

CURATED

Edition 3



Pietro Ruffo / Soho Radio / 48 hours in Zagreb
Contemporary art in Rome / Fashion Director Petar Trbović
A night in Bootshaus / London's wellness scene

art'otel

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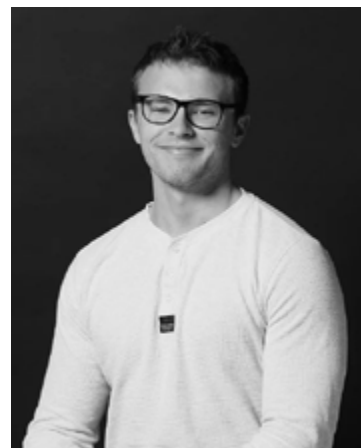
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Pietro Ruffo



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SOHO RADIO AT 10

A chronicle of the indie darling's rise to cultural domination, as told by its founders, friends and DJs

Words by Haley Durkee



British rock outfit IDLES outside the station's original studio

If Soho is the engine powering London's culture machine, Soho Radio is the spark plug charging this legendary district's electric spirit. What started as a grassroots initiative to bring American-style college radio to the UK has blossomed over the last decade into a critically lauded, globally beloved community, with an additional New York outpost, a podcast studio and roster of live events from massive festival appearances to intimate DJ sets at JOIA. 10 years on, the question for musicians and co-founders Adrian Meehan and Dan Gray isn't why the station resonates with so many—that much is obvious. It's how they're going to shape the next 10.

But it feels like an apt moment to reflect on how far they've come before propelling full steam ahead into the next era. And celebrate, of course. After all, it's no small feat to build a thriving, independent, online radio station when every brand, creator and platform on the planet is vying for our attention. How did they do it? By Adrian's recollection, it began with the Durham family and a Soho speakeasy—and if you think that sounds like the start to some deep-cut cultural lore (complete with Samuel L. Jackson side quest), you're right.

Naturally, nobody could be better positioned to narrate that story than the people who experienced it firsthand. A trip to the Broadwick Street studio was a must, where Adrian and Dan spilled the tea (not literally, but the sprawling subterranean meeting space at the studio does have a bar if you fancy a cup on your visit) alongside a few familiar voices. A lineup almost painfully cool and (rightfully) influential, including:

Simone Marie Butler, host of Naked Lunch, Primal Scream bassist, and session player who recently toured with The Jesus and Mary Chain. She has recorded with artists such as Johnny Marr, Andy Bell (Ride), James Williamson (The Stooges), and many others. Simone also DJs in clubs and festivals throughout the UK and Europe and has played with Neil Barnes (Leftfield), Darren Emmerson (Underworld) and more. In her own words (though she hates describing herself): “a music collector, a music obsessive, a musician, and a DJ, as well as a one-day-a-week radio presenter. Most of the time, when I'm doing something else, I'd rather either be listening to music, or looking for music, or playing music, or making music.”

James Lavelle, host of Living in My Headphones, founder of pioneering record label Mo'Wax, producer and DJ releasing music under the



moniker UNKLE. In his own words: “a sampler and collagist and curator of the things I love in the creative world—from art to music and fashion—whether it’s been making, producing, or remixing records or releasing people’s music through to creative design within lots of different mediums.”

Iraina Mancini, host of a self-titled show, singer, songwriter, and DJ who released her debut album in 2023. In her own words: “I write music, I’m inspired greatly by French sixties singers, psychedelia and vintage film soundtracks. I’ve been a DJ for 10 years, spinning Northern Soul, Disco, Garage, Funk and Boogaloo. Playing clubs, festivals and events all around London and internationally.”

Introductions out of the way, it’s over to Adrian to take us back to the beginning.

AM: In about 2012-13, the band Kitty, Daisy & Lewis, who are good friends of mine, invited me to a speakeasy they had in Soho. Turned out to be a spot I frequented in the 90s so I thought it would be fun to take my wife along and show her where we used to hang.

We got there about 11:00pm and it was just Kitty, Lewis and a bucket of beer in the corner. I felt really old. Made it to about half 12 and thought “I’ve got to leave soon.” But for some reason we stayed another half an hour and suddenly the place was full, and everyone was having a proper good time at this unlicensed bar.

About a month later, I got a phone call from my mate looking for a tenant for this basement bar in Soho and, strange enough, it was the same one. I thought it’d be an awesome opportunity, so I took it as a recording studio. Then the shop above us became available and I didn’t know

what I was going to do with it but eventually had the idea to start a radio station.

SB: We were still building the studio when we started broadcasting from it. I remember Adrian bringing in the wooden floor in a massive plastic bag that he had bought online—I think he bought it on eBay—he just slung this down like, scraping all the dirt and mud off of each wooden block and a few weeks later I came in it had all been done. And every time I came back each week something else had been done.

AM: We kicked the idea around for a year, trying to find someone to kind of come in with us—went to all our initial contacts first, whether they be comedians, musicians, DJs, artists. And we started it like that with an open spirit.

JL: I think there was a period of new revolution going on in digital radio and there were some really cool radio stations that were starting up, but it felt like this was going to be something a bit broader than some of the others. There was music, but there were also cultural things and food and stuff.

AM: We wanted a varied schedule of not just DJs, but to try and represent Soho’s cultural tapestry.

SB: I just remember it felt really exciting to be live on air. And there were only about three or four presenters then. I think Boy George did one of the first shows.

AM: We had him and Eddie Piller, who started Acid Jazz.

JL: There was an interesting collage of things going on and I liked the idea of being involved in that. I’ve been involved for about ten years, so pretty much from the beginning of the station.

IM: I joined Soho Radio around eight years ago. I’d been collecting records for years and wanted to share my passion for old, rare R&B and soul. A radio show seemed like a fantastic platform to do that.



“You get to connect with people all over the world. I’ve created this online community through my show, and I’ve met and made friends from it.”



Live performances
are the station's
bread and butter

DG: It was a really, really weird trajectory for online radio. When we started, it was completely—I mean, it is still the Wild West—but it was completely the Wild West. No one was doing it. There was basically NTS and us.

AM: And within a year of launching, we'd been awarded the best online station in the world.

DG: It's kind of bonkers, but it's also the fact that me and Ade had literally no radio experience whatsoever and set it up. And I think actually having that naivety to do it has made us look at it in a slightly different way.

AM: We'd had some crazy guests, too. Chuck D from Public Enemy. Engelbert Humperdinck. Steve Cropper of The Blues Brothers.

DG: Ronnie O'Sullivan doing a takeover show.

IM: I've had some fantastic guests. Lee Fields was an absolute gent and really inspiring. Viagra Boys were great fun. P.P. Arnold I fell in love with, what an amazing story she had. Mike Chapman, legendary Blondie producer.

AM: And loads of young artists who are really successful now. Mahalia came in with her mum when she did her first radio session!

DG: It's been great to get people in on the way up. I'm really proud of that. Ezra Collective's first interview was with us and now they're winning Mercury Prizes eight years later. And that's kind of, I like to think, what the radio is about. It's about giving people those first opportunities.

AM: We gave one once to a fashion designer from Sierra Leone, Fods [Foday Dumbuya]. He runs the label LABRUM. He's wicked. He's lovely. We gave him the shop. And Samuel L. Jackson was staying in the hotel opposite. He was looking in one day

and Dan said "oh, hey, Samuel, why don't you come in?" And that was it. Samuel L. Jackson walked in, got friendly with Fods, and now he's made his wedding suit. He's made Oscars suits for him!

DG: I think that's what we do really. It's up-and-coming talent and legends at the same time.

SB: And it's the kind of place where you can drop in on someone and hang out whilst they're doing a show. I was doing a show once, turned around and Johnny Marr was knocking on the window, waving at me. He came in and sat down and we ended up doing a sort of impromptu interview on-air and then went for coffee.

JL: The last time that happened I was DJing, and Jay Carder walked by and she popped in.

SB: I mean, you can't really do that on any other radio show.

JL: I think there's an eccentricity to it. It's an eccentric British radio station. It's a nice community. It's a good vibe.

IM: The feeling of being in a sort of Soho family of other musicians, DJs and presenters is fantastic. It's a lovely community of like-minded people.

AM: I love people being excited about performing on it or doing a show on it. I enjoy listening to other people's shows.

IM: People follow not just the station, but the presenters and their taste in music.

JL: There's a different relationship they talk about psychologically with radio. It's like having somebody in the room with you. It's about this sort of real-time connection. I love when you're really into a DJ and you're waiting for what records they're going to play. Particularly if

"With Soho Radio,
there are a wide
variety of DJs to
discover."





Founders
Dan Gray and
Adrian Meehan



Iraina Mancini



they're playing new records—what's the latest, most exclusive thing? There's lots of people here that play records that I haven't heard.

SB: DJ Kobayashi plays a lot of great world music. He's always got an amazing playlist and comes in excited about what he plays.

JL: Max [Reinhardt] plays a lot of quite weird and wonderful records.

SB: He's always got something utterly fascinating or somebody utterly fascinating on his show and he introduces me to so many different artists and authors. We have this ongoing dynamic that when I see him, I know he's going to impart some really interesting knowledge onto me.

JL: Oxman, for me...Oxman should be on national radio. He should be on the news or something. I love listening to him play. I like listening to him talk. Fantastic energy. That's great radio.

SB: A big shout out to The Oxman, his show is a little piece of musical good vibes and always the best dub and reggae.

DG: We're radio by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts,

you know. We're not just the norm.

JL: That's part of what's interesting about it. It's not a mainstream thing. With Soho Radio, there's a wide variety to discover. DJs like BobaFatt, his mixes are pretty amazing. Norman Jay. Simone's great.

SB: It just goes far deeper than commercial radio. Even as specialised as those stations can be. I'm sure there are some shows that will play like, a seven-minute avant-garde ambient track that sounds like a pneumatic drill being blown up in a microwave being played backwards, maybe randomly, but I'll play that, within reason, on a Wednesday afternoon show. It's nice to kind of not have any constraints.

IM: It's important to have stations like this, where we as presenters have the freedom to play whatever we want without restrictions.

DG: From the beginning we were getting more people wanting to do it because it was basically one of the only ways of actually having some creative output and outlet.

"It's the kind of place where you can drop in on someone and hang out whilst they're doing a show."

AM: Yeah, we'd have a wish list of people we'd want on. And they'd end up being on it somehow. Even if we didn't know them, within a month, we meet them. And then they were on the radio. And Dan would say "Oh, that's funny, because I imagined that a couple of months ago and now, they're here!"

SB: The people who do shows here do it because they enjoy it!

IM: Radio is also a huge part of making or breaking an artist. Streaming services have stats and numbers next to tracks, creating a sort of

“It’s important to have stations like this, where we as presenters have the freedom to play whatever we want without restrictions.”

hierarchy. At Soho Radio, everyone is the same.

JL: They’re supporting artists and they’re supporting creatives to have a platform to do what they want to do. It’d be nice for them to be able to also turn it into something that monetises—but retaining the same vibe and ethos and ideas, and I think that’s what they want.

