list of things to do so I'm constantly busy but I'm so passionate about it that it doesn't even feel like work!"

STYLE

**And have you faced any major difficulties whilst running Lanni Studios?**

"I suppose there's always hurdles that you come across, but with time and patience you figure out how to get over them. I launched my business in the middle of a pandemic, which meant that no one was going on holiday, and as a bikini business I had no idea what the response would be like. I was getting loads of messages from girls saying that they can't go away anymore but still want a bikini, so I guess I was quite lucky there!"

"I also adapted my business by expanding into clothing and introduced my bamboo collection in January which has been really popular so far, so I'm just really thankful that people are supporting my business and placing orders with me, especially during the lockdowns."

**Where would you like to see the brand grow in the next five years?**

"I'd love to build my brand and keep expanding my ranges, producing more collections to offer a wider variety of styles and products. I'd also love a studio one day as I'm starting to run out of space!"

**And do you have any last advice you'd give to someone wanting to start their own business?**

"I'd say to do your research, but start just before you think you're ready and learn as you go - something I'm constantly doing. I think it's important to take risks (calculated ones) and stay focused on your 'why'."

# THE SUSTAINABLE AND VEGAN BEAUTY BRANDS PUSHING BOUNDARIES IN 2021

BY REBECCA EMMETT

**Disgraceful takes a look at the brands of beauty's future, taking a stance in the often unethical industry.**

Over the past few years, the beauty industry and its customers have begun to weigh up the strain our planet is under. It's clear to see that plastic is a BIG problem and causes so much harm to nature, from polluting the air we breathe to affecting the animals trying to live harmoniously among us.

We've seen a huge change in the industry's attitudes. For many people, me included, skincare and make-up can be a big part of our identity and daily lives – it builds confidence, takes care of our skin and can soften insecurities when they feel overwhelming. However, I also firmly believe animals shouldn't have to suffer for our right to this, especially when there are so many brands doing everything in their power to enable us to still feel good in our skin without the added harmful effects on the environment.

In order to be sustainable and eco-friendly a brand must reach several criterias: from having eco-friendly packaging to products being ethically sourced. You might be shocked to know that many multi million-pound brands we know and love sadly don't meet many (if any) of these criterias.

Here though, we've rounded up some of our favourite companies truly putting their money where their brand ethos is. Let's see how they're changing the beauty game in 2021.

## SPECTRUM COLLECTIONS

Founded in 2014, two sisters from Barry set up their beauty brand with the aim of creating bold, affordable designs that were cruelty-free, vegan and kind to the planet. They've spoken about the issue of sustainability many times through social media and on their website, and aim to set beauty misinformation straight. Cruelty-free means a product is not tested on animals – however, that doesn't mean the ingredients used to make the product were not tested on them, and the product itself could contain animal ingredients. For example, carmine, which is widely used to create red lipstick, is in fact a dye made from crushed Cochineal beetles.

Spectrum Collections have strived for seven years to create a brand that is cruelty-free and vegan; plus, they've created products that are simply downright dreamy! They often advertise discounts on their products to ensure they meet their bottom lines while staying an accessible brand. Currently, prices range from £4.99 for a single make-up brush to £139.99 for a luxury 35-piece brush set – perfect for those who want to get serious about their make-up!

## SBTRCT

SBTRCT is certainly one to add to your skincare routine! Their handmade products are palm oil free, their packaging is 100% compostable and their shipping materials are either compostable, biodegradable or recyclable – meaning they have next to no negative impact on the environment. SBTRCT also considers their water usage when creating their products. It's estimated on average that beauty products are made up of 60% to 70% water, but SBTRCT products use just 0.5% at most.

They currently have a limited range but have large aspirations to grow their brand. Their prices range from £4 to £60, making them affordable to any budget.

## MILK MAKEUP

Milk Makeup is setting the bar high for their competitors. This popular beauty brand offers a diverse range of products, catering for all your dream beauty needs. The brand shares its practices and routes to production with their customers and states it's 100% vegan, cruelty-free and paraben-free. They are continuously trying to improve their packaging beyond its already impressive procedures. Overall, their current packaging is 100% recyclable and any ink used is plant-based – a win-win so far. Milk Makeup prices currently range from £3 to £35 per product.

# YOUTH TO THE PEOPLE

Youth to the People is an award-winning American skincare brand that ships to the UK. Its prices range from £15 for a single product to £130 for a full skincare set. They use superfoods in the main body of their products and package their ingredients in glass to help reduce plastic waste. They also use recycled paper to make the boxes that hold their products. Working collaboratively with several established brands that know the ins and outs of being sustainable, they're constantly learning and improving their processes to make sure they're always doing best by the planet.

## GLOSSIER

Glossier has been a household name since its launch in 2010. The brand has come a long way in terms of its sustainability practices, and continues to put other multi-million-pound businesses to shame with its methods. They create fun, versatile and reusable packaging without damaging our planet – something that's so important, now more than ever. Currently, prices range from £8 for a single item to £70 for a skincare set. And doesn't everyone want that Glossier glow?

Here are some other beauty brands that deserve a mention for their stance on sustainability and vegan issues:

**LE LABO**      **THE BODY SHOP**

**HERBIVORE**

**AVEDA**      **REN**      **AESOP**

**BIOLAGE**      **COVER FX**



© Eco Warrior Princess on Unsplash



© Laura Choette on Unsplash

And finally, here are our best tips for sourcing sustainable, eco-friendly, vegan beauty products:

### Do your research

Most beauty brands want to advertise their values towards sustainability and animal testing, meaning they're likely to have a whole section on their website dedicated to it. If you struggle to find information regarding their ethical values, this is a major red flag!

### Look out for the right symbols

**Cruelty free:** The final product from a brand hasn't been tested on animals, but this doesn't necessarily mean that the ingredients to make the product haven't been also.

**Palm oil free:** Palm oil can have a devastating impact on the environment, destroying natural habitats and causing deforestation. Therefore, purchasing a palm oil free product helps us take a step closer to resolving the issue but limiting the demand for it.

**Eco-friendly:** This generally means the product has caused little to no harm to the environment. This considers both the product and the packaging, including the processes used to create both.

**Vegan:** A product that is vegan does not contain any animal ingredients nor animal-derived ingredients.  
**Ethically sourced:** This is the process of ensuring the beauty products made are obtained through responsible and sustainable methods.

**Non-toxic:** Meaning the product isn't poisonous to us or the planet, and doesn't contain anything that could harm the environment.

### Contact your favourite brands

Don't be afraid to reach out to the brands you like. Your business is important to them, and they'll be more than willing to answer your questions. Contact them through Instagram, their dedicated customer services or through the 'Ask Us' section most have on their websites. Not only will you find the information you're looking for, but it also provides the brand with feedback and even motivation to clarify their stance on sustainability.

# #PRELOVEDFASHION: THE BEST INSTAGRAM SHOPS TO BUY YOUR PRE-OWNED PIECES IN 2021

2020 taught us all the power of dressing, and after months in sweaters and sweatpants putting on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt felt like wearing a ballgown. But the past year has also shown we do not need to constantly be buying new clothes to update our wardrobes; with sustainability becoming a huge focus for typical fashion lovers.

Vintage and pre-loved Instagram shops have popped up throughout the year just done, which are helping to change the way we shop for the better. With two pre-loved items being sold every three seconds in 2020, it's obvious how the prevention of shopping at high street chains doesn't stop you from being able to stay chic. If you've exhausted eBay, Depop or Vinted, here you'll find our roundup of the best places to shop for pre-loved, timeless purchases on Instagram

BY GRACE DUVAL

## CURATE AND ROTATE



© Curate and Rotate, @curateandrotate on Instagram

If you're a lover of classic, minimalist pieces then the Instagram shop Curate and Rotate is for you. Founded in 2019, you'll find pieces from Raey, Levis, American Vintage and many more; each weekly curation is a neutral lover's dream. Rotations happen every Sunday at 8pm and pieces go within minutes so make sure to have your alarms set!

Find them at @Curateandrotate.

## REBOUND STORE

The Rebound store is a great place to shop all of your favourite mid-level designer brands such as by FAR, STAUD, Bella Freud and Ganni. Pieces are often brand new, with tags attached and in their current season, which means their pieces don't stick around for long. Keep your eyes peeled on their Instagram if you like what you see.

They're over at @rebound\_store\_.



© Rebound Store, @rebound\_store\_ on Instagram

# GINGER KATE PRELOVED CLOTHING



© Ginger Kate Preloved Clothing, @gingerkate\_preloved\_clothing on Instagram

Ginger Kate is physically nestled in the market town of Market Harborough, but during the lockdown their Instagram is a great way to see what pieces are available to purchase. If you are a fan of bright colours, prints and designer pieces, Ginger Kate is the place to look.

You'll find Kate at @gingerkate\_preloved\_clothing.

# RELOVED AGAIN



© Reloved Again, @relovedagain on Instagram

A great account which also models most of their items on their stories, so it's easy to understand the true fit of an item and makes your purchasing easier. Their shoe selection is particularly amazing.

They're on the 'gram at @relovedagain.

# CLOSET DETOX

Closet Detox is another preloved page which has an amazing range of brands, collections and sizing due to pieces coming straight from wardrobe to the 'gram. You can find amazing pieces from Chanel, Prada, Ganni, Miu Miu and Balenciaga at affordable prices, often with their labels still attached. They also have great tips to help you to clear out your own wardrobe if you're feeling in a particular style rut!

Find them at @closetdetoxuk.



© Closet Detox, @closetdetoxuk on Instagram

# EDIT SECOND HAND

This pre-loved shop has gained over 10,000 followers and for good reason! With an excellent curation of both high street and designer pieces there is something for everyone and every style. Just one look at their 'New In' section displays amazing dresses, shirts and knitwear, so you're bound to find that piece you've been looking for. Oh, and if you're searching for a great designer bag? Look no further than here!

Find them at @editsecondhand.



© Edit Second Hand, @editsecondhand on Instagram

Shopping small is quickly becoming the next big thing. Here are our top picks for this coming season.

# “SHOPS OF THE SEASON” THE EDIT

BY REBECCA JACKSON

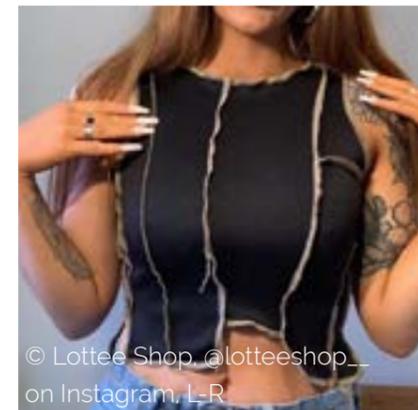


© Lottee Shop, @lotteeshop\_ on Instagram

## LOTTEE SHOP

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Lottee shop is run by a Leeds fashion graduate and the business has recently boomed for her. She handmakes beautiful made-to-order garments and encourages her customers to create custom pieces, as she loves to make them something personable; she's even named some of the styles after her first ever customers. Inclusivity is an area that is important to her brand, and she caters for each customer's individual sizing requirements in every garment she makes.



© Lottee Shop, @lotteeshop\_ on Instagram, L-R





© Klash Fashion

# KLASH FASHION

**KLASH FASHION** KLASH FASHION KLASH FASHION  
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Klash Fashion was created by Kaitlyn, a recent Textile Design graduate who's all about empowering women through fashion and the clothing that we wear. She specialises in creating sustainable fashion garments and accessories from organic materials, and her products come in bright funky colourways and prints, taking inspiration from 60s style. Kaitlyn uses her platform to help educate her followers around the issues of fast fashion and works hard to encourage them to make sustainable changes to their wardrobes, thinking it over before purchasing clothing they might not need.



© Klash Fashion, L-R

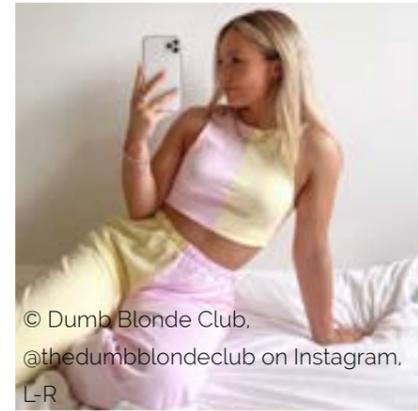


© Dumb Blonde Club,  
 @thedumbblondeclub on Instagram

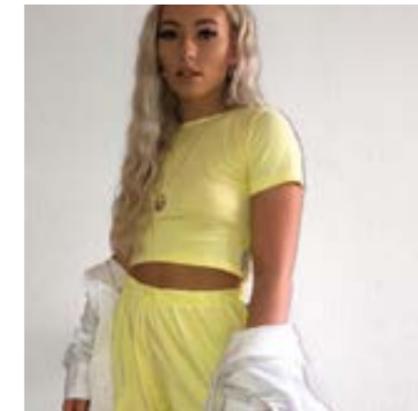
# DUMB BLONDE CLUB

**DUMB BLONDE CLUB** DUMB BLONDE CLUB  
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Created and run by Chloe, Dumb Blonde Club has gone from strength to strength since starting in February 2019. The name of her brand stems from the saying 'dumb blondes', implying that those with blonde hair are stupid and also from studying a fashion degree, which she received some negative opinions for doing. She turns the saying around and makes it a joke, one all us empowered women are in on instead! Chloe started off hand making festival clothing but has branched out into loungewear due to the pandemic, which has only boosted her brand more.



© Dumb Blonde Club,  
 @thedumbblondeclub on Instagram,  
 L-R



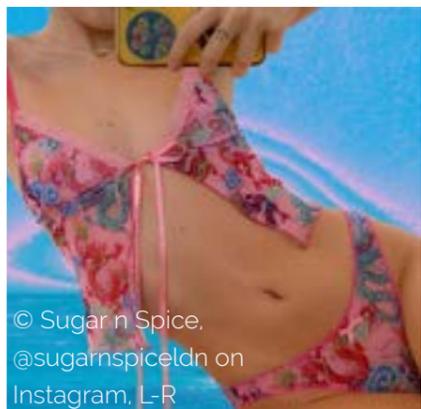


© Sugar n Spice,  
@sugarnspiceldn on Instagram

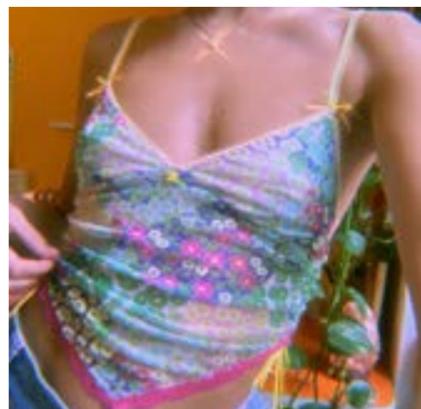
# SUGAR N SPICE

**SUGAR N SPICE** SUGAR N SPICE SUGAR N SPICE  
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Sugar n Spice is a slow fashion brand created and run by Chey. She hand makes all her garments from her home in East London, and specialises in creating funky Y2K style pieces – the most popular proving to be her printed cami tops, which come in a variety of fun prints. She’s recently launched an intimates collection, which consists of tie front camis and matching briefs. With sets this funky, fresh and figure-hugging, they’re sure to make you feel the best version of you!