SB: Sponsorship would be quite good to be honest!

DG: There’s definitely this scale and scope to do that at some point. I like that this journey so far has been fiercely independent. I think that’s been so amazing. And we’ve maybe not commercialised it like other things, but actually the way that we do it is do it the way that we want it to do it. I would like to do DAB (digital audio broadcast) in the next couple years.

AM: We definitely have a responsibility now to all the contributors. We’ve got to keep it running. We want it to grow. We want it to be a safe space for future generations of artists and listeners.

DG: Where we come to life and what we can do well is the activation aspect of it. It’s the stuff in the real world, like what we do with art’otel, or the vinyl sessions, or British Summer Time at Hyde Park. That’s the stuff that can fund itself.

JL: I hope that they can just keep doing their thing, because they do it well, and it’s done in, like I said, a kind of eccentric way. And I think people respect that.

AM: I guess that’s kind of generally the global appeal of the arts.



SB: You get to connect with people all over the world. I’ve created this online community through my show, and I’ve met and made friends from it. I’ve got people listening from Mexico, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, parts of America, all the way to Sheffield.

AM: It never ceases to amaze me. It does still surprise me how I can be in an airport in America, and someone sees a sticker on my drumkit or my t-shirt and comes up to me and says “hey, I love Soho Radio!” If someone had said to me when we started that this is what’s going to happen in 10

years, I would have definitely asked why the hell we’re doing this—but actually, when I look at it, if someone said this is what you’d have done, I would have gone, wow, yeah. That’s something to be very proud of.

So, back to the future. In the immediate days and weeks at least, it’s business as usual. 24-7 streaming of forward-thinking shows brought to you by the world’s foremost cultural tastemakers. A slate of in-person programming that will continue to draw massive crowds (search “Gideön Revolution Day” if you haven’t experienced the 12-hour street party of 2018 fame). And maybe a DAB empire bringing new songs, commentary and interviews to cars and kitchens across the globe. What remains clear is Soho Radio has been built on a foundation of platforming artists without corporate intervention, but also through exceptional taste, diversity and a trust in the connection between host and audience—with no signs of slowing down or of compromising their ethos. And that’s definitely worth celebrating.

Tune in at sohoriadionlondon.com or download the Soho Radio app.





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Curated by

PIETRO RUFFO

Our Signature Artist's personal favourites from Roman monument to art supply shop.

Words by Haley Durkee

Photos by Emanuel Vlasev and Andrea di Lorenzo

On a hot afternoon in late September, I find myself in a large industrial elevator with artist Pietro Ruffo and a small entourage of colleagues. We were seated only moments earlier in the sunshine outside a nearby San Lorenzo bar, inhaling what we collectively agreed to be the most heavenly plates of spaghetti ever served (at Ruffo's recommendation) and are now making our way to his studio. Ruffo's forthcoming debut as Signature Artist for art'otel Rome Piazza Sallustio is still a few months away, but the artwork has been complete for quite some time and we're here to check it out. And, after that spaghetti, to get his take on everything we need to know about his hometown.

The studio is something of a dream for the creatively inclined. A sprawling open space with massive windows, two floors, a desk and shelves stacked to the heavens with books and materials, it feels like an extension of Ruffo himself—a place with deep connections and history much like the city where it's set. For fans of the artist, it's a living, breathing imaginarium of his most memorable pieces. The coveted-as-ever Dior "Around the World" collab. "The Clearest Way" on display at the Vatican Library (famously its

first contemporary art exhibition). The Vogue-sanctified Valentino installation at Art Basel Miami. They all started here. And now I get to hear about his next great venture in the company of this esteemed archive.

Ruffo cuts a distinctively relaxed figure in a loose-fit shirt and jeans (with a hint of whimsy in the form of chicken-patterned socks) but, make no mistake, behind the casual appearance is a deep well of serious passion, skill, and expertise that got him to this position. And he's one heck of an eloquent speaker, too. Of course, I don't learn that until later because I don't speak much Italian (save for a few key phrases courtesy of Duolingo), and he prefers to interview in his native language. Considering the pasta from earlier, I decide to trust him implicitly—even if I have no idea what he's saying to me at the time. And suddenly the adage "when in Rome" manifests in the most literal way possible. It's an apt note to start on.

"The city of Rome has always influenced me a lot in my work. This is a strongly stratified city, where every century devours the previous one to come to life. It's like a biological organism, always evolving. A lot of history connects together, history from different periods, from different topics, to create a narrative. And this idea of a narrative, which is composed of many stories, has entered



my work in a powerful way. Like the city, each of my works has various levels, various stories that intersect to create something larger.

Drawing has always been central in my artistic practice. Drawing not so much as a tool of representation of what is around us but, more than anything else, as a tool of knowledge of what is around us. You draw something to try to analyse it and understand it. And I believe that in my daily practice as an artist, even though I don't always deal with topics related to Rome, but the way of working, that is, through the drawing, to debunk the themes that fascinate me, has remained the same. Drawing the old buildings, understanding the architectural layers. Rome has been my gymnasium."

Place in Rome

"It's a giant question. Let me try to focus on a couple.

In Rome, every corner of the street is special because you always go from a great marvel to some gloomy corner. There's a very, very strong exchange of energy that then becomes creative energy. There are various places that I love and have loved.

If I think of a place from my childhood, it's the National Gallery of Modern Art where I spent entire afternoons. There was no entrance ticket, so I could go for free. I sat on their sofas, and I was immersed in a context of wonderful contemporary art.

And right next to it, of course, is Villa Borghese, which is a park that I love a lot because it's a park where some parts are manicured, but other parts seem completely abandoned. That's the aspect I like the most, when nature takes up its space and expresses itself without human constraints. These are two places that I love to go to and that have obviously marked my artistic career."

Historic Monument

"If I had to choose a monument from the past, I would like to mention at least two. The first is San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, which is a tiny Baroque church where Francesco Borromini, perhaps one of our greatest architects, managed to express himself in an incredible way, revolutionising the Renaissance tradition and taking great steps forward with respect to the architectural discourse.



And the other place, perhaps, is the Pantheon, because the Pantheon is an example of the ability we have had to transform buildings instead of demolishing them.

We live in a strange period where, when a political government changes, we decide to take down the symbols of that government because maybe they are not congenial to the new society. Instead, the Romans were smarter, or perhaps lazier, they didn't take down anything, but they converted everything. So, the Pantheon is a sort of architectural oxymoron. What interests me in this building, in addition to being an architectural marvel, is precisely the fact that it is a symbol of how this building, which was a temple, was then transformed into a church and this has always been used.

And this has been our greatest ability, to use the old ruins to build the medieval towers, to build Renaissance palaces—think Palazzo Orsini, in Teatro Marcello—and therefore not so much to preserve something like in a refrigerator, but to use it, to continue to use it. Why not make a football stadium inside the Colosseum, or something else? It is precisely in the reuse of things that these can be preserved, coming back to life instead of sitting there like mummies inside a museum."

Clothes Shop

"This is more difficult than architecture! When I happened to work with fashion...the people who called me, I think they called me because they knew that I didn't know anything about fashion. I was a sort of alien put in a world I didn't know. I inherited many of the clothes I wear from my father and my brothers who were older than me. I think I have shirts that are more than 40 years old



"What I'm most passionate about with the art'otel project is its urban dimension. It's a place that has a responsibility within the urban fabric of Rome."





Villa Borghese



"It's a park where some parts are manicured, but other parts seem completely abandoned."

and that know me better than I know myself.

If I must buy something new, I like to buy something that already has a history. Of course, there is Porta Portese, our biggest market. It's not just a market on Sundays where you can find all kinds of objects but it's also a place where you can find all kinds of clothes. I like to buy something that has already had contact with other people and not something that was just in the shelves of a shop."

Material

"One of the aspects that ties fashion to art is craftsmanship. In the sense that the fashion that is done in Rome, for example, is not fast fashion but rather big fashion houses (like Valentino, who I've worked with) where there's something like seven people working on one dress that comes to life in two or three months. This patience, as if it were a kind of rosary that is recited, is also part of my artistic practice alongside using very traditional materials. I mostly use paper, ink, chisels, cutters, pins...materials that could have been found 30, 50, 100 years ago."

Art Supply Store

"My supply shop is Poggi which is a beautiful art shop in the centre of Rome. And there, of course, in addition to buying materials, is the relationship with the people who have worked there for a lifetime who are the first to advise you (depending on the effect you want to obtain) what kind of material to use. But what I would like to say is that everything remains in a very, very artisanal dimension.

Obviously, I also buy things on the internet. I'm not a prehistoric artist. But for me, the human contact is important."

Artist's Process or Finished Artwork

"In France they use a term which is 'l'écart de l'imprévu' which we could translate it as the "gap of the unexpected." It refers to the unpredictable and unforeseen elements that arise during the creative process.

I'm a trained architect so every piece of my work is strongly planned. It's as if I'm trying to have a projection of the final result. But then, from this project to the result it takes a month, two months, three months or maybe even a year. Everything that happens in this period—including my personal life or the people who come into my studio—is obviously part of that creative process. That's the most exciting part.

When a piece of work is finished you frame it, you hang it on the wall, and you look at it as if it were your first time. With an inquisitive look you try to understand what you've done as if you hadn't done it yourself...as if you hadn't spent so many days to make it. It separates itself from you and becomes something else. It's a bit like having a son.

When you're expecting a son, you think he'll be a part of you. He'll have your nose your mother's eyes. When you have a son and you find him in your arms, and you live with him, you realise he's like a relative in your house that you must get to know. He's nice to you, but he's not you. He's not a part of your arm or a part of you, he's just another person. And the works that surround me, the works that I create, are different from me. They're not me. I look at them and I'm amazed, I get angry, but they're not a part of me... they're something else."

It's a fitting metaphor for a man who is both a father and an artist in the midst of a colossal project. I look around the studio again and try to take in every detail of what's to come. Earlier in the day we toured the hotel, still a construction site in most areas, while Ruffo narrated the future, and we imagined what that would look like. Here in the studio is where the vision is brought together and finally, it starts to make sense. It's hard to look at an empty room and really "get" it—but when you see the collection up close and hear him speak with such aplomb about the thought behind it, you're transported there.

"What I'm most passionate about with the art'otel project is its urban dimension. It's a place that has a sort of responsibility within the urban fabric of Rome. Through so many works that are inside the hotel, I aim to help visitors get to know Rome in a different way. To look at Rome in a different way. More than anything, to come full circle with what we were speaking about earlier, the "...work is a way is way to understand how much this city is constantly evolving."

And to truly understand it is to see it for yourself.

> Discover art'otel Rome Piazza Sallustio



EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY ART

IN AN ANCIENT CITY

Inside two of Rome's chicest galleries

Words by Angharad Jones

Images by Emanuel Vlasev



Think of Rome and you think of centuries of history. Rightly so, it has a significant, highly influential and layered past that deserves to be preserved and explored. There were the gladiators, emperors, and the start of modern civilisation. It's been the home of each elected pope for thousands of years. It's got centuries-old Renaissance art that's so deeply embedded in our collective consciousness, that even the most uninitiated recognises the frescoes of Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling.