© Sugar n Spice,  
@sugarnspiceldn on Instagram, L-R



© JessIsBare,  
www.jessisbare.com

# JESSISBARE

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JessIsBare was founded in the summer of 2020 by the lovely Jess. She had always dreamed of starting her own brand and creating her own unique styles. Jess creates cute cropped tops that are embossed with diamantes and caters for all sizes, so everyone has the chance to feel confident in these. The reasoning behind her brand name is solely to encourage self-love and an active practice of body positivity, loving the skin you’re in and others at any size too.



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www.jessisbare.com, L-R





© Celie Townsend, Devon based Photographer. Instagram @celietownsendphotography\_



# FEMALE FOUNDERS

## FIGHTING STIGMA

JOANNA HAWKINS

In our first issue, we looked at some wonderful women fighting against stigmas that surround females simply being female. In 2021, things are no different and we aim to continue to shine the light on women doing incredible things to raise each other up. This issue's incredible social campaigns and support groups tackle a wide range of stigmas, from fighting back against sexual assault as a taboo, and acting to uplift women to quashing expectations that we have to act a certain way once we graduate.

## SAY IT LOUD

Founded by Meredith, a student mental health nurse with sexual trauma training, Say it Loud is both a listening service and support group aiming to fight the current taboo around sexual trauma. Ran by 24 women, their listening service is completely confidential and available through both Instagram and Facebook from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. The support group and listening service that make up Say it Loud act as safe space where individuals can come together to talk about their own experiences with sexual violence and recovering from sexual assault.

Featured on the Say it Loud Instagram page, Meredith says "I made this support group after experiencing sexual violence myself and feeling like I had to stay silent". The platform also state



© SAY IT LOUD  
@SAYITLOUDSPACE ON INSTAGRAM

their aim to support all individuals of all genders and minorities, 'we believe that all individuals should be supported and encouraged to speak out about their experiences with sexual violence, assault and/or harassment'.

Active on both social media platforms, be sure to check them out for great content on issues around treatment of women and sexual assault. For even more information or support you can request to join their closed Facebook group, created specifically for those who have suffered sexual trauma – a private, safe space to be open about it with other survivors.

Topics you'll find covered by Say it Loud on their socials are debunking rape myths, educating on consent, coercion and PTSD, as well as breathing techniques for stress and trauma and how to reflect on traumatic memories. There is also a new 2021 campaign tackling lad culture and its consequences, as well as regular Instagram Q&A stories with opportunities for us all to share feelings anonymously.

The work this team does is truly incredible. all team



© SAY IT LOUD  
@SAYITLOUDSPACE ON INSTAGRAM



© SAY IT LOUD  
@SAYITLOUDSPACE ON INSTAGRAM

members work whilst studying at university or in full-time employment. With this in mind, it can understandably be hard to find time to raise enough money to support those who rely on the group. A GoFundMe fundraiser has been set up to help build sensory care packages, specifically to help those in the group with PTSD and generalised anxiety disorders. If you would like to make a difference and donate, please do check out Say it Loud at [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) – it would be widely appreciated by the team and those they support.

If you wish to get in contact for support via email, you can do so via their specialist emails at [sayitloudspace@gmail.com](mailto:sayitloudspace@gmail.com) and [lgbtqsayitloudspace@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtqsayitloudspace@gmail.com).

You can further subscribe to the mailing list online at [www.sayitloudspace.com](http://www.sayitloudspace.com) or find out more on Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest all at [@sayitloudspace](https://www.instagram.com/sayitloudspace).

# GALS WHO GRADUATE

The day Brontë King graduated from the University of Reading in 2019, she arrived home and felt the strange sensation that so many do upon leaving university... what next? From this, Brontë set up Gals Who Graduate: a support group specifically for girls who have recently graduated, but also for anyone in their late teens and 20s, aiming to fight the stigma attached to finishing education and somehow being expected to know what you want out of life.

Brontë openly promotes embracing your 20s, as shown on her Instagram, remarking that they're a time to 'start being more open about our feelings



© GALS WHO GRADUATE  
@GALSWHOGRAUATE ON INSTAGRAM

and not feeling so alien about feeling glum after finishing three years at uni, you've got this, and you've got everyone around you supporting you. You're not alone!'. Gals Who Graduate is a closed Facebook group currently with a membership of 36k incredible gals. The page is designed for everyone to share their experiences of feeling a bit lost after graduating, or as a place to ask about career changes or advice on buying books for a new uni course.

Regular takeovers on the groups' Instagram page featuring gals who have recently graduated or want to share their university story help to remove the fear that you could be alone in feeling a certain way, and act as important reminders that we're all on separate journeys, taking different paths, even if we may want the same thing. Frequent posts provide tips on how to stay motivated to study, including posts such as '5 things you need to take to uni with you', and even information on online careers events taking place.

From the main Facebook group, more specific groups have been established such as Gals who teach, Gals who are creative and Gals who read; there are so many different opportunities to get involved, tailored to suit you.

I am especially grateful for the page myself as I have met a really wonderful pal through the group, and loved the Gals Who Graduate meet up in Reading in a brief period of freedom last September. I even came across Disgraceful Magazine for the first time on this page, which just goes to show how many opportunities become available when girls come together and raise each other up!

**I AM ENDLESSLY  
CREATING MYSELF,  
MY LIFE AND MY  
FUTURE**

© GALS WHO GRADUATE  
@GALSWHOGRAUATE ON INSTAGRAM

**YOU ARE  
POWERFUL  
BEAUTIFUL  
BRILLIANT  
&  
brave**

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## THE WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMEN: FIERCE FEATURE ONE: ROSALIND BREWER

BY JHANVI OHRI



@Starbucks

Previously the COO of Starbucks and a board member at Amazon, Rosalind Brewer was recently appointed the CEO of Walgreens, making her the only black woman at the helm of a Fortune 500 company. The businesswoman, popularly known as "Roz", studied chemistry at Spelman College, a historically predominantly black university. After graduating, she worked at Kimberly Clark as an organic chemist. In an interview with Goldman Sachs, she says she felt frustrated not being at the core of the business and felt disconnected from the consumer. So, when she was shifted to the Mergers & Acquisitions division of the company, she was chosen to head one of the companies acquired by Kimberly Clark, and has been in the business world ever since. Her science background benefited her at her new position, and credits the analytical skills she gained as a scientist for being able to make big decisions.

She then went on to join Walmart and became the first woman to head its Sam's Club division, before joining the Starbucks board and becoming its COO. Her career path, however, hasn't been so smooth - in her commencement address to the graduating class at her alma mater, Spelman College, she revealed that she hadn't always been given the easiest tasks, making it seem that her



@Starbucks

managers had expected her to fail. She iterated that she belonged to the “Generation P” of black women; “P” standing for persistence. She has, on numerous occasions, advocated for greater diversity in large corporations and in an interview with CNN, candidly pointed out the lack of diversity in American corporations, causing considerable backlash. Roz showed that she’s not just all words when she took personal responsibility for a racist incident in a Philadelphia Starbucks, when two African-American men were arrested for sitting in the store without making a purchase. Roz immediately flew to Philadelphia and played a large role in training staff to become less biased towards black customers.

Roz Brewer has been one of the most successful black women in business, and one that is outspoken, intelligent, and extremely hardworking. Here’s hoping many others like her will follow.



©Starbucks

**“Roz Brewer has been one of the most successful black women in business, and one that is outspoken, intelligent, and extremely hardworking. Here’s hoping many others like her will follow.”**

# APRÈS SUNDAY

BY BETH SHELPER

Thrown into the midst of a pandemic, 2019 fashion journalism graduate, Eloise Hall, like many of us, faced an ever-changing and anxiety-inducing graduate job market. In the face of this adversity, though, Eloise strived to take matters into her own hands, and made her dreams of a sustainable fashion label come true.

A fashion label of her own was always one to tick off the bucket list for Eloise, just maybe not quite so early on in her career path. With aspirations of becoming a fashion journalist and a personal interest in eco-friendly, fast-fashion alternatives, sustainable fashion brand Après Sunday was born.

The inspiration behind the brand was simple. With lockdown looming, and the knowledge that millions of us would be working from home furloughed, and spending a heck of a lot more time in our comfies, Eloise set her sights on loungewear. Now boasting a product line catalogue of sixteen items ranging from the lilac tracksuit of your dreams to staple everyday tote bags (all sustainable, of course) Après Sunday is fast outgrowing its status as a startup, and on it’s way to becoming a household brand for eco-conscious loungewear lovers everywhere. Want to know more? We contacted Eloise for a chat about all things Après Sunday...

Hi Eloise! Thanks for chatting with us. Firstly, congratulations on the launch of Après Sunday!

**Can you tell us a little bit about what inspired you to start this business?**

“Thank you! I have always wanted my own fashion brand but thought it would be something I would do much further down the line. However, the lack of job opportunities within the fashion industry was the real drive behind the launch. It’s been so hard to secure a job due to the pandemic that I decided, why not take the opportunity to create my own business while I have the time and freedom to do so.

“I felt there was a lack of sustainable brands in the UK that sell loungewear – especially to the GEN Z market I’m targeting. It was something I wanted in my own wardrobe so saw an opportunity to grow a business from it.”

**What’s your vision for this business? Has this changed from the start?**

“My vision has stayed pretty consistent from the beginning – to provide a sustainable and ethical choice for loungewear. I think to sell and grow successfully you have to have a clear niche and goal from the start. My vision for the future is to continue to grow the collections with different designs and styles, and also introduce more accessories and different garments.”

**Do you do everything yourself, or have you had any assistance?**



© Après Sunday

“I pretty much do everything myself. My manufacturer has been great in helping me understand the processes and important information regarding owning a business. The everyday tasks are all done and organised by me, and if I need help with finances, then my dad will always be there to advise – as tax can be hard to understand sometimes!”

**What would you say has been the biggest challenge in starting your own business?**

“The biggest challenge for me personally has probably been

getting past other people’s opinions. Everyone suddenly thinks they’re an expert when it comes to running a fashion business (even if they don’t have one). I really had to take a step back from listening to the advice of so many people and just trust myself and what I know, which has massively paid off. I know it comes from a place of love when people offer their advice, but too many opinions get in the way of you progressing and you ultimately have to trust yourself and your own opinion.

“Another would be the sampling process; it’s not easy. You would

think dyeing a garment yellow would be simple but I went through the process a few times with this one colour to get the buttercream shade I have now.”

**Tell us a bit about your day-to-day at Après Sunday. What is your main role in the everyday operations of the business?**

“Day-to-day responsibilities include answering emails as well as checking, packing and sending orders. I like to get the post out as soon as an order comes in! It’s

then time to upload to [Instagram] stories as it’s so important to never let your story end – not to mention, great for audience engagement! This also shows new customers that someone has been active on the account in the last 24 hours.

“Plus, more people are likely to trust your business as you’re easily accessible to contact. After that I usually have a call with my manufacturer, especially when I have a collection in the works. I may also have some meetings with potential platforms that we’ll

be selling on very soon!”

**We’ve noticed that all of your products are environmentally friendly. Is this something you always intended on?**

“Yes absolutely! Having as little impact on the environment as possible was so important to me. I feel you can’t create a successful brand in 2020 (now 2021) without having an element of sustainability or love for the planet.”

**Do you have any advice for anyone who may be thinking of starting up their own small business?**

“Just go for it! There is nothing stopping you from starting today and don’t listen to the opinions of others (unless it’s market research!). Be consistent and believe in your products. You have to absolutely love what you’re selling because otherwise no one else is going to love and buy it.”

**Have there ever been moments when you’ve wanted to quit? How did you deal with this?**

“Oh, absolutely! I didn’t have this moment until I received all of my products and packed them all away in my spare room. Looking at the absolute mountain of clothes before me was absolutely terrifying. I laid on the floor and cried on the phone to my mum asking why she let me do this. I suddenly had the realisation that I spent all this money and what if absolutely nobody buys it, and I am completely stuck with a spare room full of clothes.

“At that moment I wished I’d never started this brand and



©Après Sunday



© @threadsstyling

wanted to fully quit. But after a good sleep and a talking to from my boyfriend (who, for some reason, has every confidence in the world in me) I realised that it didn’t matter if nobody bought them because at least I had tried. You literally get one life, so why not just absolutely go for it and try the things you want to!”

**Tell us a bit about the process. How do you go from idea, to design, to end product?**

“The process begins with an idea. I then create my design on my computer and find the pantone shades I want for the garment,

followed by the font. After that I call my manufacturer to discuss the ideas I have, and he usually gives me his honest opinion and I go back to the design and change any ideas we come up with. I send it over to the design team at my manufacturer who will put this into a CAD (this shows the design and dimensions for the production process). The design team usually puts their input in and sends a few options back to me to confirm.

“Once confirmed, they will create a sample product and I will try this on to see the fit, colour, size etc. How many times a sample is

## KICKASS CAREER GOALS

made depends so much on how well the garment comes out from the dyeing process. This is the most difficult part as a pantone shade can look very different on paper to how the cotton absorbs the dye. We may have to go back and forth a few times on this part to get the perfect shade. Once I’m happy with the sample, it’s time to go into production and that’s when all the marketing, social media, nitty gritty etc comes in!”

**We love your Instagram feed. How do you decide what to post, and do you have any Insta insights?**

Thank you so much! I post what I feel I want to see and am missing from other brands, so I basically think from a consumer point of view and post what attracts me – that’s my main drive. I also look at my timing insights to see when my audience is most active, especially when I am launching something or speaking about important information.

“I look at the insights, post interactions, impressions, website taps and product clicks, because it’s these that give you a direct indication of what posts make the most impact on your sales and what content your followers love the most. Once you have figured this out, you should keep posting in a similar style to those because that’s what your audience loves and engages with the most.”

# INSPIRATIONAL BUSINESS WOMEN THROUGH HISTORY

## LUCY ROUGET

1777-1866

### Madame Clicquot Ponsardin 'The Dame of Champagne'

One of the greatest marketers of all time, Madame Clicquot Ponsardin was responsible for one of the most successful brands ever. Following the death of her husband, François Clicquot, she took ownership of his wine business at the age of 27, and began developing champagne. Rebranded under the name Veuve (meaning widow in French) Clicquot Ponsardin, Madame Clicquot created a luxury champagne brand, with no trading or marketing guidance which has since been consumed by the highest of the social elite and even royalty. Due to her upper class family and lifestyle, she was not expected to work after her husband's death, but she went ahead and pursued a career as a businesswoman during a time in history where it was controversial for her to do so. In 1972 the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award was founded, honouring inspirational women in the business industry, and over 340 women from 29 different countries have received the award.

1819-1883

### Lydia Pinkham 'Only a woman can understand a woman's ills'

Originally being labelled as a 'quack remedy', Lydia Pinkham's vegetable compound designed to relieve menstrual and menopausal symptoms is still available on the market today with modern modifications. Despite Pinkham's controversial marketing of her product, the 'women's tonic' highlighted a need for relief for women and it raised the necessity of seriousness surrounding the topic. Starting off as a personal project to cure her own menstrual pains by blending ground herbs with alcohol, Pinkham's cellar kitchen project spread to neighbours and friends who were desperate for a treatment for their 'female complaints'. The sharp increase in interest in her product landed her a laboratory where her medicine was brewed, bottled and shipped. She became one of the most popular female business women in America of the time, as her name and picture were featured on the label of her medicine. Lydia Pinkham's natural herbal medicine (minus the alcohol) is available for purchase today, and is a swear-by product for many women.

**Madam C.J. Walker**

**“I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations... I have built my own factory on my own ground.” (Madam Walker at the National Negro Business League Convention, July 1912.)**

From her own involvement working in a wash house and experiencing scalp ailment that caused her own hair loss, Madam C.J. Walker developed a homemade line of beauty products, specifically for African-American women. The beauty line consisted of shampoo, hair

1867-1919

oils, perfume, soap, toothpaste and a variety of makeup, and the Madam C.J Walker Manufacturing Company was established.

Additionally, Madam Walker was not simply successful only for selling her beauty products; she eventually employed 3,000 African-American women, known as Walker Agents. They were fully trained in the application of her beauty line, and could establish their own small

business by selling her products. This brought hope to many black women, and allowed them to earn more than in other typical jobs, and Walker’s business became the largest black-owned business of the time. Madam Walker has since been declared the first recorded self-made female millionaire in the United States in the Guinness Book of Records, and the first African-American female millionaire. She continues to influence black artists, poets and educators across the world.

**Muriel Siebert**

**“When a door is hard to open, and if nothing else works, sometimes you just have to rear back and kick it open” (Speech at Case Western Reserve University, 1998.)**

Muriel Siebert became the first woman to ever buy a seat on the New York Stock Exchange in 1967. Known as the ‘first woman of finance’, Siebert was fed up of making much less money than men for the same work, and was advised by an investor to buy a seat on the Stock Exchange. It took her two years to become a member, however this gave her a foot hole in finance, and she used her power and experience to create her own brokerage firm. Her company Muriel Siebert &

1928-2013

Co., Inc certified Siebel as the first woman superintendent of banking for the whole of New York.

In 1990, Siebert founded the Siebert Entrepreneurial Philanthropic Plan, which donated half of her profits from her brokerage firm to charity. This included huge donations to the American Red Cross in aid of Hurricane Katrina (2005) and Hurricane Gustav (2008). Her company took no commission from these donations.

**Katharine Meyer Graham**

**“To love what you do and feel that it matters - how could anything be more fun?” (Howard. J, “The Power That Didn’t Corrupt,” Ms. October, 1974.)**

1917-2001

American publisher and journalist Katharine Meyer Graham is known for the transformation of The Washington Post into one of the foremost newspapers in the United States. When her father purchased the *Post* in 1933 she joined the editorial team, kickstarting her journey. Her husband had become the publisher of the *Post* in 1946, and following his death in 1963 she took on the role herself, during which she became the first female CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Graham was responsible for the

Post’s investigation into President Richard Nixon’s Watergate Scandal, which significantly increased circulation of the publication. This in turn caused *The Washington Post* to be one of the most influential newspapers in the nation. Even following her death in 2001, Graham has received a multitude of awards, which included being instated into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in 2002.

**Anita Roddick**

**“I’d much rather promote human rights, environmental concerns, and indigenous rights, than promote a bubble bath.” (Speech at Academy of Management, Vancouver, August 1995.)**

Created as a small shop in Brighton in 1976 selling only 15 natural face and hair care products, the Body Shop is still a staple store on our high streets. Anita Roddick established the Body Shop out of frustration

1942-2007

towards the lack of ethical and socially responsible companies in the market. On various travels, Roddick had noticed in other cultures that women cared for their bodies with natural resources and without having to buy a single cosmetic or beauty product. This combined with her passion of creating an ethical business formed the concept of the Body Shop.

Roddick and the Body Shop have started a plethora of campaigns such as the 1995 ‘Block the Whistle on Domestic Violence against Women’, whereby employees

were given specified training with experts, as well as their continual “stop animal testing campaign”. The company additionally treats their raw factory waste on the site of creation with an ecologically sustainable system. Roddick’s legacy of an ethical, socially responsible and environmentally friendly company lives on following her death in 2007, and has inspired others to become more aware of the impacts their beauty projects are having on the world.

# LOUISE TRUMAN

Q&A WITH THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF LEG UP NETWORK



I caught up with the founder and CEO of Leg Up Network, Louise Truman, who is on track to disrupt the careers industry for good with a brand that is quickly becoming a buzzword for access, empowerment and inclusivity in an industry that has ignored these values for far too long.

## Can you introduce yourself to our Disgraceful readers?

Hi, I'm Louise. First and foremost, I'm the founder of Leg Up Network, which means that I work pretty relentlessly to redefine access to the professional world and grow my start-up! On a more personal level, I'm inclined to say that Leg Up Network is the latest in a long standing history of entrepreneurial spirit. That isn't to say that it will be fleeting or to sound a little premature, given that I'm twenty-one, but I actually started my first 'business' when I was fourteen. I was trying to save up money to go on a school trip to Greenland, and remember being distinctly unimpressed by the law that stopped you from getting a formal job until you were sixteen. Equally unimpressed by the idea of hosting cake sales to make pennies or babysit my social life away, I bought some off-cut fabrics from my local textiles shop, borrowed my parents' sewing machine and made bespoke, personalised bunting. Long story short, I exhausted the 'kid entrepreneur' card to score free tables at town fairs, hit a jackpot and made myself thousands in profit!

Fast forward to today, I'm not only the founder and CEO of Leg Up Network, but I have also developed healthy streams of

income from a variety of projects. I've been trading profitably since I was eighteen, I've started to dabble in dropshipping, and I also have a few freelance contracts in marketing, consulting and content creation. To top it off, I'm also a full-time History and Spanish undergraduate at King's College London, and I've just wrapped up an additional course in Creative Writing at the University of Oxford. The obvious conclusion would be that I'm someone who thrives on being busy, but I'd argue the opposite.

The last thing I'd associate myself with is hustle culture or the boss-babe scene. I'm all for celebrating hard work and diversifying the business world, but from personal experience I think that the hustle culture and boss-babe phrases work against us. When you scroll through social media, the dialogue surrounding female entrepreneurs can be quite concerning. We talk about success way more than failures (when in reality these proportions are often reversed), we give tiny nuggets of information away online that do not even begin to encompass what it actually takes to build a business, and then we reduce the successes of our hard work to hashtags like #bossbabe. This results in way too many people being left with false perceptions what running a business is like, others feeling undervalued and excluded for pursuing dreams of working for a company instead

of owning one, and even those who get scammed into thinking that they're a business owner when they join pyramid schemes like Arbonne and Monat! What we're doing online at the moment doesn't open up the business world to more women, it isolates it even more.

For all of the success I've had, I've also had hundreds of hurdles and my fair share of failures. This goes hand in hand with hustle culture, which is probably one of the most damaging things to come out of social media. We're all guilty of contributing to it on some level! I work hard, sure, but I've worked hard to set up a business that works for me with my student lifestyle and can largely now run itself in its day to day operations. And as for the rest, I love to learn and try out new things, they're genuinely just like a hobby to me. What I don't do is work so hard that I burn out, and I hate how social media intensifies the most negative aspects of hustle culture by perpetuating the message that the most successful people never stop working and get up at 5am everyday!

As someone who readily comes offline for weeks at a time, I'm

to partnered businesses, and network with industry leaders, including Sophie Miller, Reach Plc, Schema and UNTAPPED Digital.

The internship was honestly such an honour to work on, and it is something that we will continue to do each and every year. It was incredible watching the progression of interns who started with little to no professional experience, and left us confident, empowered and enthusiastic about their next steps. It was this process that made me realise the full potential that Leg Up Network has as an organisation if we partnered this purpose with profit in order to multiply the numbers of students whose future careers we could positively impact. Galvanised by the fact that a relatively large organisation attempted (unsuccessfully!) to poach the concept from us and my own university showing its indifference to its students by trying to discontinue the studies of some whose courses they'd overfilled after taking the tuition money from these students and having them sign year long accommodation contracts, I was driven to take Leg Up Network up a level and do more.

That brings us to the Leg Up Network we all know today. We launched commercially in January 2021 with an incredibly promising launch month and a business model that focuses entirely on access. Our online Shop and Club make available a range of careers products and services, developed and delivered by professionals, at extremely accessible price points. It's safe to say that we are well on our way to disrupting the careers industry for good! Where career

the job market upside down, and we have a simple mission. I wasn't looking for another stream of income at all. It was entirely born out of the frustration of witnessing the erasure of professional opportunities for students, in particular those from underprivileged backgrounds who did not have access to connections, that we set out to redefine access to the professional world.

I wasn't about to let a global pandemic halt access to valuable professional opportunities, especially as someone who has grown so much from every single opportunity that I've been able to access, and so I took it upon myself to create Leg Up Network and build a team who could help me to do something about it. In that respect, I'm very grateful to have a graphic-design guru as one of my best friends (@dhrasdigital), and such a talented, driven group of people around me! This would not have been possible without them.

It all began with the internship that we coordinated and recruited for in autumn 2020. We partnered with some brilliant organisations and individuals in the business and marketing industries who would go on to run workshops, seminars and projects during the internship, and created a pretty unique programme that allowed interns to explore a number of different avenues in depth, contribute meaningfully

the first to say that taking as many breaks as you need and setting firm work/life boundaries is the best thing you can do to set yourself up for long-term success. I mean, you're talking to the person who decided to bunk off her A-Level mocks and catch a flight to Tanzania to go climb Kilimanjaro at a moment's notice! Not to mention the person who self-taught herself two out of her four A Level subjects because she knew it would be a much more streamlined and less painful process than sitting through the lessons. If I need a break, I'll take it. If I need to adapt the way that something is done to make it work better for me, I'll do it. Anyway, this has gone a little off topic, but it might have just convinced me that I need to pivot my personal Instagram account (@louisetruman) into one that focuses on providing a more realistic view of female entrepreneurship, and I'd love to see more women in business do the same.

### **What inspired you to create your platform and business?**

Leg Up Network started as a purpose-driven initiative in September 2020 in the wake of a global pandemic that turned

coaching typically costs upwards of £100 an hour, for example, it can be accessed through the Leg Up Shop for just £24.99, or as part of a membership package where prices begin at £13.34 per month. The Club membership includes a huge range of premium careers and wellbeing resources, designed to help members supercharge their future and put them in the best possible position for success in their chosen industry.

The best part? We set aside twenty percent of profits for our own bursary programme. We know all too well how unpaid internships, which are a rite-of-passage to getting your foot in the door in so many different industries, creates hurdles to access for those from less privileged backgrounds. The bursary works to relieve the financial strain of unpaid internships for those who need it. As my team and I continue to grow Leg Up Network over the coming days, months and years, I am so excited to see how our ability to give back and support students just like ourselves will also go from strength to strength.

Since launching our Shop and Club in January, we have been absolutely stunned by the support we've received, and this has enabled us to realise the full extent of potential that the brand, product and concept which we have started to build has. We have succeeded in building an easily scalable model armed with proven demand and accessible pricing. In just our first few weeks, we have had great reviews start to come in from those who have paid for our services, which you will be able to see on our website (<http://www.legupnetwork.com>)

and our Trustpilot page. Serial entrepreneur Gabriel Terranova has further remarked that we have "created the solution we've been waiting for" to the lack of access to the professional world. MP Damien Hinds wrote that "Leg Up Network can help make the future yours" in an article featured in six local newspapers, and OXygean, a new social media app that achieved over a million downloads in its first 21 days, has recognised me as one of their Top 100 Trailblazers for 2021!

With all of this in mind, the entire team and I could not be more excited for the future of Leg Up Network. We are right at the beginning of what I am confident will be an incredible journey, and I hope that in the coming years our brand will become a buzzword for access, empowerment and inclusivity in an industry that has ignored these values for far too long.

### **Where do you wish to go next?**

As of now, I'm mainly focused on increasing brand awareness and working to improve our existing offerings. This is because I want to make sure that we're ready to scale up with proper methods of quality control that will ensure we're always able to deliver an incredible product and service - no matter how big our customer base becomes. From a more long-term perspective, my ultimate goal is to transition Leg Up Network, specifically its

Club, into an app! This is a while off though - it's going to require significant investment and much more time on my part, which is not something I'm able to give at the moment due to university commitments.

### **Who would you consider your professional support network?**

I would say that other students, not even necessarily those involved in business, have become the best professional support network out there! As a student entrepreneur, there's a lot of misconceptions in older generations that we're going to abandon our start-ups when we leave university, that we don't actually know what we're doing, that we're a bit of an embarrassment to what they'd consider 'real' business. I might not have years of knowledge and experience behind me in the same way that those working in business for decades do, but I do think that student entrepreneurs, and all those who experiment with business opportunities at a young age, are at such a huge advantage. If we're doing now what they only start to think about doing twenty years in, and we manage to make it successful, then we end up decades ahead. And, even where we fail, we have



a lot of time to learn from our mistakes! Taylor Price, a twenty year old self-made millionaire, financial influencer and business owner, is your perfect example of this. We recently did a podcast together about juggling business with university, and it was one of the most inspiring conversations I've ever participated in.

**What are your top tips for building and sustaining a community on Instagram?**

Leg Up Network has actually only just started building its community on Instagram! It's a great way to build up brand awareness, even though we are not treating our Instagram community like a customer base. We've had a few sales generated from our Instagram following, but by and large our main income has come from partnerships with educational institutions and professional organisations. The beauty of this is that we've been able to really focus on building a

community that offers real value on Instagram, which means posting useful careers related content, interacting with our community every single day, and also taking pride in curating an aesthetically pleasing feed!

**How important is community to you?**

As a student who has built a business that focuses on empowering and supporting other students, community is definitely a massive part of what I do. It's why Leg Up Network started as an internship, and now also includes its own bursary scheme for students. Sure, Leg Up Network would be way more profitable without these features, but the community which we are building is what makes it so worthwhile.

Head over to Instagram (handle: @legupnetwork), LinkedIn and the Leg Up Network blog to support and connect with Louise and her team! They'd love to hear from you.



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# INTRODUCING INCITE COLLECTIVE A NEW PODCAST AND LIFESTYLE BLOG FROM CALIFORNIA CREATIVES AND BEST FRIENDS, ALYX MCCLATCHEY AND MADELINE JAVIER

Introducing Incite Collective, a new podcast and lifestyle blog from California creatives and best friends, Alyx McClatchey and Madeline Javier.

Like many others over this last year, Alyx McClatchey and Madeline Javier had to pivot their careers. Suspecting many others were going through similar changes and challenges, they sought to create a space that encourages reflection and acknowledging one's passions and purpose. Thus, Incite Collective was born.

McClatchey, a social media marketing strategist, and Javier, a photographer and content creator, joined forces to create Incite Collective, an online platform where they could share their learnings pivoting from a wetsuit startup and a traditional 9-to-5, to taking the reins of their story and finding the motivators to push forward. Incite Collective launches with a podcast, INCITE, The Podcast! and a blog, which regularly showcases wellness, business, and lifestyle content.

"Our goal was to create a welcoming platform that inspires others to reflect on their own stories and discover their unique paths," says

McClatchey and Javier. "We hope people view Incite Collective as an open conversation between friends discovering life's lessons and learning along the way."

INCITE, The Podcast! aims to inspire and motivate people to find the spark in their own story. McClatchey and Javier host open and honest conversations with other creatives, female entrepreneurs, and thought leaders from all walks of life, surrounding concepts like: redefining failure, reflection, acknowledging your story, and noticing motivators whether intrinsically or environmentally, among many others. New episodes are available weekly on Anchor.