The markers of Rome's past can be stumbled across on every street, in every church, in every museum. But to focus purely on eras gone by is to miss the rich tapestry of its present, and the more recent decades we've lived through. After all, Rome's culture and identity is so much more than what happened BC, or during the 15th-century Renaissance.

In Rome, there's a movement dedicated to exploring creativity in the now, with more galleries and studios than ever dedicated to modern and contemporary art popping up around the city. They may not be as obvious to spot as the other tourist destinations but they're worth taking the time to seek out.

If you're hankering after art created in the 19th century and beyond, there are two galleries we highly recommend adding to your itinerary on your next visit to Rome: Galleria Lorcan O'Neill and the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art. They're both very different, both very stylish, both very well curated. It's here that you'll find the best names in modern and contemporary art—both Italian and international—in the city.





**Works by
Rachel
Whiteread**

Galleria Lorcan O'Neill

Around the corner from must-visit eatery Roscioli Salumeria con Cucina and just a few minutes' walk away from Campo de' Fiori is Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, a tucked-away gallery that unfurls with every step. This isn't a gallery that's in your face or easily spotted amongst the rooftops of the city, you have to look for it. Explorers will be rewarded.

In a lot of ways, the gallery is very Rome. It's housed in the former 17th-century stables of Palazzo Santacroce, and the signs of its history are all there: the unassuming entrance to the cobbled courtyard, and the large, intricately carved baroque fountain that greets you once you've arrived. But it's also unique in its approach to art, paying homage to the building's past, while being firmly rooted in the present.

The sprawling and vast building is now a blank canvas of polished herringbone flooring and bright white walls adorned with rotating exhibitions. It's the brainchild of Irish gallerist Lorcan O'Neill, whose curatorial eye has brought internationally renowned artists to Italy, as well as given a platform to promising young artists and local talent. When Galleria Lorcan O'Neill opened in 2003, it was the beginning of a new generation of contemporary art spaces in Rome. It was a place that brought big names (you'll probably recognise the likes of Tracey Emin and Martin Creed) and up-and-comers together for the first time.

Every time you visit, expect something different and varied. Recent exhibitions include *Fragmented Bodies*, a group show with British painter Celia Hempton, American visual artist Wardell Milan, and American photographer Paul Mpagi Sepuya. Then there was Tracey Emin's *You Should Have Saved Me*, a collection of 15 artworks of acrylic on canvas, completed after she was given the all-clear from cancer. On another visit you may have seen Sam Taylor-Johnson's *Wired*, a series of large self-portrait photographs showing the artist dangling above the Californian desert by trapeze wires.

It was English artist Rachel Whiteread's show *New Works* that graced the pristine white walls of Galleria Lorcan O'Neill when we visited. The first woman to win the highly regarded Turner Prize in 1993, Whiteread is one of Britain's leading contemporary artists. She's famous for casting everyday objects like doors, beds and tables, in materials such as plaster, metal, resin, rubber and concrete. In *New Works*, it was

Whiteread's latest pieces in papier-mâché and resin sculptures that took centre stage.

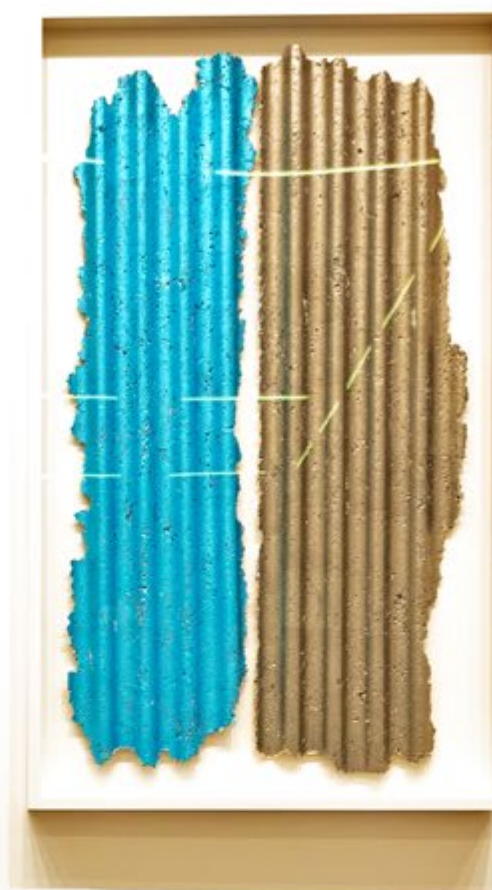
There are also regular pieces by Pietro Ruffo, the native Roman artist with a theatrical style and common themes of philosophy, history and contemporary social issues that run through his works; a recent exhibition of his at the gallery was *The Planetary Garden*, which explores the impact humans have made on the climate. His art has drawn the eyes of major fashion houses Dior and Valentino, and us at art'otel Rome Piazza Sallustio. We're very excited to have him as our Signature Artist.

Galleria Lorcan O'Neill may not be huge. It may not be the most famous of Rome's galleries. But it's where you'll find one of the most captivating mixes of contemporary art in the city, beautifully curated exhibitions, and artists that you won't see anywhere else in Italy's capital.

You'll find Galleria Lorcan O'Neill at Vicolo Dei Catinari 3. It's open Tuesday to Saturday, 11am - 7pm.



**> Discover
Galleria Lorcan
O'Neill**



The sprawling and vast
building is now a blank canvas
of polished herringbone
flooring and bright white walls



"It's here that you'll find the best names in modern and contemporary art—both Italian and international—in the city."



National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art

You'll want to carve out a few more hours for this one. The Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (you might see it being referred to simply as la Galleria Nazionale or GNAM) is a huge gallery full of iconic works by the likes of Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Joan Mirò and Vanessa Beecroft. It's on the edge of Villa Borghese, which just so happens to make the perfect spot for a passeggiata through the tree-lined park after all the art. It's far enough away from the loud streets that surround Rome's busiest landmarks, but not so far that you can't reach it by foot from most parts of centro storico.

Buy a ticket in advance online or get them at the entrance. If you're there in low season, you shouldn't need to queue for too long. Despite the vast number of world-famous artworks here, it's rare that la Galleria Nazionale gets super busy, especially by Rome's standards.

Truthfully, this building—a neoclassical palace that cuts a striking figure—is so beautiful that you could be forgiven for going for the intricate architecture and thoughtful interior design alone. The floors are smooth, polished herringbone. The ceilings are crane-your-neck high. The rooms are large and airy; the walls clean, fresh and white. The windows, tall and arched, flood the space with light, as do the skylights that cover a huge proportion of the ceilings. The French doors leading out to the small internal leafy courtyard are inviting. As are Marcel Breuer's Wassily chairs dotted around corridors, where you can stop and sit for a while, or the corridors framed by archways and lit up by elegant pendant lighting.

After you've taken all the snaps that will make up your future Pinterest boards, it's time to focus on what makes this one of the best galleries in the city: the art. There are almost 20,000 works by international and Italian artists spanning



“The building is a neoclassical palace that cuts a striking figure”

the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries; the largest collection of modern art in Italy that has been growing since the gallery was founded in 1883.

How la Galleria Nazionale differs from other large galleries around the world, is that the diverse collection is exhibited not with a chronological layout, but a thematic one. It's a fresh approach to exhibiting art, devised by former director Cristiana Collu, and one that brings a new perspective to all of its pieces. Each work of art is given space to breathe, allowing

you to fully take it all in. But take a step back, look at the wider picture and you'll notice how each piece works with and complements each other—even if it is a 19th-century sculpture alongside a photograph from the 21st.

There are 55 rooms so you'll probably want to plan your must-sees in advance. Impressionism, Surrealism and Symbolism are all covered. You'll find Claude Monet's *Water Lilies*, Giacomo Balla's *Dynamic Expansion + Speed*, and Méret Oppenheim's *Südlicher garten*. You'll get up close to Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, Mario Ceroli's wood-carved *L'ultima cena*, Man Ray's *Nudes* and Vincent Van Gogh's *The Gardener*.

If you want to make sure you tick off some iconic pieces, we recommend Gustav Klimt's *The Three Ages of a Woman* (1905), which has been part of the gallery's collection since 1912. This masterpiece represents the passage of time and the three stages of a woman's life; childhood, motherhood, and old age. Antonio Canova's large marble sculpture *Hercules and Lichas* (1795-1815) is another must-see, dominating one of the main rooms on the ground floor. It depicts the image of Hercules poised to throw his servant into the sea and took 20 years to complete.

Number 8, 1949 by Jackson Pollock, one of the most famous artists of the 20th century, is a good one to add to the list too. Like his other paintings, it was made by dripping colour from above and is an excellent example of abstract expressionism. For more Italian art, make sure

to check out Amedeo Modigliani's *Portrait of Hanka Zborowska* (1917), showcasing the artist's expressive style.

There's a lot to see. Wear your most comfortable shoes and make sure to take advantage of the (very stylish) on-site restaurant *Caffè delle Arti*, open for coffee, lunch, aperitivo and dinner, for an attention span reset. Here, the food is almost as creative as the art on the walls, there's a good mix of natural wines on the wine list, and you can take your pick between a table in the indoor plant-filled space, or under a canopy of trees outside.

The National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art is open every day except Monday, 9am - 7pm. You'll find it at Viale delle Belle Arti, 131. You can't miss it.

If all that contemporary art has left you wanting more, don't forget to stop by *art'otel Rome Piazza Sallustio*. Our favourite time to visit is just before dinner, when you can do as the Romans do and sit down to *Aperitivo Hour* at our bar to ruminate on the artwork—or simply enjoy a Spritz.

> Look at the wider picture at GNAM



A promotional image for The Brush Grand Café. The image shows a close-up of a burger with melted cheese, lettuce, and onion on a bun, held together by a wooden skewer. Next to it is a black metal cup filled with golden french fries. In the background, a flatbread pizza topped with cheese, tomatoes, and herbs sits on a wooden board. A glass of white wine is partially visible on the right. The text 'THE BRUSH' is overlaid in large white letters, with 'GRAND CAFÉ' in smaller letters below it. At the bottom, contact information and opening hours are provided.

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48 HOURS IN ZAGREB

**For the first timer, curious
collector and nature lover**

Words by Daniel Fowler

If there were ever a city in Europe for Goldilocks, it would be Zagreb. Not too big, not too small — just right. Often overlooked as simply a stopover on the way to Croatia's coast, there's more to this complex capital than meets the eye. Its laid-back rhythm, rich culture and toytown magic apparent for anyone who wanders its winding alleyways and leafy hideouts for longer than a few hours.

But as one of Europe's best and brightest under-the-radar gems, how do you tap into its heart and soul? How do you pick and choose its

must-see spots as a wide-eyed first-timer? Which of its niche museums will feed your insatiable appetite for all-things quirky? Where do you go if you want to escape from it all, trade concrete for greenery and be at one with nature?

From its daily time-honoured traditions to museums that challenge convention, you can experience Zagreb's happy-go-lucky energy in just 48 hours. All you need to do is plan ahead. Whatever brings you to the city; whatever your passions and reasons for travel in the first place, here's how to feel the buzz of Croatia's capital in just one weekend.