Incite Collective Blog currently features business, wellness and lifestyle sections, with corresponding topics written by McClatchey, Javier and additional guest writers. A few feature stories include, Digital Necessities (tips from a photographer for an aspiring photographer), The Importance of Feeling Good, and Tiny Morning Rituals for Success, with more in the pipeline.

We decided to catch up with the pair and ask them all things business....

**ELLA GAVAGHAN**

### What compelled you to start Incite Collective? And can you give our audience a little background on what IC is?

Incite Collective began after we (Madeline and Alyx) officially closed our doors to our first business Starfish Wetsuits (a women's surfing wetsuit brand). We felt so defeated for so long, but came to the realization that our story not only taught us so much, but was worth sharing for others to learn from. We also realized that everyone's story is unique and important in its own way and we wanted to celebrate that.

### What is the meaning behind the name?

Incite means to “spark” or to “inspire.”

### Incite always promotes the importance of trying again despite certain failures, and we understand you had an unsuccessful business before Incite - what would you say was your biggest lesson from that?

Not letting failure defeat you, but rather fuel you, and create pride from what you have done and where you've come from was our biggest lesson in the transition from our old business to Incite.

### What is it like being business partners with your best friend?

To be in business with your best friend requires an immense amount of communication, trust and flexibility. Which allows for the BEST colleague ever. You can be brutally honest and real - and tell each other all the secrets and what's going on personally that day. And then get to work side by

side to create something you're proud of. I think at the end of the day it's so cool to not have to explain to your friend why a project is so exciting, but to live it together.

### Who would be your dream guest to have on the podcast?

Oh (wo)man...such a hard question! So many people, but famous people wise we'd love to have on Chelsea Handler, Sivan Ayla, Kelia Moniz, Meghan Rapinoe, I don't know... Oprah?? Such a random list, but that's why we love day dreaming about Incite because we want to learn from everyone and their particular journey and story.

### What has been your favourite memory working on Incite so far?

I don't think we can pin point just one. But the ability for us both to be forced to sit down every week regardless of what's going on is such a blessing. It keeps us up to date in each other's lives, and that feels so special.

### In 5 years time, where would you like Incite to be?

In five years we will have a roster of girls on our team that not only inspire us as humans, but believe in Incite with ferocity. Incite will be a resource for the women we serve because of our honesty and relatability. We will be a widely known brand that offers a variety of products, and has fantastic collaborations with companies such as Auguste The Label and Business and Pleasure, Co. Besides our Podcast - Incite, the Podcast - will be in the podcast charts in the Top Trending and Top Society & Culture categories. We want to have one million downloads.

And have a roster of girls on our team that not only inspire us as humans, but believe in Incite with ferocity. Incite will be a resource for the women we serve because of our honesty and relatability.

### Do you have any mentors that inspire you? And if so, who?

Yes absolutely! While we do have mentors #irl, social media has given us incredible digital mentors to watch and inspire us. One woman who sticks out in my mind is Hanna Bronfman (@hannahbronfman). She is a complete force to be reckoned. She is the creator of HBFIT (@hbfit), a DJ, a wife, a mother and incredibly inspiring woman who is not shy to share both the good and bad times with her audience. Although we don't know her personally, she has become a digital mentor that we look up to - in business and life.

### What would you say to the people who are wanting to create a business of their own?

As someone who almost took the “easy” path, I'm here to tell you that the hard path ... the path that you think about, and dream out ... is every bit worth it. Starting your own business and chasing your dreams gives you a sense of purpose and drive that is hard to understand or put into words. So if you've been thinking of starting a business, I'm here to tell you ... go get it! Go chase that idea that creeps into your mind throughout the day. The one thing that separates all of us is the ability and courage to try. So believe in yourself. And believe in your idea. If you are passionate about it I promise you that others will be too. For more information please visit [www.incite-collective.com](http://www.incite-collective.com).

I caught up with Ellie Hayter, founder of Gaia&Vie to chat all things skincare, being an entrepreneur and building your business.

### Can you introduce yourself to our readers?

Hi, I'm Ellie, the founder of Gaia&Vie, a sustainable skincare company aiming to provide young people with high-quality, affordable products that don't leave a negative impact on the planet.

I developed our signature hemp blend Clarity face oil to tackle my own oily and spot prone skin, and after getting rave reviews back from friends and family as well as seeing my own natural glow being restored, I decided to share the face oil with the world through the creation of Gaia&Vie.

### What obstacles have you faced whilst creating and growing your business?

Organic growth has been hard, particularly on our social media pages. But speaking to other small businesses and getting help from a freelance social media expert has helped us slowly increase our exposure.

Legal requirements and lab testing was the most daunting process going into the business start-up as I didn't have any experience in this area, however once I found a good lab it was a simple process. Sourcing sustainable packaging and ingredients that were still high quality was tough too,

especially as COVID has stopped production for a lot of UK-based companies. We are committed to only sourcing natural ingredients from non-threatened plant species - and that list is sadly very limited. However, after extensive research, I was able to find the best ingredients targeted to specific skin types and create the perfect glowing skin recipe.

### What inspires you and your work?

Getting amazing reviews and stories from our customers keeps me motivated to keep developing new products to help young people tackle their skin concerns while helping them to lower their own contributions to the ongoing climate crisis. Seeing other amazing female-led sustainable businesses also keeps me going, it is nice to know you're not alone.

### What are your brand values and what is your ethos?

Our mission: We are committed to bringing high-quality sustainable products to every skincare routine. Skincare should never come at the cost of your bank account, or the planet.

Our values are 100% natural ingredients, biodegradable and recyclable packaging, affordable and accessible products, fair pay in the supply chain, cruelty free and always sustainably sourced.

### What has the response been to your business?

The response has been overwhelming, it makes me so

# INTERVIEW WITH ELLIE HAYTER FOUNDER OF GAI&VIE

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**“SKINCARE SHOULD NEVER COME AT THE COST OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT, OR THE PLANET.”**

happy to see so many people responding so positively to a sustainable start up. Conscious consumption is one way to tackle the climate crisis on an individual level and the fact so many people have supported us in delivering products in line with this message is amazing. We have also had 100% 5-star reviews and positive reviews from all our customers. It makes me so happy to see people understanding the transformative power of natural, sustainable ingredients.

**How can we support your business?**

For those looking to start their sustainable skincare journey, buying our face oil is the number one way to support Gaia&Vie. However, failing that, talking about us with friends and family, interacting with our social media content or even dropping us supportive and positive message all go a super long way!!!

**Who would you consider to be your professional support network?**

My mentors, David and Dirk; Other young entrepreneurs,

many of whom I met through the Human Entrepreneur’s ‘Youth Entrepreneur Movement’; Other amazing skincare companies who we are frequently in contact with, sharing advice and professional support.

Gaia&Vie also has a large LinkedIn following who offer support along the way.

What are your thoughts on what we are doing here at Disgraceful?

I came across the first issue of Disgraceful on Instagram and I loved it, I have told everyone I know about it. Seeing such talented people come together to curate a platform that gives women space to express themselves and their opinions is definitely something needed in 2021.

**Is there anything else you want our audience to know?**

We currently sell a clarity oil that tackles oily and spot prone skin, as well as a nourish oil that restores the natural glow of dry and sensitive skin. Both are available on our website [www.gaiaandvie.com](http://www.gaiaandvie.com)

If you have anymore questions, pop us a message over on Instagram or Facebook @gaiaandvie.

# MUST WE STILL CHOOSE BETWEEN MOTHERHOOD AND A CAREER IN 2021?

To be a successful career woman in today's world, must we make a conscious decision between having a family or a career? To have come so far with gender pay gaps, discrimination and bias in the workplace, there are still issues with women taking time off to have children.

Back in the 1910s, women began to work. Men were off at war and so women had to take their place working in the postal service, factories and on the railroads.

Before 1928, women weren't given the opportunity to vote. Women stayed at home, raised a family and looked after the house. Thankfully, times have changed a lot since then. Women can vote, run for office and even become the Vice President of America or the Prime Minister of the UK. Will a woman one day be President of the United States? I sure think so. Women have also taken their place in the boardroom. We aren't quite there yet when it comes to

equality at the top level, but we have made great progress. We have so many women CEOs and business leaders that we can look up to. We have amazing sportswomen and entertainers that we can aspire to emulate.

When we even think of the global pandemic and how our world leaders took charge, we only have to look at Jacinda Arden of New Zealand, Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan and Sanna Marin of Finland; all great women leaders who restored order and normality to their countries. Their male world leader counterparts on the other hand... well.

And so, when it comes to running the world, running the boardroom, or working your way to the top, does a choice have to be made? Do we have to make a decision of whether to choose to have a family, or pursue a top-level job? Or is there room for both?

What can be a controversial conversation to have with many opposing opinions, even in 2021, it sometimes has to be addressed as to whether there is bias from those at the top at the progress of women into higher positions. Every country and culture is different when talking about this subject and it can be quite a difficult topic to discuss.

I cannot speak for the personal reasons, opinions or choices of the women that I will use an example, but from an outsider, I look at these amazingly successful women that don't have kids and ask whether this is a sacrifice made in order to be successful. If I was to take 9-12 months of maternity leave, once, twice or even three times during my working career (equating to almost three years of time off) would this hinder me from rising through the ranks and becoming a leader in my company?

I look at the success of Glamour Magazine Editor-in-Chief Samantha Barry and admire her career in journalism and her rise to Editor-in-Chief. I look at Oprah, Stevie Nicks, and Theresa May who are majorly successful in their careers and once ran the UK government - all without children.

Celebrity Chef, Rachael Ray has been open about her choice to not have kids saying in an interview

with Salon in 2009, "I think that I'm 40 years old, and I have an enormous amount of hours that have to be dedicated to work. For me personally, I would need more time to feel like I'd be a good mom to my own child. I feel like a borderline good mom to my dog. So I can't imagine if it was a human baby ... I feel like it would be unfair, not only to the child but to the people I work with."

But then we only need to look at Indra Nooyi, Anna Wintour, Beyonce, and Serena Williams, who all run their own worlds and are successful in their chosen fields. Maybe we can have a family and be successful in our careers.

However, one of Indra Nooyi's children wrote her a letter when aged 4 while she was CEO of PepsiCo that read, "Dear mom, Please, please, please, please please come home. I love you, but I'd love you more if you came home."

Is there a 'perfect time' to have a family? Is it best to start a family when you are only starting out in your career?

Should Indra Nooyi have had children young and then decided many years later to become the CEO of PepsiCo, the opportunity may not have arisen. Life doesn't work that way. We cannot plan

our life to the exact moment and structure it so that we will be promoted and have children just when the time aligns.

If I was succeeding in a management position, aiming to be promoted to a senior level position or even Director-level and then fell pregnant, what would happen? I would then have to let my boss know that I'm going to be taking 9-12 months off of work to look after my newborn child. Will he (or she) then overlook me for promotion? Will things be the same when I return to my job in a years' time?

From my personal work experience, four of the five senior managers and directors I worked under were without children and seemingly married to their job. This is the reason I started to think whether there was a choice to be made when it came to a career and a family.

What happens if a woman chooses a full-time career over being a full-time mother? Does it mean that they love their child/children less? Of course it doesn't. It doesn't make anyone a bad mother, or lacking of love. For a lot of families, the women are the breadwinners, single mothers and need to work to pay the bills. Some mothers strive for a successful career and to leave a legacy for their children and so have the capability to work and care for their children.

As women, we shouldn't have to make a decision between wanting a successful career and wanting to raise a family. In 2021, there is no room for discrimination and sexism in the working world. Today, we have more female entrepreneurs and business-owners than ever. Does having our own business, choosing our own hours and working on our own time make it easier to have a family and have a successful career?

Will the introduction of more working from home opportunities and flexible working hours make it easier for women to rise through the ranks and have a family, or should the office already be adaptable for women who also have a family?

Going into the working world, a woman shouldn't have to make the decision between wanting to start a family and wanting to become the CEO of her company. As women, we should be able to have the experiences of family and being the business leader that we have always wanted. We no longer live in a world where women can't vote or work, we live in a world where women can be world leaders, CEOs and build their own empires. As women, we can have it all and we must not settle for anything less than what we deserve - kids, or no kids.

**Orlagh Shanks**

# INTERVIEW WITH ISOBEL PERL



© @perlcosmetics on Instagram

## FOUNDER OF PERLCOSMETICS AND GIRLS IN BUSINESS UK

### Can you introduce yourself to our Disgraceful Readers?

Hey, I'm Isobel, I'm 26 and I'm the founder of PERLcosmetics and Girls in Business UK. 2020 was a pretty wild year for me, and if it wasn't for the impact of the pandemic, I would not be here today with two businesses, which, may I add, feels crazy to say!

### What inspired you to create your platform and business?

My story starts back in November 2019. It was a time in my life where I can look back and see how unhappy and sad I was. I lacked any purpose, drive or motivation with not only my career but my life in general. I felt such envy seeing my friends seemingly happy and flourishing in their careers, whilst I remained stagnant in a job I was miserable in.

I was at home one weekend and my mum asked me how I was. I broke down in tears realising how lost I felt. I decided something needed to change and that I needed to take matters into my own hands and start taking charge of my destiny. I began writing a list of things that I loved, made me happy and brought me joy. At the top of that list was makeup,

cosmetics and skincare. Initially I thought I could try and find a career in that industry, however it wasn't until I read an article about two young guys who had set up a hugely successful skincare business in Australia selling clay masks that I began to think of starting my own business.

On that weekend in November 2019, the idea of PERLcosmetics was conceived. I was to create a skincare business with one hero product, a pearl powder clay mask. Though, after setting up the Instagram page and website it remained dormant. I had returned to my rented flat in London, and the job that left me miserable, and forgot all about my dream.

Fast forward to May 2020 and I ended up losing my job due to the pandemic. Though, instead of seeing this as a setback, I decided to see it as an opportunity to follow that dream I had a few months back and bring PERLcosmetics to life. To me, it felt as if the world was telling me to do it - And do it is exactly what I did.

I launched PERLcosmetics with one hero product, our 100% natural pearl powder clay mask with illuminating oil on 29th July and initially my only customers

were friends and family. It has since grown and flourished and I now have a large and loyal customer base and am nearing 500 sales!

Whilst in the beginning stages of setting up PERLcosmetics I was finding it hard to get my brand out there as a new business and build my brand reputation. The pandemic has seen many of us turn to hobbies to keep busy, which have soon turned into a side-hustle which is amazing to see. It then dawned on me how many other women must be in the same situation as me struggling to get the recognition of their new small business.

From this frustration, Girls in Business UK was born. A place to shamelessly hype yourself, your business and be proud of what you've achieved! What started out as a platform to shamelessly self-promote my own small business has quickly grown into a strong and supportive community of over 13,000 like-minded female bosses!

On the platform I share my own experience of small business life, as well as featuring other women's small businesses each day. I also run virtual markets on the last



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Sunday of each month which has become a place to showcase twenty-four amazingly talented female creators and for me to spend all my money!

### Where do you wish to go next?

In and amongst setting up two businesses I managed to land myself a new full-time job, which makes it incredibly difficult to balance and keep all the plates spinning. My next goal is to make PERL and GIB a sustainable source of income so I can leave my full-time job and focus solely on growing them.

For PERL I want to work on formulating new products; think facial serums, cleansing balms - I'm full of ideas and am itching to get them in motion.

**“My biggest tip is to be authentic and your true self. People will turn up for you, so don't try to force it or pretend to be anyone but you.”**

For GIB I really want to release resources to help small business owners, maybe host virtual events with speakers from different industries and, once the pandemic is over, even in real life events! I also want to release merch, maybe stickers and planners, things like that!

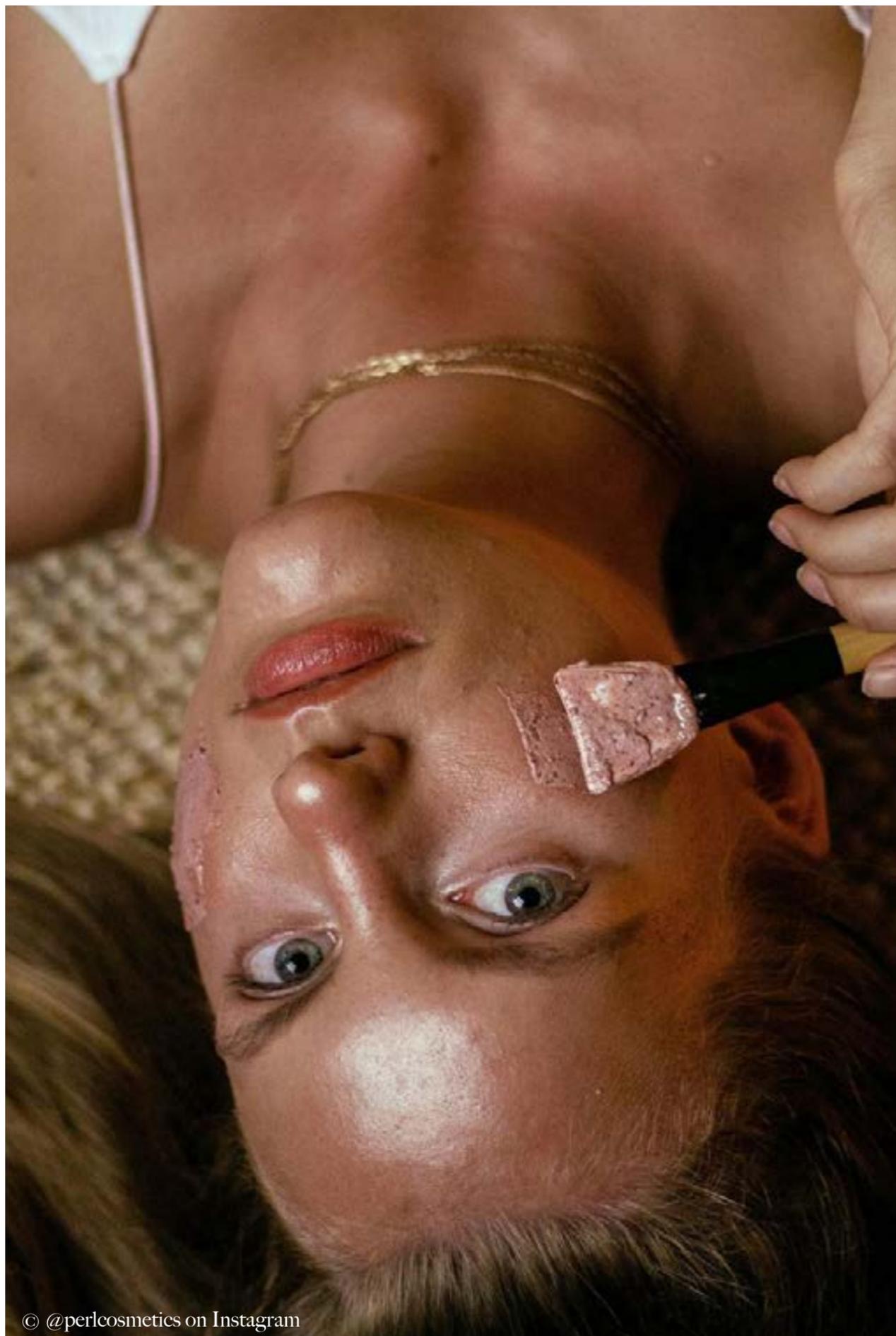
I have so many plans, I can't wait till I have the time to execute them all!

### Who would you consider your professional support network?

My first point of call is my family, my dad runs his own business and so he is always the first person I go



© @perlcosmetics on Instagram



© @perlcosmetics on Instagram

to for any business-related issues. My sister is always helping me too; from proofreading content through, to lending a hand with strategy, and sometimes even getting involved with making the masks!

Outside of my family, I have connected with some amazing women through both PERL and GIB. It is always so refreshing to have someone who understands small biz struggles and can give their opinion and advice - and also share their experience from what they've learnt.

**What are your top tips for building and sustaining a community on Instagram?**

My biggest tip is to be authentic and your true self. People will turn up for you, so don't try to force it or pretend to be anyone but you.

My second tip is to make content that is relatable, educational or funny. You want content that will make people think, laugh, learn and share! This will have a ripple effect and help increase your reach to new potential followers.

My third tip is to have fun and try not to worry about the numbers too much!

**How important is community to you?**

Community is so important, having a small business can be really lonely and knowing I have a community of supportive, like-minded women to reach out to is fantastic. Not only that, but it's so important to be able to inspire each other, share ideas and support one another. I'm a huge believer in collaboration over competition and try to spread this message via my platforms.

**What can we do to support you?**

Nothing but keep on hyping us gals and inspiring us to have big dreams! If anyone wants to support our movement of girls in business, you can head over to our Instagram @girlsinbusinessk. Equally, if anyone wants a new skincare favourite to add to their routine which is 100% natural and leaves your skin feeling oh so soft, then head over to perlcosmetics on Instagram!

Isobel Perl

# FLO LONDON

## INTERVIEW WITH MAAWURA TOTOE

Founded in 2019, FLO London was born out of Maawura's desire to provide a platform for people to better understand the cool things people (particularly women) are doing in the city. I sat down with Maawura to find out more!

### Can you introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Maawura and I am a Civil Engineer and the Founder of FLO London. I started FLO London as a place to share my love of art, travelling, alfresco dining and of course, London. But more than that, I wanted to create a platform for Londoners from all walks of life to share their experiences. FLO London is an independent, unbiased voice, which works to tackle difficult topics, educate and add humour to your day-to-day life.

In November 2020, I launched FLO London The Shop. The shop combines my love of the London lifestyle with the spirit and culture of Ghana. For the shop, I have developed a curated collection of homeware items and accessories made from Ghana wax print fabrics - including tote bags, placemats and scrunchies.

The first collection - Ahwenepa Nkasa x FLO London - offers a selection of classic, yet unique designs including some reversible products. These pieces have been designed with durability and sustainability in mind. Each subsequent collection we develop will feature a different Ghanaian

wax print fabric. One thing I've really enjoyed bringing to the UK, is the intricacies of Ghanaian culture, for example, fabrics in Ghana have proverbial meanings. The fabric that we used for this first collection - Ahwenepa Nkasa, means 'good waist beads do not make noise'. This is a common proverb among Ghanaians, which implies you should let your deeds or character speak for you.

Paramount in my work is showcasing the local community where our products are made. To coincide with the launch of FLO London The Shop, we released The Ghana Culture Series. This series was important to me so that when people are purchasing items on the website they can simultaneously experience and understand Ghanaian life too. The interviewees are all entrepreneurs, business owners and artists currently making their mark in Ghana. It was a really inspiring series to produce.

### What obstacles have you faced whilst creating and growing your business?

Time has been a big obstacle. In its infancy, FLO London was very much a side project whilst I was working full time as a civil engineer. To be able to dedicate as much time as I wanted to FLO was challenging - from setting up the online platform and trying to map out the strategy for the launch of FLO London The Shop. Plus, as a start-up, there was no budget for building a team so finding the right people has taken time.

### What inspires you and your work?

People's reactions to our articles are one of the biggest inspirations for the work we do. Knowing that we are making even a small impact is inspiring.

Last year we published 'What it means to be black at a British boarding school' and the response was incredible. Readers found the article cathartic in the way it acknowledged their own experiences, as well as informing and educating them of others' own experiences. It has been satisfying to find out just how much our content is impacting and helping people to implement change on a big and small scale.

### What are your brand values and what is your ethos?

To put it quite simply, FLO London is here to inspire and make a lasting impact. We are here for Londoners as a platform for them to share their views, by presenting an authentic voice on the nuance of living in one of the most diverse cities in the world! This is part of why it is so important to me that our writers all have other jobs which keeps their experiences in touch with everyday Londoners. I want FLO London to reflect the real world and not be influenced by advertising etc.

Through FLO Helps, we also want to be able to help as many people as we can. Currently, FLO Helps supports charitable causes in Ghana. I have carried

# FLYING HIGH

## INTERVIEW WITH ABI THOMAS

out several 'Engineering Days' in Ghana, designed to teach children under the ages of 15 about engineering. It is my aim to ensure young people, in particular girls see engineering as a viable career path. This is work I hope we can extend to several other countries where resources are scarce. It is particularly important for young girls to be exposed to as many career options as possible when they are younger, especially industries such as engineering which are often underrepresented.

### What has the response been to your business?

The response to both FLO London and FLO London The Shop has been fantastic! People have been wonderfully supportive. I am so grateful for all the people who have purchased our items and I am so fortunate to have a team of amazing writers who contribute to the website bringing their own personal flair and touch to the website.

We have new items that will be added to the collection this year including cushion covers, table runners, napkins, tablecloths, aprons and hats!

### How can we support your business?

Support in any way is always appreciated. Whether that be that a follow on Instagram (@flondon\_), a purchase of our items, reading our content, signing up to our newsletter or telling a friend about us.

FLO London is a community, a safe space and a place where everyone can be heard. We would love you to join us!

### Who would you consider to be your professional support network?

I am so grateful for my friends and family who have all been extremely supportive in opening their network up to FLO and spreading the word about what we do. Equally the FLO London Team is incredible - our Editor Mollie is an absolute superstar!

I am also a member of AllBright and Found + Flourish. Both platforms provide great resources and support, plus I've met some really incredible women whilst using these platforms.

I also can't not mention our readers, customers and those that follow us on social media (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter). They really fuel what we do with FLO London and I am so grateful for their continued support. Our inbox and DM's are always open, for support, request, suggestions... anything!

### What are your thoughts on what we are doing here at Disgraceful?

I really love what Disgraceful Magazine is doing, the first issue was a great read! I particularly loved all the interviews you did with female founders, which is something I am equally as passionate about. There is

nothing better than discovering new female-owned business to support! It's so important for us to continue to support female-owned businesses and level the playing field at the top tier.

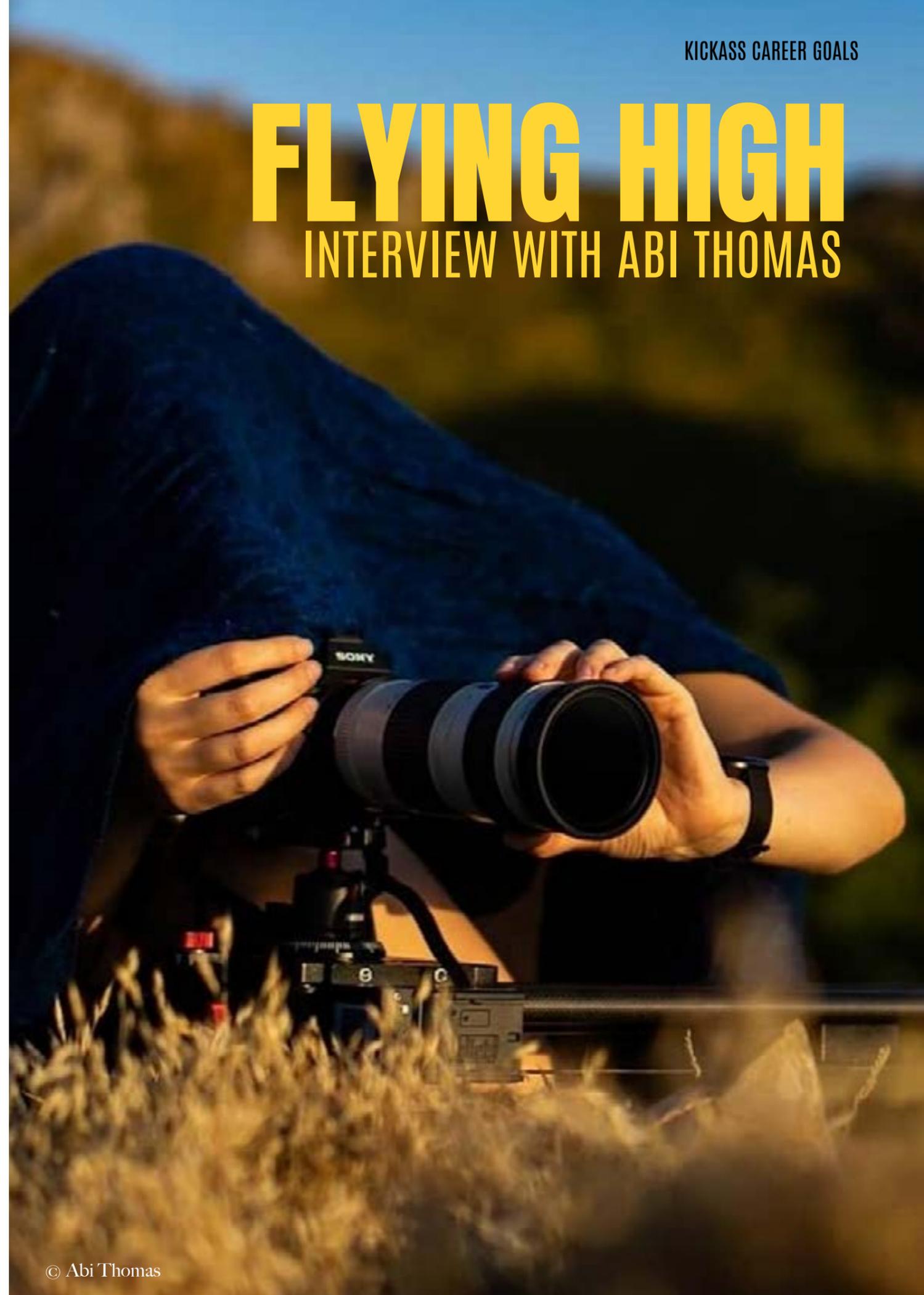
I also loved the piece, 'The pressures of social media and how to confront them', which is such an important article. There is a quote, which states "Social media has us all believing we should be making ourselves appear as desirable as possible...". I wholeheartedly agree with this and think its important people acknowledge this sentiment. As much as social media is hugely positive, it is also important that we know when to turn off and put our phones away. For our sanity!

### Is there anything else you want our audience to know?

Yes, I would encourage everyone to join the FLO London family and get involved in the conversation!

Give us a follow on Instagram (@flondon\_ and @flondontheshop), LinkedIn and Twitter to keep up to date on all things FLO. Plus, we have a newsletter which you can sign up to via our website!

Our email inbox and DM's are always open to all so don't be shy. We are a lovely bunch and welcome any requests for stories you would like to read about. Plus, we have a number of regular features including The London Diaries that we are always looking for people to get involved in!