FOR THE FIRST TIMER

Day one: Lenuci's Horseshoe, Upper Town and Strossmayer Promenade

Every journey begins with a simple step (or in this case, about 75 steps). From art'otel Zagreb, start by walking towards Zrinjevac and to the top end of the Lenuci Horseshoe — a curvy collection of parks and promenades flanked by neoclassical blocks that date back to the 1800s. If you're still feeling a little weary from the plane, make a beeline for the always-excellent Botanical Gardens in the lower left corner to discover one of Europe's quaintest hideaways. Otherwise, take your time ambling about each of the seven parks and absorbing some of the city's mellow energy.

Having rounded off Lenuci's Horseshoe, head north along Gundulićeva street towards Lotrščak Tower to, quite literally, end your morning with a bang. Peeking out the fourth floor you'll see the Grič Cannon, a local icon that's fired once a day,



"Layered with Gothic and mediaeval charm, Zagreb's Upper Town is a must for newcomers".

every day, to signal midday. Around five times louder than Big Ben and one of Europe's oldest daily traditions, it's well worth timing your visit to witness this explosive piece of living history.

Spend the rest of the day exploring the pastel-coloured townhouses and enchanting cobbled streets of Zagreb's Upper Town. Tkalciceva Street, crammed with traditional restaurants, seasonal markets and café terraces, is a must for anyone looking for a taste of local life, while Strossmayer Promenade is the best place for panoramic views and postcard-perfect selfies.

Day two: Ban Jelačić Square, Dolac Market and St Mark's Church

First stop, Ban Jelačić Square — the time-tested heart of Zagreb. A 300-metre walk from our front door, this huge, paved piazza is anchored with monuments from centuries past, most notably the Manduševac Fountain, after which (as legend would have it) the city was named.

Brief crash course of Croatian history complete, you'll want to hit the markets afterwards — Dolac Market specifically. Under the cherry red umbrellas, expect to find everything from cured meats and olive oil to

regional delicacies like štrukli and poppy seed cake at the city's daily market. Smoked cheese is the best buy here — a hefty chunk only costs a couple of euros and tastes absolutely divine with fresh bread. Take your time to see, smell and taste Zagreb's finest flavours, and maybe pick up a souvenir to take back with you too.

Once you're done, swing by Zagreb Cathedral in the east and St Mark's Church to the northwest: both almost-impossible-to-miss landmarks with oodles of gothic and medieval charm respectively.

Local markets indulged, city icons snapped, centuries of history walked, it's time to wind down for the day. Head on up to the rooftop bar at art'otel Zagreb, treat yourself to a glass of Adriatic wine, and see out your final few hours amongst a sea of red-tiled roofs and gas lamp-lit streets.

Reminisce at
the Museum
of Broken
Relationships



FOR THE CURIOUS COLLECTOR

Day One: Heartbreak, illusions and the 80s

If there's one thing Zagreb isn't short of, it's museums that change things up. Case in point (and your first port of call), the Museum of Broken Relationships. Always heartfelt, sometimes humorous and often moving, Croatia's shrine to all-things loved and lost houses otherwise ordinary objects with huge sentimental value. Discover the stories behind everything from postcards and plushies to dog toys and scab wounds.

Heartbreak over, you've two choices for your next venue: the Museum of Naïve Art that's found next door, or Zagreb 80s Museum just up the road. The former, an ode to Croatia's self-taught painters, is a fantastically bizarre and, at times, psychedelic trip through the world of outsider art; the latter a nostalgic homage to a world of big hair, bigger shoulder pads and 8-bit era gaming. We'd highly recommend both, but if

you're short on time, pick the one that feels more your vibe.

Round off day one by walking down Ilica Street towards the Museum of Illusions. In rooms that seem to defy gravity and installations that'll make you think you've been hitting the rakija too hard, it's the perfect place to question everything you thought you knew about your senses.

Day Two: Hangovers, chocolate and all things electric

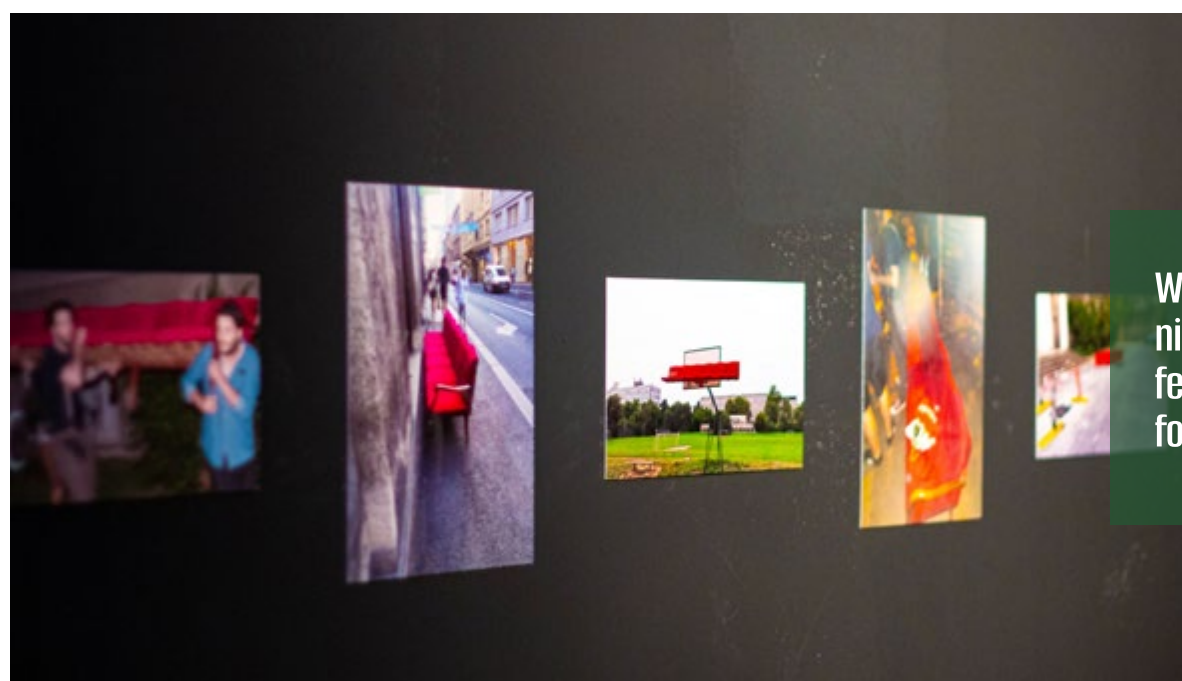
Feeling fresh? The Museum of Hangovers should be able to help if you're not quite there yet. Equal parts informative and hilarious, this offbeat gem showcases the aftermath of nights best forgotten (or remembered, depending on your perspective).

For your next stop, take a quick stroll via Ban Jelačić Square and indulge your sweet tooth at Chocolate Museum Zagreb. A cocoa-lover's paradise, it's a delicious journey through

the history and art of chocolate-making, from ancient Mayan rituals to modern confectionery techniques. There are of course plenty of samples to devour along the way too.

Hangover cured and chocolate devoured, your final museum celebrates Croatia's best and brightest. Nikola Tesla Technical Museum, a 20-minute walk south along Savska Cesta and Franklina Roosevelta Street, is a hands-on tribute to all things electric and eccentric. Filling out a huge hall with every form of vintage transport imaginable, including turn-of-the-century trams and soviet-era lunar rovers, spend the rest of the day getting to know the country's most influential citizen.

> **Sleep pretty in art'otel Zagreb**



Which of Zagreb's
niche museums will
feed your appetite
for all-things quirky?





FOR THE NATURE LOVERS

Day One: Maksimir Park, Peto Jezero and Jarun Lake

Zagreb's best asset might just be that it's one of Europe's leafiest capitals, making it the perfect place to embrace a little urban zen. Rise with the sun and take a 15-minute tram ride from Draškovićeva to Maksimir Park — the city's oldest and grandest green space. Peppered with rolling hills, winding footpaths and cute cafés that date back all the way to 1794, the English-inspired woodlands delight no matter what season you're visiting. Do as the Croats do and stop by the scenic Vidikovac Café before you head to the upper right corner to find its most tranquil spot: 'Peto Jezero', or the Fifth Lake.

Maksimir Park meandered, hop on the number 5 tram to Jarun Lake next. Affectionately known as 'Zagreb's Sea', this man-made lake is best known for its chain of verdant islands and June's INmusic festival (headlined most recently by The National and Hozier). Rent a bike and cycle around the lake's perimeter, try your hand at kayaking or stand-up paddle boarding on the calm waters.

As the day winds down, find a cosy spot on one of the lake's beaches or bars to watch the sunset paint the sky in hues of orange and pink. Grab the number 17 tram from Vrbani back to art'otel when you're ready to turn in for the night.

Day Two: Medvednica Nature Park, the Leustek trail and Sljeme

Start by taking tram 14 to Mihaljevac, then change to tram 15 up to Gračani — your gateway to Medvednica Nature Park and the rolling hills that look over the city. Dotted with cosy mountain lodges and huge yew trees, it's home to ski slopes, prehistoric caves, and over 42km of hiking trails.

Today you'll be picking up the Leustek trail: a popular 6km, two-and-a-half-hour trek that's about as scenic as they come. Head through Sljeme Tunnel, then follow the red and white signs on the other end to begin the hike. Take a quick breather halfway up at Adolfovac and keep climbing until you hit Grofica: Zagreb's cosiest wood-fired cabin-come-restaurant, and the de facto end of the ascent.

Trail conquered, it's time to embrace Sljeme, Medvednica Nature Park's highest peak, in all its glory. Head straight to the open-air terrace atop the unmissable TV Tower for panoramic views and the occasional falconry display; otherwise, take in Zagreb's best 1033m above sea from any of Sljeme's lush meadows. Descend via Cable Car when ready, and head back to art'otel Zagreb on the 617 bus for a well-deserved soak in the bath and pampering courtesy of KEVIN.MURPHY.

**Maksimir Park —
Zagreb's oldest and
grandest green space**



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A close-up portrait of a man with a beard and blue eyes, wearing a white shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His right hand is resting on his neck, and he is wearing a thin gold chain bracelet.

In conversation with
**PETAR
TRBOVIĆ**

From a small mountain village in Croatia
to Fashion Director at Vogue Adria

Image by
925STUDIO

There's a deep admiration for fashion and this region that runs through Petar's veins.

Words by Angharad Jones

In March 2024, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro got their own edition of Vogue. The iconic magazine arrived on the Adriatic shores for the very first time, highlighting fashion, culture, art and craftsmanship in the region. The position of Fashion Director could only go to one man: Petar Trbović.

Petar exploded onto the scene at 18 with an editorial published in ELLE magazine and has since become the only Croatia-based stylist to be published in GQ, V magazine, Numéro, L'Officiel, Harper's Bazaar and many others around the world. He's been Fashion Director at ELLE and Grazia Croatia, and he's given his creative prowess to many other projects—including a recent shoot for our very own art'otel Zagreb.