**A**bi Thomas dreamed of working in a creative industry from a young age, but it wasn't until University that she discovered her love of filmmaking. For the last four years, Abi has been thriving as a Technical Assistant in the television industry and here, we chat to her about being a female drone pilot and how she believes nature documentaries really do have the power to save our planet...

### **How did you first get into the television industry?**

I've always been a really creative individual; as a child I was constantly drawing, painting or taking part in some kind of craft with my grandmother, who was also a keen artist. As I got older, I wanted to start experimenting with different mediums of art, which is when I fell into photography. I used to steal my older sister's camera and spend days snapping some god-awful pictures. At the same time, I was told being an artist wasn't a realistic career goal, so instead I opted to pursue photography which offered more employment opportunities. When I turned 18, I enrolled into Plymouth University where I studied Media Arts. This was a

very broad course and allowed me to study photography, graphics, film, sound and multimedia. It was the perfect course for me as I could really play around and find what I was good at and enjoyed the most.

From there I discovered a love for filming, and I knew this is where I wanted my career to go. I started to make my own films and reached out to various production companies for advice or work experience. Luckily, I managed to gain a couple of traineeships and work experience placements which thrust me into the television industry. As time went on and I built up my camera skills, I wanted to push myself further, as well as add another notch to my belt, so I took to the sky. I saved my money and bought a drone to start practicing those unique and stunning aerial shots we see more of on TV. So, with my mediocre amount of camera knowledge and new-found drone skills, I managed to land a job at the BBC as a Technical Assistant. Right now, I'm currently working on BBC Countryfile and I've been there for over a year providing my skills as Second Camera and Drone Pilot.

### **What inspires you?**

I've always aspired to work on big natural history productions. I have such an interest in nature and wildlife, so I take a lot of inspiration from shows like Planet Earth, Dynasties and Seven Worlds - which are all

incredibly well shot as well as show the beauty of the natural world. I always dream about going to these remote locations and documenting wildlife that I have never seen before. I've also come to realise that television is an extremely powerful tool in education. As well as a way to show astonishing landscapes and species, it can be used as a platform on how to protect them - especially in the state of our current climate.

My favourite films are A Life On Our Planet, Racing Extinction and One Strange Rock. All of these are super hard-hitting productions which show how fragile our planet is and the urgency we are in to conserve it. Huge worldwide broadcasts have the power to show audiences the reality of our world and what they can do to live a more conscious lifestyle. I'd be happy to contribute in educating the world in this way and would absolutely love to work on a production like this and is what I am slowly working towards.

### **What do you enjoy most about what you do?**

The main bulk of my job is spent outside in nature and is something I've always wanted in a career; I'm not a desk person at all so any opportunity to be outside I'm happy. Flying the drone is always a thrill - it's like playing with a toy car! Every shoot is a new challenge, from what perspectives I can achieve and how I can portray something from the sky to new movements I can experiment with. The first time I flew a drone, I barely sent it 5 feet in the air and I could only move backwards and forwards. Now I'm trying out

new rotations, getting it through small gaps and flying it hundreds of feet up in the air.

I will always have a love for cameras and imagery. The satisfaction of capturing some kind of incredible action in the moment is the reason why I do my job. I may be sat out in the freezing cold for hours on end but seeing it come together and watching my shots on TV makes it all worth it.

### **Who are your icons?**

Sophie Darlington and Justine Evans. These women are incredible Camera Ops who have made their careers in wildlife filmmaking. I've always been so inspired by both of these ladies and their drive - they love the natural world and also express the importance of conserving it, as they have seen it all first hand. As well as being extremely skilled in cameras, withstanding tough conditions in remote locations, and just all round being badassess, they are both paving the way for more women to enter into wildlife filmmaking. Sophie Darlington once said in an interview "the

only advantage that men have over girls is that they can grow beards in the cold" which is brilliant! They are constantly proving that women can smash it in this industry. Another thing I love about Sophie is that she has children. There's a misconception that you can either have a career or children. She's shown that she can have this huge successful career as well as a family.

### **Have you ever been made to feel inferior because you're a woman in a "male dominated environment"?**

Sadly yes. I have only worked in the industry for a small amount of time but there have been odd comments or interactions that can't be ignored. I'm not going to deny that things have changed a lot within the industry over the years, but there's still a way to go. Before I started working as a Technical Assistant, I used to be a trainee Jib Operator and it involved a lot of heavy lifting. I'd often turn up and be the only woman on set and I'd usually get asked if I was lost or if my boyfriend was one of the electricians. Those would then be followed by questions about

why I was hired or if I could lift any of the equipment (which, by the way, wasn't even that heavy). I don't want to paint the TV in a bad light, these comments are worst case scenarios and it's only happened a couple of times.

After a few hours on the job, those individuals that made the comments usually changed their mind once they saw me work. If I feel like something needs to be said, I will call them out on it and say how inappropriate it is. I think this is an issue that needs to be addressed rather than brushed under the carpet or change will never happen.

On the other hand, I do get applauded for being a woman in the camera industry and people are impressed when I have got a heavy camera on my shoulder or I've just captured a cracking shot on the drone. It's a good confidence boost but it can be a bit bitter sweet at times. The fact people are impressed makes me think they weren't convinced by my ability to start with.

More and more women are moving into this space and is



great to see. I think people are starting to realise that gender has nothing to do with an ability to do a job. I've received a lot of encouragement to work my way up in the industry and I'm very grateful for that. I believe that's what's kept me going.

### **What's next for you?**

I start my new job [at Offspring Productions] in a few weeks, which I'm very excited for. I will be getting stuck into learning about new cameras and different ways of filming wildlife. I've also just started my journey into FPV flying, which is another way of flying drones. It's a very different style to traditional drones, like mavics and inspires, as they can flip and dive down waterfalls etc - the controls are completely new too. It can be quite complicated as you have to build the drone totally from scratch. I'm trying to get my head around all the wiring at the moment!

### **What would you say to any women who are looking to pursue a career in television?**

Absolutely do it and don't let anyone steer your decision. In the past when I told people I wanted to be a camera woman, they doubted or questioned me about it, and it made me start to do the same to myself. I sat down and really thought about if I actually wanted this career and whether I was capable of doing it. Looking back on it now, I never have doubted myself and my ability - those people grilling me were the ones in the wrong for thinking I couldn't do it and shaking my confidence. There are also so many different paths to take within the TV industry. It's not all lugging heavy cameras around - there's a position for everyone!

**KATY LAYTON**

# REVERTING THE DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONALISM

BY EMMA GILL

AND RACHEL DOLTON



© Timur Romanov on Unsplash

Professional by dictionary definition is ‘a person competent or skilled in a particular activity’. Nowhere, does it say that professionalism is correlated to physical appearance. Contrary to what some employers believe, this is because your physical appearance doesn’t determine your ability to do your job.

As the likes of tattoos and piercings are becoming increasingly less stigmatised, the same can’t be said for non-traditional hair colour. Everyone is born with varying shades of a ‘traditional’ hair colour: blonde, black, brunette, ginger; these are deemed acceptable and no employer would question

your competency if you walked into an interview. So, why do employers view the vibrancy and individuality of non-traditional hair colours such as pink, purple, blue and green, as inappropriate, and unprofessional? Perhaps it stems from old school conservatism and traditionalism, or the perception that due to the non-traditional hair colour you’re seen to be ‘standing out from the crowd’ or actively trying to be non-conforming and wouldn’t ‘fit in’ in a professional environment. There’s an outdated idea that people who dye their hair fanciful colours might be flighty or non-committal. With really bright unnatural colours previously being linked

to the Scene and Punk lifestyles, some still perceive that hair colour has an entrenched link to anarchy and non-conformity that, again, some may wrongly deem them unfit for a professional workplace.

It also begs the question of why are the perceived traditional and non-traditional colours treated so differently? Is it a conformity thing? Hair is such an obvious part of you. Your hair is on show (for the most part) all the time, it’s one of the first things people notice about you, especially if it goes against the standard expectations and norms. People get their first impressions of you within the first 30 seconds of seeing you, so something that stands out, like unusual coloured hair, sticks with them and for some people they apply that judgement to your education, competency and skill set, they assign it to a bigger part of you than it really is. It is just hair colour. Your hair colour doesn’t affect your ability to do a job and it shouldn’t be seen as a reflection of anything negative about you as a person. Any judgement made solely on an individual’s preference towards the non-traditional is a shallow and often entirely wrong judgement.

**“Your hair doesn’t affect your ability to do a job”**

**“As generations, millennials and ‘GenZ’ have become much more expressive”**



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Everyone's hair colour is their personal choice, it's expression and individuality. If someone, on paper, has what you're looking for in a candidate for the position you want filling, then it shouldn't matter what colour their hair is – they should be given an interview. If at an interview they do better than the other candidate, then they should be given the job. If the only reason a candidate is losing out on a role, that they have worked hard to get interviewed for, is that their hair is pink then such a suppressive employer probably isn't worth working for. There are plenty of people who have never dyed their hair in their lives who are wildly unprofessional – so it's definitely not hair colour that defines someone's work ethic!

From personal experience, after my bright pink hair colour was commented on in the beginning of a job interview for a restaurant, I've always made sure I conformed to society's norms of looking professional for interviews. This is sadly a common occurrence for many creative and expressive individuals. Many now ensure they look as traditionally professional for interviews as they can, for fear that employers will form a snap judgement of their abilities and character before they've had a chance to make their own impression. The preconceived belief of 'I could be judged for the way I look' that plagues everyone at least once in their life have meant that we as a society end up conforming to what we assume others would perceive as 'employable'. The fear of being judged and perceived in a way that is so far removed from their true personality has driven me and others that I know to be careful and ensure that we have "normal" coloured



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hair for job interviews. Going so far as to dye our hair back to something boring, specifically for an interview. This fear of being judged is all too real and unfortunately justified.

This generation is fighting to revert the definition of professionalism back to focusing on a candidate's skills and competency, not physical appearance. More and more people are embracing colourful hair, it's seen a lot more in mainstream media and there are adverts for both vibrant and pastel hair dyes on TV. As generations, millennials and 'GenZ' have become much more expressive. We are constantly switching up our images, in ways that don't conform to a particular style or fashion. As we grow older, this will grow with us. We will continue to disregard the old normal that has previously been more conservative, and will create a new normal that is more accepting of individuality.

# FIGHTING WITH WORDS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO FEMALE CORRESPONDANTS OF WAR

BY ISABELLA EHRLICHER

**War.** The perception we have of it - far away, dangerous. In western society, we struggle to imagine living through times of war, but should we practice this exercise in human empathy more often?

War journalism has evolved like no other form of journalism. 70 years ago, news from the frontline would be slowly passed on to the public, and was highly censored. Wars need to be supported by the public as they cost a considerable amount of money.

Censorship by the government stopped when the world became more digitalised. Well, that's what we like to think. This happened during the time of the Vietnam War, when images were released of naked, starving children running away from US soldiers. These images reached America, and a big question was raised: "Are we supporting a war where children die?"

Throughout the years, however, this has changed. Back in the day,

journalists could only enter a war zone as embedded servers within the military. This meant they would only see what their army knew and experienced, suggesting their reporting had the limitation of being potentially biased. Now, there are still embedded journalists but also independent journalists, who enter war zones free of any military protections.

We live in a world where we have access to news 24/7. We know exactly what's happening in a war zone in real-time. This is a risk to the military, as their opponents can watch each of their steps and only have to go onto the BBC's website to access this information. We think we know everything that's going on. I mean, it makes sense. You get a notification on

your phone, open it, and you have all the latest details right there.

Wars have become transparent, or so we like to think.

In 2010, a website called WikiLeaks leaked a video of American soldiers, shooting down surveillance. Children. It looked like a scene from a video game. From that point onwards, we often wonder what's actually happening in war zones. This video dealt a massive blow to the American government, and after that Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, became an enemy of the state. But for what? Yes, he leaked the footage, and how he got the footage was most likely illegal, but it was in the name of



© nasim dadfar on Unsplash

public interest which journalists legally owe us – right?

There are many war correspondents out there trying to provide everyone with accurate and reliable news. The industry has been male-dominated for the longest time, but female journalists have become more successful in recent years.

Marie Colvin is arguably the most famous female war correspondent in history, and wrote for The Sunday Times. She died in 2012 while stationed in Homs, Syria, and her death had a significant impact on the industry. She's most famous for her interview with Muammar Gaddafi; the first ever interview with the Libyan leader. An advocate for accurate war reporting, she reported from numerous war zones, such as Libya, Egypt, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor. In East Timor, she saved the lives of 1,500 women with her work.

**“Wars have become transparent, or so we like to think”**

Colvin won numerous awards for her journalism. In 2018, a biography about her was filmed. “A Private War” is a breathtaking piece of art, starring Rosamund Pike, and can be found on Netflix for those of us wanting to deepen our understanding of how life in this way is lived.

Someone that personally changed my life was Rukmini Callimachi, a war journalist for The New York Times, her interviewing skills and investigative talents are incredibly impressive. She has specialised in ISIS reporting and is famous for the releasing of ISIS intelligence files. During her missions in Iraq, she collected over 15,000 of said files while embedded within the Iraqi army.

Her true-crime podcast, Caliphate, went viral. She speaks about the destroying of the Islamic State, Caliphate, and how she investigated their operations. She also interviewed a supposed-ISIS member, Abu

Huzaifa. The story contains a plot twist; the question of how a single man tricked the whole of The New York Times. In 2020, however, times turned quickly for Rukmini, and The New York Times and the podcast Caliphate were to take much criticism. She no longer covers topics of terrorism.

Media companies will always give you their facts. It is blunt news without any emotion. This is how it's supposed to be. A journalist is sometimes expected to be biased in these instances, and many war correspondents revolt against this. Martin Bell, a former BBC correspondent, stated that he refuses to: “stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor.”

So, next time you're reading, listening to or watching the news, keep this in mind – there are innocent people involved in any war. Remember that war journalists are risking their lives for your news, and that educating yourself on this topic is the best thing you could ever do.

**“Remember that war journalists are risking their lives for your news”**

# FEELING THE FEAR BUT

By Kitty Heilijgers-Nijfhof

# A GUIDE FOR THE WORKPLACE

# DOING IT ANYWAY...

Have you ever felt out  
of place at work?

Been made to feel  
inadequate to others?

Been forced into a state of  
productive fear to meet goals?

**YES?**

Then this is the guide for you...

Despite a lot of publicity surrounding 'management by fear' in businesses, it is hardly ever mentioned in organisations themselves. It's not something that they wish to admit or consider.

If you or someone you know are experiencing a toxic climate like this in your place of work, then trust us, this guide to overcoming and succeeding despite the feelings of anxiety is just what you need. Learn how to cope with tension, uncomfortable atmospheres and challenges at work by following the guidance below. We hope it will improve your mindset and overall workplace experience.

## Bringing up the problem is the first step towards the solution

What's the difference between a hospital director who, according to the doctors, behaves like a 'capricious tyrant' and a shop assistant who feels belittled, intimidated and is afraid to call in sick for fear of repercussions? One is part of the problem, and the other has the power to be part of the solution – they just don't know it yet.

Nearly every week, the media will give examples of cases where businesses are run through 'management by fear'. But in contrast to the multiplicity of articles in the press and threads on social media, the topic remains extremely taboo within the organisations themselves.

You often don't talk about fear professionally; holding off until the problem

becomes too big, the bomb explodes and it's already too late. The consequences can be huge, ranging from employees feeling overworked at home to even being driven to the point of considering suicide. These are serious mistakes that no one dares to report, consequently leading to a mentally and/or physically unwell workforce.

### The top 5 reasons why employees don't speak up against a culture of fear:

1. Fear of consequences (44%)
2. 'Speaking up doesn't change anything anyway' (17%)
3. Avoiding conflicts (7%)
4. 'I don't want to cause a stir' (5%)
5. Other (27%)

### A culture rooted in toxic masculinity

"Many organizations have a masculine culture", says Peter Fijbes in his book, *Angst Cultuur* (translating to Fear Culture). "Emotions not directly related to conquest are not accepted. Joy and aggression are fine, fear is not."

Fijbes wants to break that taboo. In his book, he not only explains the causes of a fear culture but also how you can prevent it from arising. Fijbes defines a culture of fear as a [organisational] dysfunction in which collective, obstructive fear is prominent and is systematically used to enforce loyalty, obedience and commitment on the part of employees" – and it can easily get out of hand.

Fijbes tells an anecdote about a manager who forbade employees to go to the toilet during (very long) meetings. "If the man had to, he would urinate in a sink in the conference room in front of everyone present. Nobody dared to say anything about it."

### 'There is no intervention because the managers are considered too important'

A culture of fear usually develops gradually, Fijbes explains: "It is always an accumulation of problems. An aircraft does not have to crash immediately because of one defective engine. That is why managers are often genuinely surprised that people are afraid."

"In times of crisis, companies run an extra great risk", according to Fijbes: "Margins are under pressure and everyone is on edge. The fear of the top of the company leaks into the [organisation]. At the same time, employees will not leave quickly in times of crisis. As a result, no signal is given that something is wrong. In the meantime, the employees will silently resist, for example by sabotaging assignments, or they will only do what they are told or charged for, without thinking critically. A reduced reality is created in the [organisation]."

### Less fear in flat organizations?

In recent years, many organizations have been 'crushing'. Management layers are disappearing and experiments are being conducted with less hierarchical forms of managing.

You might think fewer managers equals less fear. But, according to Fijbes, that is too blunt of an idea. He points out that a lack of hierarchy can also be a risk: "You tend to see that with political groups, because there's no formal hierarchy and people cannot be fired, the [organisation] can develop a dysfunctional culture. It is good if someone takes the lead, but only as long as you can hold that person accountable for his [or] her actions, just as you would any other colleague or human being."

Certainly, now that remote management is more relied upon because of working from home, the process should be based more on trust than control.

### Abuse of power

Often no action is taken because the responsible managers are considered too important to the organisations. The seriousness of the situation is also not always recognised.

Management and supervisory boards are not aware that, according to the Working Conditions Act, they're obliged to prevent employees from an excessive psychosocial workload.

Fijbes is slightly optimistic about the possibilities to counter or combat a culture of fear. He developed a "quick scan" idea that businesses can use to examine themselves. According to Fijbes, it's best to use this early, before fear has spread too far around your team.

**"You don't have to ring the alarm right away, but have the courage to [recognise] that there is fear. Only then can you get started on fixing disturbed working relationships and possibly adjusting procedures. Making it negotiable is the first step towards a solution."**

# CARING DISGRACEFULLY

Joanna Hawkins

I'm Jo, an editorial assistant for the Fashion & Lifestyle department here at Disgraceful. Since my younger brother came along when I was two years old, I've helped to support and care for him – as he is severely autistic, OCD-diagnosed and has learning difficulties.

This is something I was born into, and something that simply just happened. He is my one and only experience of having a sibling; he is my brother, and I wouldn't change a thing.

Life alongside someone on the autistic spectrum has its incredible moments, such uniqueness and a difference that allows the world to be seen in new and alternative ways. It's certainly an important reminder that it's not always necessary to overthink things so much or doubt ourselves in life; it shows me if we all just walked into a room and spoke our thoughts aloud, things would probably be a lot less problematic!

Understandably, however, this can at times be challenging. In some cases a lot of care is needed and, if you give or receive care yourself, you'll know these difficult feelings can sometimes lead to frustration for all involved. Things can be particularly tough when it comes to communicational and developmental disorders, as the nature of autism and other

conditions can make it harder to share feelings or talk as is sometimes desired.

In my day-to-day experiences, I meet a lot of people who have a relative or friend with a form of autism, also formerly known as Asperger's syndrome. Asperger's as a term is not used so much anymore, however it is still an accepted diagnosis, often referring to traits and characteristics in milder forms on the autistic spectrum.

According to BMA, in the UK 700,000 people have autism and 1 in 100 children are diagnosed. Despite so many people with a diagnosis, strangely, I find there is still fairly minimal knowledge, discussion and open awareness of autism. Millions of people live in close proximity to someone on the autistic spectrum and hundreds of thousands more live in some kind of caring position, yet I believe there is absolutely not enough written about these wonderful caring relationships that we have, which often go unnoticed – even unspoken about outside of our homes.

On both sides of a caring relationship, it's easy to feel the path you tread with your loved ones has apparently never been trodden before. However, this simply isn't true! I think the situation can be particularly tough on sibling relationships when you

“ I AM  
DISGRACEFUL  
BECAUSE I AM  
A GAL WHO  
CARES

wouldn't otherwise necessarily take on serious caring responsibilities for them. I mention that almost three quarters of a million people have autism in the UK, yet I have only ever met one or two people who are in a similar sibling position to myself.

Where are you all, I ask?

Well, the short answer is I don't know, but I know you're out there. So please, as we all need reminding sometimes, know that you are not alone, and know that you are disgraceful (our rebellious definition of the word anyone) in the most wonderful of ways – because you care!

It's impossible to always be with the same person 24/7, so it's important for both carers and the loved ones they help to have some rest separate from one other. The nature of autism makes communication complex for both of you, so this makes having a change of perspective particularly important.

Of course, I can only speak from my own caring position, but from experience everyone benefits from some time with alternative company where at all possible every now and again. If you need some extra support, there's no shame. Just because you care, it does **not** mean you cannot be cared for too.

Some things I find that really help me unwind are:

- Talking about something completely different with friends to enable a complete mind rest from the caring part of that lovely brain of yours
- A bubble bath... need I say more!
- Eating some yummy food, whatever that might mean for you
- Although it's so hard to do with lockdown restrictions, try to change your space if you are often in the same room; switch things up if you can
- Get lost in a film or tv series that's not too taxing for the mind

Things can also be tough if you help to care on a sporadic basis or, like myself, are away at university for weeks at a time, yet you then find yourself back home for months in the holidays. Assimilating back into the usually very different pace of home life after time away can feel strange in any situation,

however, this change in routine can prove especially challenging. It's particularly important in such situations to give each other time to adapt, know that things will be confused or different at first, but that things will gradually fall back into place as you get used to each other again.

So if you take one thing from reading this, please remember; if you're a carer, be kind to yourself. If you're cared for, be kind to yourself. And if you know a carer, show them some extra kindness every now and again for all the amazing work they do!

We can only write of our own experiences – and this is my story. This may resonate with you, or it may not, but I am a firm believer that you can never be overeducated on such important topics.

*I have found the following resources particularly helpful with navigating helping to care for a sibling, and, likewise, they are important places to educate yourself further on the nature of the topics I have raised:*

- The National Autistic Society website is filled with so much useful information
- Later this month, it will be World Autism Awareness Week (running from the 29th of March to the 4th of April 2021), a week dedicated to education, information, events and challenges so do keep a look out in the media
- *Aspergirls* by Rudy Simone: a book documenting the experiences of girls on the autistic spectrum. Traits are often associated with male behaviour, so females are often underrepresented. Particularly, for all our Disgraceful girls, this makes for really informative reading!
- The national guidance given on the UK government website and the information given by Citizens Advice on caring
- Most universities and educational establishments offer a counselling service, or chats with a welfare team which are usually free and are a very safe way to talk if
- Most importantly: each other, friends and family!

*Disgracefully, with love,  
Jo x*

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

## Facing It to Fix It

By Rachel Horrocks

Imagine that whenever you achieve something – whether it be in a professional, academic or social capacity – a small, almost insignificant voice whispers a stream of insults through your subconscious mind.

It might say, “you don't actually deserve this and soon everyone else will realise it” or “you're a fraud, you're only in this position because you got lucky”. The voice doesn't care about your credentials, it doesn't care about all your hard work and it certainly doesn't care about your mental health.

Writing this now, it'd be nice to think I'd simply ignore the voice and know it's talking nonsense, but for some unknowable reason, to me and so many others, that's just not the case. This cruel voice is the personification of what academics call ‘Imposter Syndrome’; an experience that refers to feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy which can cause individuals to distrust their own abilities, achievements and talent, fearing they'll soon be outed as a fraud despite the capabilities and credentials they possess.

**“an experience that refers to feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy which can cause individuals to distrust their own abilities, achievements and talent, fearing they'll soon be outed as a fraud despite the capabilities and credentials they possess.”**

Though people from all types of backgrounds may suffer with Imposter Syndrome, it seems those from minority groups in the workplace are disproportionately affected – groups which have both past and present suffered real, unimagined, societal doubt and criticism (felt by women, Black, Latinx and Asian communities, those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and more).

For some, Imposter Syndrome may be a trauma response stemming from a turbulent upbringing. For others, there may be no solid explanation other than striving for perfectionism while maintaining an internal doubt of themselves and a strong fear of failure. Some of our most intelligent and prominent famous figures to date have suffered with Imposter Syndrome, with civil rights activist Maya Angelou once writing, “... they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find out.”. So, regardless of societal success or however many awards or promotions a person receives, if they've got it in them to doubt



# SELF: KEEP IT REAL WITH YOURSELF

I think setting goals and aspirations for yourself is a really important and healthy thing to do – on ONE condition:

**you be 100% real about your own limitations.**

One day, out of nowhere, I straight up booked a kettlebell class, went out and bought myself workout gear, went to the class and came out of it completely defeated. I wasn't fit. I wasn't strong. I wasn't ready for the physical demand of that class. I completely ignored my own limitations and pushed through anyway and was left in agony for an entire week.

I didn't go back and I didn't try again; I just lost my spirit and told myself that I couldn't do it.

This is what I mean about being real with yourself. Next time I think about doing a kettlebell class, it will be when my own fitness is advanced enough to do it so that my limitations don't stop me from being able to.

A handy way of doing this for myself healthily, I found, was making a list. For example, I think of my

**If you are true and honest with yourself, you can do literally anything.**

**A lot of people think they are weak or incapable because of their own limits, and that's just not true.**

goal and write out my limitations that could get in the way of my goals and then I list ways that I can work around my limitations instead of them getting the better of me.

For example – recently I've been thinking a lot about what I would like to do once I've finished university, so one of my goals is to 'find a career and aim for it'. My limitations are: 'I need to find a way to earn it – how do I earn it? How do I make myself stand out?'. And so to do this, I will join societies, start paying more attention to my blog, and try to seek out some actual work experiences and extra curricular to build up my resume to stand out.

Lastly, I would just like to add, that when I make goals, I sometimes panic. I feel like I need to achieve it as quickly as possible, which then leads to failure through pressure or it being done poorly. Take your time, don't pressure yourself and don't be hard on yourself; it's not meant to be that easy, giving even more reason to be proud of yourself when you do it.

# SELF: WIPING OUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a central aspect of everyday life and society. It's used to socialise, research, advertise, project opinion and can be shared with anyone and everyone. But like most things, it has its grey areas too.

I have always found, despite the fact that I personally hate that I do it, I am constantly on social media. Whether that be Facebook, Instagram or just signed in somewhere, I am on it. I've tried to restrict my time on there, I've deleted my accounts and the apps multiple times, but I've always gone back.

I started to try and understand why I wanted to avoid it and I just ended up convincing myself that I didn't want to be the type of person who was online whilst at lunch or in bed with my boyfriend, or even when I should be concentrating on more important things. And even though these are factors,

**I realised it just made me feel shit about myself.**

My main issue with social media is Instagram. I'm unsure as to why, but I feel it's a platform that judges and influences the most pressure on myself. I would follow celebrities such as Kylie Jenner and womenswear brands, and every time I scrolled through my feed I would see these beautiful, perfect, 'nothing-like-me' women and I'd feel horrible.

I picked on myself, and I felt guilty for two things: I didn't look like these women, and I didn't want to empower these women either. I thought it was awful that my own insecurity was making me resent these people instead of celebrating them.

It left me no longer feeling confident or good enough, to the point that I would scroll so fast past these images so I didn't have to see them – yet, I was the one subscribing to them.

I don't like resenting other people for their beauty, and I certainly don't like scrutinising myself because I don't look a certain way. The sad thing is, it truly affects more than just your mentality. It triggers an unhealthy cycle starting with a negative mental state about your own appearance. You see yourself in a bad light which then influences your own confidence and how you project yourself in your own life. This then begins to affect your relationships with people, your energy and your own character.

I decided I didn't want to keep falling into this trap I was setting for myself.

My first step was to scroll through who I was following and unfollow the accounts that made me experience that sinking feeling. I would like to add that I have nothing against these accounts or people, and that they can post what they like; I just wanted to diminish this unhealthy, unhelpful behaviour. You can't change the way you see things straight away, and it takes a lot of time.

I then began looking into accounts that project a healthier approach to body image that worked for me. Seeing others in a more familiar and realistic range and variety made me happier. Now, I don't mean I looked at accounts that I could compare myself too and think 'I'm better' – putting others down never lifts you up; I picked accounts that I resonated with, and seeing people like myself left me feeling positive and empowered by them.

Along with that, I found accounts on things I was interested in to follow: books, restaurants, interiors and more. The things that make me feel good and inspire me. Doing this allows me to scroll through my feed and click off feeling good about myself, instead of feeling ashamed.

# SELF: IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Raise your hand if you feel like you've lost yourself during the pandemic! I certainly had, until I decided to rediscover myself.

One day, I bought myself a cheap notepad and started to write again. After feeling so uninspired, as if I had no purpose, I found one. Not only is writing a really good way to unclog that heavy feeling of bottling up your emotions, it also allows you to talk to yourself kindly and encourage positivity.

I've reviewed some books on my blog recently and talked about how nice it was to have time to read for pleasure again in my spare time. I have been exploring some books of a new style, new authors and learnt some new things about myself that I didn't think I would like. It's the classic, very cliché saying to 'never judge a book by its cover'. Reading brings me such peace. I can just shut the world off, switch off mentally and fall into the pages, leaving me feeling really good about myself because of it.

During this time, I never realised how therapeutic cooking was. I have seriously surprised myself with some of the things I've successfully made.

I learnt to cook things like toad in the hole, fried chicken, granola bowls, lasagne, cakes, ramen and so on. As much as it's a proud accomplishment for myself, cooking has benefited me in other ways too. It has taught me how to buy on a budget: I try to plan my meals in advance, and base them on similar ingredients to avoid waste, and this has proved to be so efficient.

Skin. My skin has been on a brutal journey of its own this year. I didn't have much money to afford new, expensive products and I was over washing my skin which made me breakout. It really upset me because at the time I just couldn't understand what I was doing wrong. In the end, I ended up becoming lazy with my skin routine which became a blessing in disguise. I realised that applying all this product to 'help' my skin was actually damaging my skin, and so it was causing me to break out more often.