There's a deep admiration for fashion and this region that runs through Petar's veins. No more was this evident than in the first issue of Vogue Adria and his love letter to his homeland. The pages of the magazine were graced with shoots that highlighted traditional Croatian folk dancers amongst high fashion, models in luxury labels perched atop the historic walls of Dubrovnik, and elegant designs from Bosnia and Herzegovina

gliding through Sarajevo's old town bazaar.

We caught Petar just after Paris Fashion Week to find out more about his approach to styling, his favourite places to check out in Zagreb, and just how a kid from the Croatian countryside landed one of the top jobs in fashion.

You've had an impressive career, starting out as a stylist and now as Fashion Director at Vogue Adria. Can you tell us how you worked your way up in the fashion industry to get to where you are today?

It's one of those old-fashioned romantic stories when things happen in a way you know was meant to be. I was born and raised in a small mountain village in the Croatian countryside far from fashion capitals and all that buzz. I was that curious kid passionate about many different things, especially art. I discovered fashion through FashionTV and my ever-favourite CNN's "Style" by the unforgettable Elsa Klensch, and instead of Art Academy, I went to study fashion design.

Somehow, I deeply believe things were meant to find us at certain points in life, and we just need to be open to recognise the moment when it happens. At only 18 my first fashion editorial was

Image right
and below: by
Filip Koludrovic
Cover by
925STUDIO



published in ELLE, making me the youngest stylist at the time ever published in ELLE magazines worldwide. Years of hard work and dedication later led me to where I am today.

What do you love about working in fashion?

Fashion has always been an inspiring playground to express myself. Getting dressed is an act of our need to cover up and protect our bodies but, for many, it elevates to the extent that it becomes an incredibly powerful tool for non-verbal communication and that's my love spot

with fashion where it becomes exciting to me. I never aimed to put beautiful clothes on beautiful models and that's it, that's worthless. The power of the message we're able to send is what I find striking about fashion. Throughout its history, fashion has always been the reflection of the time. In its layers, one can read the dreams, thoughts, values, passions, progress, fears, humiliations, inspirations, cravings, and fantasies of humanity at any time.

What have been your career highlights so far?

I'd say the highlight is the fact that so far, I have always lived that highlight, meaning the moment I live in is always better than the one before. I'm happy and grateful for a chance to constantly grow and, hopefully, offer more to the people my work once touched. And yeah, freedom! That's my career highlight then, now, and forever. Being part of so many beautiful projects but always independent and on your own is something I'd never trade for anything in this world.

Are there any fashion shoots or other styling jobs that stick in your mind as favourites?

Not really. I have done numerous inspiring fashion shoots, the same as commercial and not-so-flashy ones, and I always try to give my best the same way. Some random people used to thrill me immensely as some of the big celebrities used to leave me flat. There are no rules. My favourite ones are all when I see each member of the team giving 100 percent.

What's your time been like at Vogue Adria?

It feels good to be a part of the Vogue platform with its big influence and impact, and such a powerful global voice. I hope my Vogue Adria team and I will be smart enough to use all our knowledge and creativity and this given



VOGUE

ADRIA

SEPTEMBER
2024

N° 006

MATTER OF TIME

IN CONVERSATION:

Nora Turato, Katalin Ladik, Tamara Kalinić, The Gstaad Guy,
Jelena Djokovic, Gordon Neufeld, Carine Roitfeld



"Fashion has always
been an inspiring
playground to
express myself"

Image by Filip
Koludrovic

opportunity for the better of our whole region—our fashion and designers, but also our artists and culture, craftsmanship, sport, science, and everything we could support to spread their voices far and further.

How is Vogue Adria different from all the other Vogues around the world?

This project is unique as we're covering not one but five countries of the whole Adria region: Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. It's all about the people, I always say. That's why our Vogue Adria is meant to be the reflection of all of us here while blending global voices with everything unique we have to offer to the world.

Our region is so diverse and special in all different ways. It was a crossroad throughout history for both memorable moments as well as tragedies, and all that is written in its DNA. We're passionate and in love with living, sometimes savage but always emotional. It's how we do things here. In terms of Vogue as a global platform, we're small but what I just described is exactly what I see as the key to how we can contribute by giving a new perspective on things, new energy, and sort of magic to become relevant and noticed.

How would you describe the fashion scene in Croatia?

The fashion scene in Croatia is in constant struggle. There are so many creatives around, but the fashion system is non-existent. It's based on the initiatives of individuals and their struggles without any textile industry behind to support and bring things to the next level. Still, in small ateliers fashion magic is happening and I'm about to use my position to help them the best way I can so the fashion world finds out about them.

You recently styled a shoot for art'otel Zagreb, which we all love. Can you tell us a bit about your process when it comes to styling?

It was a very nice shoot with an international team from all around Europe which is always cool, and the creative energy was on a high level. I hope our intention in making strong visuals that reflect the idea of art'otel succeeds. I'm happy Zagreb got its art'otel in the heart of the city where the vibrant energy of the main square meets this beautiful hotel atmosphere, chilled and cool, filled with art, and often stylish and fashionable, I must say.



Have you got any more exciting projects coming up?

I'm having this conversation with you after just getting back from Paris Fashion Week and already packing to leave Croatia again for our next Vogue Adria issue cover shoot. At the same time I'm trying to keep up with all the other productions we're doing all around the region, or in Paris, Milan, London, and New York... Searching for the best fashion from the collections, talking to dozens of showrooms and brands, interviewing new assistants who could hopefully help me a bit to handle all the mentioned above. So, yeah, there's quite a lot of projects around all the time. Also, it's about time to give a piece of my knowledge and over two decades of experience in fashion to the young generations so there's something wonderful coming up on that matter you'll find out about very soon.

What are your favourite things to do in Zagreb?

To be honest with you, I find myself way much more boring than other people see me, ha. The fashion world can be pretty intense and so in private I keep myself out of the crowd. It would be a lie to say I have no time for myself at all, I can't understand people saying that ever. My partner, parents, nephews, and a small group of chosen friends are the centre of my world, and I cherish my time with them more than anything. I prefer quiet dinners over nights out, books over TV, and nature over messy streets. Or at least beautiful parks around Zagreb. You know, Zagreb is also quiet in general, I think that's the reason it feels like the perfect home for me. The only thing I'm missing is the Adriatic Sea which is the cure for

my soul. Luckily the coast is a two-hour drive from here. Travels are my biggest passion; if my bank account was running dry, the last of what I had would be spent on a ticket somewhere.

Are there any other creative people we should check out in Croatia?

There are so many around! Look at the walls of art'otel here in Zagreb and all those local artists. Step out of the hotel into the surrounding area—the small streets around the main square—and you'll find small designer ateliers and century-old crafts from milliners to tie-makers (the tie comes from Croatians and is our national symbol we are so proud of). And one more thing: while walking around, please don't forget the street artist! Stop for a minute, leave a euro or two. Everybody knows how much I love them. They are the soul of our cities, they bring joy and always make my day, and they make this world a better place.

(K)NOCKING ON THE ART INDUSTRY'S DOORS

We meet the Amsterdam-based duo making art a lot more accessible

By Angharad Jones

Let's face it. Unless you're fully immersed in it or you're given a helping hand, the art world can be an enigma to most. Up-and-coming artists can struggle to get their foot in the door and make a living from their craft, while those interested in building an art collection often don't know where to start—let alone have the kind of disposable income that these purchases often require.

There's a duo that spotted this and decided to shake things up—and shake things up they are. Anne Rose Cornelisse and Ciel ter Velde, the co-founders of Amsterdam-based NOCKNOCK, have created a new approach to discovering, buying and selling art that's making it a lot more accessible and dare we say it, more modern and more fun.

NOCKNOCK is a platform that showcases artists and allows them to represent themselves and their work (after all, they're the ones who know it best). Both emerging and established artists feature on the platform, covering all disciplines ranging from glass and ceramics to painting and photography.

The idea started, like so many genuinely disruptive brands and businesses, during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. An artist

friend of theirs was asked to present herself and her art to a gallery outside of the Netherlands but with no international travel on the cards, that presentation had to take place on Zoom. Suddenly, the curtain into reality was lifted and that artist was presenting her work in her own environment. It gave the gallery a deeper insight into who she was and how she worked, building a more personal - and human - connection.

This sparked an idea for Anne Rose and Ciel. They would create a platform for artists, but they would do it in a different way than you would typically find at a gallery. They would personally work closely with each artist and film a short interview series to shine a light on the person behind the art. They would create opportunities for artists to come together, network and support one another. They would let the artist show their work in the way they

envisioned it, and they would bring the audience along for the journey. In short, they would create an environment that's inclusive, welcoming—and exciting.



ARTEFAIR
NOCKNOCK



“NOCKNOCK is about making art approachable and fostering a supportive community”

The Artists

Artists on the NOCKNOCK platform include the photographer Milette Raats, whose travel-inspired photography has been exhibited everywhere from the Netherlands to New York, Sydney and Tokyo, as well as in the permanent collection of the Amsterdam Museum.

There's Jesse Fischer, whose colourful paintings playfully depict the individual pursuit of pleasure in, as he describes it, “intuitive narrative painting.” There are ceramicists Mickey Philips and Janice Jill. The former uses clay to create everyday objects—like bug-shaped table lights or a fruit bowl with a clay pear inside, because nothing's sadder than an empty fruit bowl or a lonely piece of fruit. The latter, whose time spent in New Delhi, has shaped her colourful, unserious approach to sculptures and objects such as large candlesticks and organically shaped bowls.

Then there's Arnout Visser, who works with glass, and considers glass-blowing to be the ultimate craft. He was instrumental in the success of Droog Design in the 1990s, Amsterdam's famous conceptual design platform, for which he created the iconic Optic Glasses that have influenced so many vessels that have come since.

The Art Fair

As well as offering a platform for artists, there's a NOCKNOCK Art Fair every year in Amsterdam that is quickly becoming one of the hottest dates on the art calendar. At the 2024 art fair in the Gashouder in Amsterdam - a huge building that makes up Westergas, the former gasworks that's been turned into a lively cultural hub - more than 100 artists from around the world descended on the city, showcasing a diverse range of art forms under one roof. Visitors were invited to immerse themselves in the world of art, listen to talks from panels of experts, take part in interactive activities, and watch fashion shows featuring the latest



collections from local designers. The atmosphere is one of celebration, creativity, building on old friendships and creating new ones.

True to NOCKNOCK form, accessibility is a key element at the annual art fair. Instead of working with galleries, which is typical of art fairs, NOCKNOCK's artists present their own work at the fair and engage directly with the public. The Find Your Fit service gives fair goers the chance to work one-on-one with an interior designer free of charge, who can help them find the right art for their space. At the fair, attendees can speak directly to the artists, understand their vision and their process, and create a deeper connection to the piece they may eventually buy. Children are welcome and encouraged to get involved too, while a kids' corner allows them to get creative with paint and toys when the parents want some uninterrupted time to look at the good stuff.

The Founders

We caught up with Anne Rose and Ciel after the 2024 Art Fair (their busiest yet) to find out more about NOCKNOCK, their thoughts on the art world, and what we can expect to see from them next (hint: there's a very exciting collaboration between them and art'otel Amsterdam in the works...).

What is NOCKNOCK, in your own words?

NOCKNOCK is an online and offline platform that bridges the gap between emerging artists and art enthusiasts. NOCKNOCK is about making art approachable and fostering a supportive community for creators and collectors alike. At the annual art fair, we offer over 120 artists the chance to showcase their work. Instead of working with galleries like other art fairs worldwide, we decided to work directly with the artists themselves. This is to create an extra dimension within the artwork because the story behind the art comes from the artist and this is something he/she can present best because they know it best.

How and why did NOCKNOCK begin?

NOCKNOCK was born from a shared passion for art and a drive to support artists. We noticed how challenging it was for emerging artists to gain visibility, especially during the pandemic. We decided to create short introductory videos that showed the artists working in their studios and answering questions in a one-minute video. We “(k)nock (k)nocked” on their doors. After doing this for a year, we decided it was time to take the next step and host our first art fair. Now, four years later, we are one of the biggest in the Netherlands.





What were you both doing before you started NOCKNOCK?

Before launching NOCKNOCK, we both studied at Hotelschool The Hague in Amsterdam, where we gained a strong foundation in hospitality and management. After graduating, Ciel spent a year studying at the Amsterdam Filmschool. After these studies we both did part-time jobs which gave us the opportunity to start working on NOCKNOCK ART.

The art world can be difficult to crack. What do you think are the greatest challenges that artists face?

The biggest challenges for artists are visibility and support. Many artists struggle to gain exposure, especially if they aren't represented by a gallery or are working outside traditional circles. Financial stability can also be tough, as emerging artists often don't have consistent income streams from their art.

How do you work with artists?

In the beginning we personally visited every artist we collaborated with. Now, with over 200 artists, we primarily connect through phone meetings. We're committed to working closely with each artist, and three to four times a year, we bring all the artists together for network events. These gatherings feature engaging talks on the latest trends in the art industry, offering valuable insights and fostering community among our artists.

How do you choose which artists to platform?

We choose artists who are passionate about their craft and who align with our mission to make art accessible and inclusive. It is a long and difficult process in which we look at education, experience, craftsmanship and much more. We have an advisory board who have already been within the art world for a long time, to help us with the selection procedure.

Are there any success stories you can share about artists you've worked with?

Absolutely! One of our artists, who had never exhibited in a major art space before, was featured in our 2022 NOCKNOCK Art Fair. She ended up at a gallery and travels the world to sell and create her art, at an age of 30 years. She is currently in a residency in New York!

You've just held the 2024 NOCKNOCK Art Fair in Amsterdam. How does your art fair differ from others?

Our art fair differs from other art fairs since we work with artists instead of galleries. At our fairs the artists present themselves to present and tell everything about their work. In addition, we ask all artists to bring one affordable piece which we present in our fashion art shows. We want to create a real art experience for every visitor to make the art accessible.

What were your highlights from this year's NOCKNOCK Art Fair?

The art fair itself was our highlight as we did not expect 10,000+ visitors. It was our dream that it would be a great success, but the whole experience exceeded all our dreams and wishes of this year.

What advice would you give to artists who are just starting out in their careers?

Just do it and go for it!

And what advice would you give to people who are interested in building an art collection, but don't know where to start?

Visit the NOCKNOCK Art Fair 2025. We offer a special format, called "Find Your Fit" in which interior designers help you to find a piece of art that matches your wishes. You can bring a picture of your house/room, tell them what you'd like and they will help you buy your first art piece.

What have you got planned for the future of NOCKNOCK?

We are growing enormously and we are planning to grow further. We are taking over the gallery in art'otel Amsterdam, planning an even better and greater art fair in Amsterdam in 2025 and hoping to surprise every visitor by our great collection and atmosphere at the fair. The yearly art fair in Amsterdam will remain and hopefully we will expand to other cities in the future as well.



Visit nocknockart.com to find out more, and to grab your tickets for NOCKNOCK Art Fair 2025.

> Stay & create in Amsterdam



its own sake," remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of the Daily Telegraph, "the keenest pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to have so far grasped this truth. The records of our cases which you have been good enough to send me, occasionally to emphasize my eminence not so much to the many causes celebres and which have been trivial in themselves, but which have given me a special province." "And yet," said I, smiling, "I have been urged against my records." "You have erred, with it the long cherry-wood pipe which was wont to be in your hand, you have erred perhaps in attempting to put color and life into my record that severe reasoning from cause to effect. I have done you full justice in the matter," I said, "once observed to be a strong factor in my friend's case." "I was repelled," said he, answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words. "If I am selfishness or egotism, it is because it is an impersonal thing--a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore

course of lectures into fire in the old room at 71 like a useless metal, I had no use of a pipe, and my pipe was so kind as to interest me to hear the King of the lip, and I have of interest, law, composition, left me after across the anxious to pass the time."

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For the city shopper

If shopping is your thing, Chiltern Street is the place. Lined with independent boutiques, cosy cafés, and specialty stores.

A short stroll away is Marylebone High Street, where you'll find a flurry of your favourite luxury, high-end brands, including Sézane, Weekend by Max Mara, Aesop and more. Book lovers will also appreciate Daunt Books, holding onto its reputation as London's most beautiful bookstore.

For more shopping options, you can take a brief 15-minute walk from Holmes, and you'll find yourself at Selfridges - one of London's most iconic department stores - located on Oxford Street, with a building designed so elegantly you won't miss it!

For food lovers

Foodies will find plenty to love at Holmes Hotel. Kitchen at Holmes offers a seasonal menu full of Mediterranean influences, featuring dishes like ricotta ravioli with butter and black truffle is a must-try, as well as the cuttlefish croquettes and zucchini fritti - menu staples!

Fancy something else? Marylebone is host to some of the best restaurants in London. You can ask the knowledgeable front office team for their top recommendations!

For the dog lover

The Marylebone area is perfect for dog owners, and Holmes is proud to welcome your furry companions, providing a variety of pet-friendly amenities, including cosy dog beds, bowls and delicious treats to keep your pups comfortable.

The nearby Regent's Park offers beautiful open spaces for leisurely walks and playtime. Marylebone's charming streets also feature pet-friendly cafés and shops, making it an ideal destination for a memorable getaway with your dog.

For the families

Holmes Hotel is perfect for families, with plenty to see and do nearby. The hotel is within walking distance of top attractions like Madame Tussauds, The Sherlock Holmes Museum, ZSL London Zoo. For a fun-filled day, the London Eye, SEA LIFE Aquarium are just a short trip by tube via the nearby Baker Street station.

At Holmes, you can find a selection of family-friendly rooms, with special family packages available that come with a variety of extra amenities to keep the little ones entertained, including teepee tents, teddy bears and Sherlock Holmes books.



For sporty people

For those in town for a sporting event, Holmes Hotel is ideally located. Whether you're attending a cricket match at Lord's Cricket Ground or a football game at Wembley Stadium, both venues are just a short distance away. Regent's Park offers tennis courts, open spaces for running, and the hotel's Piggy Doyle's Gym, is equipped with stylish NOHrD equipment, perfect for a post-sightseeing workout.

Took book your stay at Holmes Hotel London, and explore all that Marylebone has to offer, visit holmeshotel.com.



Discover a seasonal menu, full of Mediterranean influences, at Kitchen at Holmes



DESIGN DICHOTOMIES

with Hayon Studio

Reflections on a quarter century's body of work from artist Jaime Hayon

Words by Haley Durkee

In the 25 years since founding his namesake studio, few figures in contemporary art and design have inspired as much fervent enthusiasm and unwavering respect as Jaime Hayon.

Visit any proprietor of design-led wares (think: Cassina, Fritz Hansen, &Tradition, Aram et al), and you'll find something with his name on it, from furniture to decorative objects and fine art prints. It's a name that immediately evokes visions of surprising combinations—sophisticated and playful, hard and soft—punctuated by a cast of recurring characters and signature motifs only Hayon could dream up.

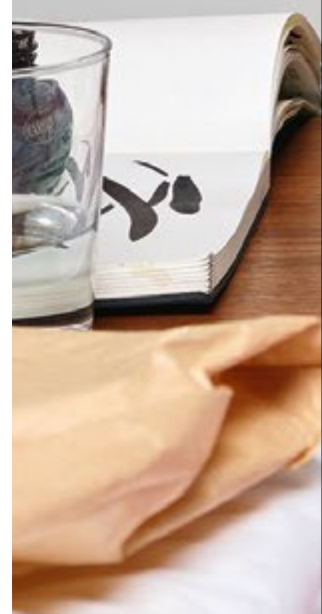
In short: brands, galleries and collectors turn to him when they're ready to start colouring outside the lines.

Perhaps the most significant marker of a Jaime Hayon work is its personality, meticulously realised through both physical and visual elements (from materiality to proportion to palette). These objects feel alive, engaging us in a way that is almost anthropomorphic. You're not simply sitting on a chair—you're being caught by the figure of a man with outstretched arms. A vase isn't simply a vase, but a piece of stationary theatre inviting you to experience it. This work is not just something to admire, but something to live with.

And there's much to be said for the expert craftsmanship, too. Especially at a time of voracious consumerism, where an average product's life cycle starts and ends in a flash, there's something that feels fresh and exciting about investing in a genuinely timeless heirloom. Feeling, or the ability to instil feeling out of a viewer, is fundamental to his ethos and what differentiates the Hayon Studio output from anyone else.

By transcending the traditional boundaries between functional and aesthetic values, his pieces communicate with their own distinct language — one that speaks not only to the eye, but also to the heart. It's within this liminal space where he's able to forge deeper connections between objects, environments, and the people who inhabit them. Connections that keep his creations culturally resonant a quarter century later.

With a body of work as prolific as Hayon's, it's no easy task to highlight only a few projects, as each work is a testament to his vision and influence on contemporary aesthetics. Of his standout projects, each uniquely engaging the viewer in a dialogue that invites us to not only observe but to become participants in their story.





Mediterranean Digital Baroque (2003)

The first exhibit to fully expose Hayon's artistic vision to the world. A visually striking, otherworldly mise-en-scène, the collection manifests everything the new-age renaissance man has come to represent. Surreal ceramics in the form of curvy cacti and supersonic pigs contrast the distinctive street-art adorning the walls, crafting a dreamlike theatrical space that defies conventional design. An ode to the skateboarding milieu, Francophone heritage and iconography of vintage Japanese toys that influence Hayon's creations so much.

Opened at London's David Gill Gallery in October 2003, the exhibition ran for three months, drawing visitors from around the world who were eager to experience Hayon's unique vision. The collection's playful elements — namely the marriage of familiar Mediterranean shapes with Asian digital culture — blur the lines between art, decoration and design and invite viewers to engage with the objects on a deeper level. This dynamic interplay between the serious and ironic, along with mixed cultural elements, are all hallmarks of Hayon's work, reflecting his belief that design should be both playful yet meaningful.