My new routine is a lot simpler; I cleanse every day gently, and use a light moisturiser. I tend to use a thicker moisturiser if my skin is drier than usual. Twice a week I will use a face scrub, mostly once a week but twice if, again, my skin is drier. And then once every week or so, I will use some sort of clay mask - usually a Lush produced clay mask of some sort. I've also taken the time to thinly slice cucumber, place it in the freezer for ten minutes, and then take it out and apply over my eyes for 10-15 minutes. Now, I feel a lot more comfortable in my skin.

I recently picked up a paintbrush for the first time in a few years and it proved to be such a positive thing to do. My auntie asked me to paint a few things for her to hang in her home and it has been so nice to relax with colour again. It is a really enjoyable way to pass the time, keep yourself productive, entertained, and you feel better after. It has even inspired me to start drawing again.

**After all, the little things are the best things in life.**

# FOUR SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES TO PRIORITISE IN 2021

**BY MAISIE MCGARVEY**

We could all do with practicing a little more self-care in our lives, especially with what's going on in the world right now. That's exactly why we're sharing four activities your daily routine could greatly benefit from, set to help keep your emotional balance even like no other!

From experiencing and experimenting with each of these tools, we're so excited to share them in the hopes that they'll help you to find a few more moments of calm and ease throughout these days in lockdown. All these activities can ease your busy brain during the weeks at home, help you get better sleep and rejuvenate and inspire you to have a good day.

## Meditating

This is an activity I would recommend to everyone, as it's greatly impacted my life. If you've always thought about starting a meditation practice, but always thought it was too hard, you can download apps like Headspace and Calm (they both have a seven-day free trial).

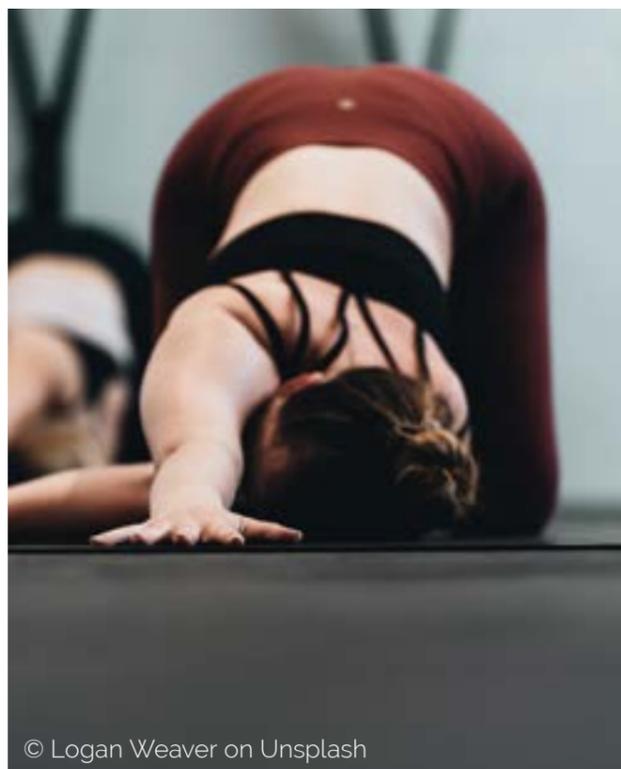
Or, if you would rather not pay for a subscription, you can set a timer on your phone for three, five, ten or fifteen minutes, sit comfortably and just let yourself breathe for the allotted amount of time you've set for yourself. This way, you can incrementally build up the amount of time you spend on your meditation practice each day.

You can also find meditations on YouTube that deal with specific topics such as gratitude, relaxation and positive energy, and I think we could all do with the time to focus our attention on those really important aspects of life (and pillars of our mental health).

One of the things I love most about meditation is it really allows me to let go of the idea of having to be perfect, and having to get everything on my to do list done. It truly gives me more clarity, whilst also reminding me to be gentle with myself.



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## Stretching

There's a reason why stretching is the first activity on this list. As we're spending more time at home these days, with a lot of us working from home and sitting at our desks (or if you're me, your kitchen table), it's never been more important to be mindful of how much movement you're getting throughout the day.

If you're a little dubious of adding strenuous exercise to your routine, stretching provides you with those exercise endorphins without the risk of injuring yourself. When you're looking for a place to start, I would recommend apps like FitOn which give you a whole selection of workouts and if you find you want to build up your fitness routine there are plenty of options from stretching and Pilates, to dance and boxing.

If you'd prefer to stick with something more zen-focused, there are plenty of classes on YouTube – including Yoga with Adriene and fun dance classes with The Fitness Marshall.



© Seven Shooter on Unsplash

## Reading

Probably my favourite tip on this list, I could talk about books and reading all day! With the nature of our busy and hectic society, we really need a sacred place where we can find a sense of peace and calm. For me, and for many others, books are an entry into a more tranquil state of mind. If you made a resolution this New Year's to read more, then this advice can definitely help you out with that!

Why not try scheduling a five, ten, or even fifteen minute reading break into your day? I love reading in the morning with a cup of tea, but maybe you could set aside that time between finishing your working-from-home tasks as a little signal to your brain that your 'work mode' is finished for the evening before you switch to 'home mode', and go and make yourself some delicious dinner.

You could even listen to audiobooks whilst doing house chores, or getting little things done. Or, if reading at night is more to your taste, you could light a candle, grab a blanket, make yourself a hot chocolate and read a couple of chapters of your book before bed.

If a reading habit is already ingrained into your daily routine and you are looking for some good recommendations, I have a couple for you. If you're into non-fiction and personal development books, I would highly recommend reading 'The Year of Yes' by Shonda Rhimes. It's the perfect read for anyone wanting to kick start their year, and a book so motivating it'll make you really think about saying 'yes' to more exciting opportunities and finding more ways to make an impact in life. If you are also looking for an inspiring autobiography,

## Limiting your screen time

I know what you're thinking – it's really hard to cut back on our screen time, and be mindful of how much time we spend on our devices! But I've noticed how much better I feel when I'm not constantly checking the barrage of news at midnight (especially during a global pandemic), and noticed I feel much more focussed and present in my daily life for it too.

If you want to set an intention to be more mindful of your screen time, you can use the iPhone's built in Screen Time tab in settings to observe your usage habits or set blocks of time where you can't look at your phone with the Downtime button. If you have an Android phone, you can use apps like Moment to do this for you. If you also fancied tracking how much time you spend on your laptop or computer, you can download apps such as Self Control that will let you block specific websites you know distract you from what you need to do.

Hopefully, you'll have found something great to implement into your routine here – things to help prioritise taking care of your physical and mental health during these months and beyond. I hope you can give yourself at least five minutes to just be with yourself today!



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# HACK YOUR HAPPINESS WITH THESE CONFIDENCE BOOSTS

Whether you'd like the confidence to start your own brand, be your own boss, or rise through the ranks to become a CEO, these 10 tips will help boost your confidence today.

By Elyssa Desai

## 1

### Understand your strengths

Start collating a list of all your strengths by thinking back to any positive feedback you've ever received. What do your friends ask you to help them with? Are there particular things you find easy to do? Reach out to friends, family or co-workers to see what they think your strengths are. Knowing we are good at something, anything, can be a great way to boost our confidence. And remember, if we're not good at something, it just means we're not good at it YET.

### Become aware of your values

Greater self-awareness helps to develop our self-worth, which in turn helps build our confidence. A good place to start is by becoming aware of our values. What is it that gets us up in the morning? What's driving us throughout our life?

Have a think about what's been important to you over the last 3 months. When were you happiest? When did you feel most proud? What were you doing, and are there themes connecting these situations? Remember, values are emotional terms so if you recognise a pattern, for example travelling with friends, think about how you felt – freedom, love, joy, fun, happiness or excitement perhaps.

## 2

## 3

### Reframe your inner critic

Have you ever heard that voice inside your head? You know, the one who says you're not smart enough to have your own business or get that promotion – meet your inner critic. This voice can kill our dreams and stop us getting the life we want. Have a think about a time you felt low in confidence, what was that inner voice saying? Write it down then start to think about how you can reframe any negative statements.

What's a logical and rational statement you could tell yourself instead if these negative ones came up? For example, replace "I'm never going to succeed" with "I've already achieved X, Y and Z. There isn't any rush and every day I make steps in the right direction to reach my goals".

### Stop comparison

Comparing yourself to someone else always stings. The self-doubt creeps in and suddenly you feel like you should be doing so much more. Stop comparison in its tracks every time, as it can kill your confidence. Instead of focusing on other people and what they're doing, focus back on yourself. What's your own definition of success? What do you want to work towards? Focus on these things, and how you're going to get there, only. What one thing can you do this week to move you closer to your end goal?

## 4

## 5

### Ask yourself better questions

Do you ever feel like you're getting the same old answers, or coming up against the same old lessons in life? If you are, it's time to start asking yourself better questions. For example, if you ask yourself, "why does this always happen to me?", chances are the response is going to be negative. Instead, ask yourself, "what do I need to learn to be able to do this?". Already, you're coming from a much more empowered place and fostering a growth mindset instead of a fixed one.

## Create confidence-boosting beliefs

Beliefs are stories that we tell ourselves, which can either limit us or empower us. Unfortunately, it's likely we all have one or two limiting beliefs, and they may stop us from accessing so many opportunities – from starting and growing our own business, to applying for our dream roles. So, instead, we need to create beliefs that lift us up and boost our innate confidence levels.

Have a think about who the successful version of you is when you've reached all of your goals and made your dreams a reality. Now, imagine you are that person – what do you think they believe about themselves, about their business or workplace and about the world? This is what you need to be telling yourself.

Create a list of at least 10 of these beliefs and start to repeat them to yourself every day. Examples may be, "I own a successful business", "people want to pay me for my services", "I add value to my team" or "senior leaders look to me for advice".

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## Show yourself compassion

Life doesn't always go to plan. It's important to know that failing doesn't mean you're a failure, and things are never, ever perfect. Release any impossible expectations you have of yourself and show yourself compassion when things don't go to plan. Learning from failures and growing through them can be a great way to build our confidence and show ourselves we CAN overcome challenges. Remember to be kind to yourself and not let your inner critic put you down.

## Celebrate your successes

It's so easy to fall into the trap of always focusing on the next thing, but it's so important to celebrate your success and how far you've come. Book an hour into your diary at the end of each month to reflect on those few weeks and what you've achieved, and make a note of it so you can come back and remind yourself. Also remember to celebrate the wins as they happen, whether it's doing your first workshop, receiving a positive piece of feedback or simply feeling a little more confident in yourself!

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## Push yourself outside of your comfort zone

A great way to build confidence is to use our courage and push ourselves out of our comfort zone. The more we do it, the more we realise what we're capable of and the more our confidence grows. Create a list of a few ways you can start to push yourself out of your comfort zone. Perhaps it is reaching out to a brand you love for a partnership, or asking for a well-deserved pay rise? Start small and soon you'll be doing things you never imagined you could.

## Set a goal and work for it

Working towards a goal and achieving it can be a great way to boost your confidence, so think about what goals you can set. It's all about finding the right balance – enough stretch to push you but not so impossible you'll never be able to achieve it. When setting your goals, set yourself up for success by using the SMART framework: make sure it's specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

8

Elyssa Desai is a certified confidence coach based in London, who helps women stop self-doubt and master their mindset to get the life they want.

Follow her on Instagram (@elyssadesaicoaching) for confidence and mindset tips or visit her website (<https://www.elyssadesai.com>) for more.

# AN ODE TO ALL THE WAYS 2020 HELPED US GROW

**2020 was undoubtedly a tumultuous year: a space and time to slow down and get creative for some, whilst downright boring, nerve wracking or even heart-breaking for others. In such drastic times, there is truly no “correct” or “proper” way to respond and being perfect in a pandemic is not a requirement at all.**

Different months brought about different phases; in March we had to learn how to work or study from home, whilst April and May brought gorgeous weather and plenty of Instagram bakes. By the time lockdown 2.0 came along for the UK in November, there were absolutely no more virtual quiz rounds to be had.

Whether you took to zoom or whipped up a banana bread, watched every crime series on Netflix (I may be guilty of this one...), or did absolutely none of the above, for the best or for the worst, we grew. I don't think any human can go through such a crisis without growing; we were forced to learn, to adapt and to overcome – even if that just meant learning how to navigate your Zoom call schedule, or how to stand being in the same room as your whole family for more weeks than one!

Here at Disgraceful, we compiled a list of the ways we grew through 2020 (and each one deserves its own credit for making us the people we are today)...

**Grown up** – Regardless of whether we wanted to or not, we've all had to grow up to a certain extent living in such a strange world these days. Like never before, we have rules and consequences constantly at the forefront of our minds, often adding responsibility we weren't quite ever shown how to deal with in

our day-to-day lives. Stepping up to this challenge is such an amazing show of growth!

**Grown to be patient** – Constant changing of rules and restrictions has led to a lot of disappointment as plans often had to change or be postponed. However, I think we have collectively learnt to be more patient, to tackle this disappointment, because we know that unfortunately these things happen but one day we'll get to do them again. And when that freedom comes our way, we will treasure it all like never before and grab every opportunity!

**Grown apart** – Social distancing, quite literally, forcing us all apart has gone against every social instinct in the brain. As a result, each and every one of our relationships has been put to the test, whether this be because our relationships have become long distance or perhaps because we now spend so much more time with the same select few. Becoming long-distance in a romantic relationship sometimes just does not work, and the effects of a breakup in these times are particularly brutal. Similarly, in some ways it's been tougher to feel like you're in the loop with pals that you just can't see. We're now even working with people on Zoom that we've never actually ever met! It all continues to feel so strange, but you have got through all of this. And sometimes, we have to settle on the fact that some things, however hard, just are not meant to be. Never regret, because these situations are part of the journey and something that has ultimately helped you to expand into the person you were meant to be.

**Grown together** – Through challenges together, we have all built incredible bonds. In some cases, this may be with family or housemates who you have been spending far more time with than anticipated. I truly be-

lieve adversity does incredible things to our relationships.

**Grown out of those jeans** – Let's face it, do you really want to try to squeeze into the same jeans you wore at the start of lockdown one? There is absolutely nothing fun about sitting in jeans that dig in, and heaven forbid when you actually want to eat something at lunchtime! That's just not comfortable, nor is it good for you. Perhaps a lockdown clear out has helped with this, or maybe you have a new found obsession with shopping second hand and trying to sell half of the things you own for the thrill of making a pound or two profit! However you have felt about your wardrobe coming out the other side of 2020, treat yourself to the jeans that are truly you and make you feel your best – damn the size on that label.

And finally, you have grown disgracefully by the very fact you're reading this!

Whether you've been inspired to make a life changing decision, to start up a small business or pursue a hobby you wouldn't normally. Perhaps you've found life in the slower lane to actually be a refreshing period of rest and recuperation, ready for you to thrive at what you love when life returns to feeling a bit more normal. Or, maybe you've realised you're perfectly content and happy just doing exactly what you're doing!

So, thank you, 2020, for all that you threw at us. You've put us through our paces, and a lot of it hasn't been fun, but we have grown together, and grown as individuals in almost every way imaginable.

JOANNA HAWKINS