Ro Chair (2013)

The Ro chair, meaning “tranquillity” in Danish, is a cocoon of calm amidst life's chaos. Created in collaboration with Fritz Hansen, the renowned Danish furniture manufacturer (noting Arne Jacobsen's iconic Egg and Swan chairs among its legacy) the piece is among the brand's most notable contemporary collaborations, highlighting its tradition of pioneering design excellence.

The chair is upholstered in soothing tones like dusty rose and light blue, inviting moments of reflection, while its legs in oak or walnut ground the design in natural elegance. This sculptural seat features moulded foam forms that cradle the body in ergonomic comfort. The chair is more than furniture—it's an invitation to pause, unwind, and reconnect with the self in an increasingly frenetic world.

The union of Hayon's contemporary vision and Fritz Hansen's historical significance represents a fusion of past and present, tradition and innovation. This partnership underscores the importance of maintaining timeless design principles while embracing modern aesthetics, resulting in a piece that is both a statement of luxury and a functional work of art.

Fantasy Collection (2014)

With Fantasy for Lladró, Hayon breathed personality into porcelain. The renowned Spanish brand, founded in 1953 by the Lladró brothers, is a distinguished name in porcelain, known for their delicate detailing and lifelike expressions amongst its figurines and sculptures. Lladró pieces have become synonymous with luxury and fine craftsmanship.

The Fantasy series includes vases and figurines in bold reds, blues, and yellows, offset by metallic accents. The stand out “The Guest” figurine offers a narrative-rich design, blending colourful patterns and surreal character forms. Inspired by the imaginative worlds of fairy tales and folklore, Hayon's creations in the Fantasy collection are meticulously handcrafted, transforming everyday objects into joyful works of art that spark imagination and delight in their owners. This collection epitomises Hayon's talent for elevating the ordinary into something extraordinary.

Gardenias Collection (2016)

Spanish design outpost BD Barcelona Design collaborates with some of the most innovative creatives in the business, celebrated for its avant-garde approach that blends contemporary design with traditional techniques to create timeless pieces. And if you think this sounds like the perfect fit for Hayon Studio, you're right.

The Gardenias collection for BD Barcelona Design brings romance to the outdoors with its wrought iron furniture. Combining delicate botanical motifs and flowing lines, the pieces balance whimsy with structural elegance. A muted palette of terracotta, soft green, and cream enhances the connection to nature, while floral details imbue the collection with charm. From curvaceous armchairs to inviting benches, each piece feels like an artwork meant to be lived in, turning gardens into spaces of serenity and beauty.





Bosa by Hayon (2017)

With Bosa, Hayon explores themes of identity and play through ceramic masks. Featuring striking glazes in cobalt blue, gold, and bright red, the masks blend abstract geometric patterns with textured finishes. This collaboration fuses age-old craftsmanship with modern design, crafting objects that feel both decorative and deeply personal. Each mask invites viewers to consider notions of transformation and self-expression, showcasing Hayon's ability to layer meaning within bold, artistic forms.

Bosa, a prestigious Italian ceramics company renowned for its meticulous attention to detail and commitment to quality, has long been a beacon of innovation in the field of decorative arts. Founded in the early 1970s by Italo Bosa, the brand has become synonymous with excellence in ceramic design, blending traditional techniques with avant-garde aesthetics. The partnership between Bosa and Hayon is a natural fit, as both share a passion for pushing the boundaries of what ceramics can achieve.

Hayon's collaboration with Bosa has resulted in a series of pioneering designs that embody the perfect marriage of tradition and modernity. The Masquerade collection stands out for its inventive use of colour and form, elevating everyday objects into expressive works of art. By incorporating Bosa's tried-and-true methods with Hayon's contemporary vision, the collection breathes new life into the age-old art of ceramics, making it relevant for today's discerning audiences.

Every detail invites exploration, making guests not just visitors, but participants

art'otel London Battersea Power Station (2023)

In the heart of Battersea's post-industrial revival, Hayon's work at art'otel London Battersea Power Station redefines hospitality design. The interiors are a dynamic fusion of organic forms and luxurious materials—velvets, polished metals, and ceramics—crafted into spaces that feel like vivid cinematic scenes. Emerald greens and mustard yellows pop off the walls while sculptural furnishings and curated art installations weave a narrative of playful sophistication. Every detail invites exploration, making guests not just visitors, but participants in Hayon's artful storytelling.



"These objects feel alive, engaging us in a way that's almost anthropomorphic"

Looking forward, Hayon Studio stands as a powerhouse in the art and design world, consistently setting the bar for innovation and excellence. The studio's commitment to quality craftsmanship ensures that every piece is not only aesthetically pleasing but also built to last. This dedication to both form and function highlights the importance of valuing not just the visual appeal of an object but also its practical utility and the skill involved in its creation.

In a world where mass production often leads to disposable products, Hayon's work reminds us of the enduring value of thoughtfully designed objects. These creations do more than serve a purpose; they enrich our lives by fostering a deeper emotional connection to the everyday items we interact with. This approach underscores a fundamental aspect of the human experience –

the need to feel, to connect, and to find joy in our surroundings.

As Hayon Studio continues to push the boundaries of what is possible in design, its influence will undoubtedly inspire future generations to appreciate and aspire to the same standards of excellence. By creating objects that resonate on an emotional level, Hayon not only enhances our daily lives but also enriches our collective cultural landscape. This enduring impact is what sets Hayon Studio apart and ensures its place at the forefront of contemporary design.



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"This is a wellbeing revolution that's distinctly London in every way"

WHO'S RUNNING UP THAT HILL?

The clubs behind London's booming fitness and wellbeing scene

By Daniel Fowler

Forget everything you think you know about fitness and wellbeing. There's a whole new generation of micro-communities making their mark on the UK capital.

Beyond London's #RunTok boom, a fresh wave of swimming, climbing, camping, walking, and yoga groups continue to pop up in every corner of the city. For most, it's about rediscovering the feeling of community; one that doesn't have to rely on alcohol to be socially successful. They're challenging the notion that improving your health has to come at a cost. What's emerging is a wellbeing revolution that's distinctly London in its diversity, creativity, and resilience.

The current crop of brains masterminding this movement clearly know what the people want. A lot of clubs are free and cater to all abilities; a far cry from the boutique, exclusive, membership-only monopoly that it once was. It's almost as if getting fit and working on yourself can actually be, whisper it, fun.

As locals ourselves, we can't help but talk about some of our favourites — gatekeeping is not our style. So, if you're tired of the same-old solo self-care routine, why not try something a little different? Whether you just want a breath of fresh air (literally) or are looking to totally reinvent yourself, everything's possible in the creative playground that is London. You just need to know where to look.

Friday Night Lights

Self-described as the city's healthiest night out, nowhere quite captures the zeitgeist of London's millennial and Gen X population quite like run-come-party club Friday Night Lights. Stampeding along Southwark, brandishing glow-sticks and coloured smoke grenades, the impossible-to-miss parade brings bundles of energy to London's streets; the likes of which rivals anything you'd find in the clubs of Soho or Shoreditch. There's a big festival energy about it. You won't find any talk of PBs, marathon training, or medals here. You'll come, run, have a blast with your mates, and leave all the happier.



Kez Camps Black Camping Club

Your Oyster card won't help you here, but knowledge of how to shuck one might just come in handy. This London-born movement of Black and brown nature lovers (allies welcome too) meet once a year on the stunning Dorset coast for a good romp in the great outdoors and to celebrate all-things Afrocentric.

"I find that people often avoid camping, because they're like, OK, well, there's no one out there that looks like me. Or even if I'm feeling really ballsy and I'm going to go, I don't want to go alone. I want to go with other people in the community. I want to feel safe, seen and heard," founder Kez explains, reflecting on the barriers that have historically kept many Black Londoners from exploring beyond the city limits. "There's a vivid felt sense of being othered within British landscape, so having the club has been essential in being able to take up space."

The four-day retreat is as much an escape from city life as it is a cultural celebration. "Last year someone brought their guitar along, and so one night we had a whole choir situation going on," Kez recalls from the last gathering. Still, being from London, there are naturally home comforts to be found with each excursion: food trucks, hot showers, and — most importantly — proper toilets.

Beyond the practicalities though, it's about nourishing the body and soul. As a trauma psychotherapist, Kez understands this better than anyone. "Black stories are power: they're really interesting and really important. It's what defines us as individuals, as a collective, as cultures, as groups, as a diaspora". It's a place to unplug, watch sunrises and heal "on a somatic level."



Les Run

We're confident in saying FLINTA-friendly Les Run is the only group in London where post-run conversations include "I'll bring you some plant cuttings for next week" and "I went on a first date last night and I'm already in love with her". Founded by two long-time friends, brought together by their love for fitness, this weekly get-together puts community first and running second. Weekend outings typically start in the East End at all-day café and social space Knees Up, while post-work get-togethers stay closer to the city's traditions: pubs, pints and a good natter.

Even as one of the scene's relative newcomers, they've quickly garnered a 3,000-strong following and carved out a niche for the capital's queer community. "Sports and wellness have always

been a big part of our lives and so we wanted to create a space that puts queer women, trans and nonbinary individuals at the forefront" founders Phoebe and Robyn explain. "Running seemed like a good way to start this". A quick two-minute scroll through their Instagram and TikTok confirms their popularity; collabs with Dykes Who Hike and Set Piece Social helping to spread the word quick. It's truly a 2025 take on wellbeing: a 'come for the Sunday 5k, stay for the drinks, dancing and community building' kind-of attitude.

Swim Dem Crew

An inner-city club with one mission: make a splash. Fighting the crushing reality that 97% of Black adults don't swim, South London-based Swim Dem Crew are transforming the city's dwindling aquatic spaces into playgrounds with tons of potential. They've been nothing short of ground-breaking ever since they were founded, introducing over 200 Londoners to the pool since 2013. The group has built somewhat of a reputation as pioneers for their approach outside the water too. There's a big focus on tailored skincare and haircare routines pre- and post-swim that's made specifically with the capital's Black community in mind.

TrackMafia

This Maida Vale-based run club is for those who feel the need — the need for speed. Come rain, hail or shine (and this is London remember, so we get it all), their free weekly meets are all about the friendly competition that comes with smashing PBs, personal or otherwise. Naturally, they call the 400m track at Paddington Recreation Ground home: the only fair place to measure, set



“So many women live isolated because they don’t have a platform to meet people with the same interests”



and better records. From first-time sprinters to seasoned long distance runners, this grassroots collective breaks down barriers to elite-style training, proving that speed work isn’t just for professional athletes.

Athene Club

In a word: trailblazing. Born from lockdown isolation, Athene Club has been leading a quiet revolution in London’s outdoor scene, challenging its traditionally white, male, middle-class dominance.

Hosting everything from introductory bouldering classes to wild swimming workshops, co-founders Olivia and Zaineb simply decided that if their male peers could go on open-air adventures, why not women too? Hiking, foraging, running, skinny-dipping or meditating within and beyond the capital’s boundaries, this 10,000-strong sisterhood continues to prove that the outdoors belongs to everyone. They’ve created a safe haven where women of all backgrounds, ages, abilities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations can discover their inner adventurer, free from judgment or exclusion.

Girls Who Walk

Escaping the frenetic pace of the city, Girls Who Walk centres on bringing women together through one of life’s simplest pleasures. What began as a simple plea on Facebook from founder Ella has grown into a nationwide movement, attracting over 12,000 members across towns and cities of the UK. It’s all quite wholesome

really. Fighting the Sunday scaries with walks in Temple’s inner sanctum and the labyrinth that is Epping Forest, there’s a big focus on connecting with like-minded people in a safe, inspiring environment — all while getting your steps in.

There’s more to this movement than just moving though. “So many women live isolated because they don’t have a platform to meet people with the same interests” explains Ines, ambassador for Girls Who Walk London. “Loneliness is a real concern in the 21st century and we’re doing our best to fight that by creating a safe, welcoming and diverse community.” It’s working too. Members speak colourfully of finding not just walking partners but lifelong friends, turning the city’s vast network of paths and parks into places where they can connect.

RunTheBoroughs

New Balance-affiliated RunTheBoroughs does exactly what their name suggests. They’re all about the good vibes and shared energy that naturally comes with pounding pavements in graffiti-bright railway arches and centuries-old Victorian crescents. Alongside creating some seriously cool shoe collabs with the former, they’ve been on somewhat of a meteoric rise

since their founding in 2018, gaining so many followers they’ve since expanded to the twenty arrondissements that make up Paris.

It’s a simple, pure passion for urban exploration that stokes the fires of RunTheBoroughs. “Running has really opened my eyes to how much of London I don’t know and even my own borough Hackney” founder and part-time poet William Stowe recounts. “I was shown one of the oldest synagogues in East London by a friend during a run, the building is next door to well a known mosque in Whitechapel; this to me is the definition of the unity and community I grew up with in London, different people existing side by side respectfully. These findings and pieces of history are now part of the running routes we use, and it makes me proud to be a Londoner.”

Want to get physical? Flex some creative muscles? Check out our art’beat events and try your hand at something new while you stay. You’ll always find something tempting going on, from the first light of morning to the last minute before bed.

> [Discover art’beat events](#)



Les Run founders
Phoebe and Robyn
talk plans

"Running seemed
like a good way to
start something
bigger"

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and denim jeans, sitting at a table. She is holding a fork and looking down at a plate of food. The table is set with a white tablecloth, a blue glass, and a plate of food. In the foreground, there is a large, round, golden-brown pie or tart with orange and dark toppings. To the right, there is a bowl of food. The background is dark and out of focus. Large, bold, white text is overlaid on the image, reading "CONNECTION, AROUND THE TABLE".

CONNECTION, AROUND THE TABLE

We meet Sam Wolfson, the woman building meaningful relationships. No apps required.

Words by Angharad Jones



Sam Wolfson

"Because of these tables I get to know so much more about each woman and that's what I think makes our connections even stronger"

You walk into an apartment you've never been to before. You're greeted by a host you've never met. You're joined by four other women whose names you don't yet know. But you're there because there's a common thread that weaves through all your lives. That, and a desire to meet new people and genuinely connect far beneath surface level, in a space where great food and effortless style comes as standard. You may be strangers now, but you'll leave having bared your soul and truly listening to others' stories in turn. At least one of you will cry. In a good way.

Welcome to & the Table; intimate, exceptionally well-executed dinners designed to help women meet like-minded souls and create meaningful connections.

& the Table was dreamt up and founded by Sam Wolfson, a dispatch from the U.S. who landed in Amsterdam 8 years ago, with just a sense of adventure and a yearning for something new in another country. Like most expats, Sam scrolled through the usual apps to meet people outside of work, went to socialising events and joined Facebook Groups in the hope to form bonds in the city she now called home... but nothing clicked.

So, Sam took matters into her own hands. After quitting her job in advertising and wondering what to do next, she started & the Table in 2022 (an evolution from a similar event series called Sam's Dinners, which started in 2017). The concept: six solo women carefully chosen by the host sit around a beautifully styled table, share a meal and chat about the good stuff. A theme and a question are set to break the ice, stop the awkward small talk and prevent the usual "So, what do you do?". At these tables, your job doesn't define you. It's who you are that does.

In Sam's words, "& the Table is a place for connection at any age around the table. No matter how old we get, there should always be the possibility to connect and find women, to be able to discuss different topics in a casual setting and with delicious food."

What it's not, says Sam, is a friendship app. "We're a place you're going to come to connect to grow your web of women. As I get older, I truly believe that friendships are not linear. One person can't give you everything in life. So being able to build these connections with women, in whatever aspect it is you can relate to, is so important in our growth."

Like a lot of millennial-founded businesses, Sam's first port of call was Instagram, where she shared photos from the dinners she hosted, and delved more into the concept. It turns out she wasn't the only one craving connection; the account blew up. "Within the first two months, I

had 500 requests for the five spots at my table", says Sam. "And I thought, oh, maybe women really want this. I feel like more women are pulled to it because they think, I have friends, so I don't want to go on a friendship app, but connections with new people? That sounds nice over dinner. We know what we're going to talk about, and we know it's going to be pretty and put together."

Today, & the Table is in 10 different countries, holding between 45 and 65 dinners a month. The dinners are held at a host's home and potential guests can request a seat through & the Table's online platform. It's a rigorous process; not just anyone can host, and not just anyone can attend. That's not designed to be exclusionary, though, it's about curating the best evening possible for everyone involved.

"To be accepted as an official host, you have to go through an application process with a video, and show your cooking and your table decor," says Sam. "We've had just over 700 applicants for hosts, and we have brought on a little over 150 of those. They see all our imagery and we also have a Pinterest board they look through. I'm not looking for one particular vibe or aesthetic in a host, but they need to come with one. It's actually the most unbranded brand thing that everything is different. Every night is different. The dinner, the food, the theme is different. The women who are there are different."

"Hosting is an art form. Every host brings their own charisma. They're connectors. They're culturally rich. They really love to learn and be around women. On the platform, there's a meet our host page so you can scroll through who the hosts are."

On the platform, hosts set up their event, choose the theme, question and menu, and can set an age range for women they want to attend. Then, potential guests can request their seat, and it's up to the host whether they turn that request into a formal invitation. "The host is able to read through the requests and extend the invites to the women she feels would be best curated for that event. [Unlike friendship apps] AI is not connecting our women. We're genuinely the ones doing that."

"The request system was a big hurdle at first. Women were like, what the f*ck is this? Why can't I just buy it, it says there are four seats left? We just had to explain that it's because you're in a host's home and now our guests are really getting that."

Beyond the host and the guest curation, there's a theme to each night. The themes shape the evening, give a purpose for attending and offer a vehicle for connection. "Our themes are about truly getting down to the core of what's going on, whether it be about self-love or... one that's super popular is women who are choosing not to have



children. And the themes are extremely well-received because you know what you're going into talking about. It's not just six strangers who don't know what they're supposed to say."

How an evening looks and feels is important, too, says Sam. "Coming to a table that's put together, looks really cute, has printed out menus and has those little extra details on the napkins... That's what sets us apart from a normal friendship meet up event. We have a huge onboarding deck when hosts come on. They can come up with the aesthetic elements of how it looks, but there are certain things they need to have, like a centrepiece.

"We give an abundance of design for our hosts to use as their menus. They can choose to use ours or they can create their own, but there needs to be a menu on the table. All those different elements... it shows you put a little more effort into it than just coming and seeing a plate with a fork and a knife on a table, which is fine. It's just not & the Table"

And if turning up for dinner at a stranger's house feels too daunting? Well, everyone's in the same boat. "Understandably, it can be really nerve-racking but when the five other women are doing exactly the same thing it kind of lowers that bar a bit", says Sam. Instead, you can think: "No one's best friends here. I'm going to just come in as myself. There are no preconceived notions about me or whatever that is. I get to truly come as I am for this evening."

There are two recently launched tables too that take place outside the home. "Now we have two other types of tables that we execute this concept with, which are the community tables and the collective tables.

"In building this software, we realised that we have all these other women that have applied to become a host. Maybe they're not the perfect fit. But we still want all these women to be able to use what we've created in this requesting system and on our event page to be able to find

women to connect with," says Sam. "So, we've created community tables where women can come on, join our community, and put up their own tables. They can get requests from anyone, see them, extend the invites, and create their own connections through coffees, cafés, restaurants or cocktail bars.

"The collective tables just started. We launched our first ones in Amsterdam, London, and LA and we're expanding to new cities soon. They still follow the same concept, but we do it at restaurants and instead of it just being one table, there are 15 to 20 tables of four to six women. Everyone comes to talk about the theme that night and eat delicious food. There's an & the Table host there to welcome everyone but there is no official host at the tables. It ends up being a little more casual."

There's also a membership, to keep up that sense of connection all year round. "It's 65 euros for the entire year. With the membership, you're



a 'regular' and with that you can attend four collective tables per year without the reservation fee and only pay for the food. It ends up being around 300 euros worth of value. I'm really focusing on building the membership part of it, because I feel like this should be a necessity for women. And that's why we priced it where we did, because I want women to say, oh, 65 euros, this is part of my life."

As for that connection Sam was looking for? She found it. "I held a dinner, and I met one of my closest friends at it. There was just something when she walked in that was just so special about her. She came with this incredible energy, and she was super positive about her life even though she had been through some hardships. After that, we were inseparable. The whole group at that table was spectacular and we stayed really close. Unfortunately, last summer she suddenly passed, which has been very difficult. But I do look at it as I am so blessed to have known her even for that short time."

"Because of these tables I get to know so much more about each woman and that's what I think makes our connections even stronger. I know about the problems you're having with your childhood friends or your mother or what you're going through with infertility, like whatever those elements are that's happening in that person's life. I'm able to touch in on that instead of just "How's work going?"

Walking into a stranger's apartment has never sounded so inviting. Nor has in-person connection and celebration ever felt more important. There's no time like the present to raise a glass with the ones you love or share a meal with future friends.

Host your own gathering at art'otel Amsterdam
artotelamsterdam.com/meetings-events

Request your next seat at & the Table
and-the-table.com





BOOTSHAUS BEAT BY BEAT

We spent the night at one of the world's top-rated clubs where the scene's biggest DJs spun for a sold-out crowd (and you should, too)

Words by Daniel Fowler

Ask anyone in the crowd and they'll say the same thing: James Hype lives up to his name, and then some



Stepping out of the taxi below Zoobrücke, moments from the mighty Rhine, I join the back of a queue eighty-something long. Peppered with flannels, puffers, fleeces and a smattering of denim throughout, I immediately assume we're all here for the same thing: Bootshaus.

The self-conscious, pre-arrival worries of whether my box-fresh trainers and daily go-to jeans would out me as a techno newcomer have all but disappeared. Nearly everybody dons what can only be described as functional garms: outfits that wouldn't otherwise look out of place in the city's morning markets. Think logo-stamped tops and loose-fitting trousers, paired with Stan Smiths, Superstars and Sambas (we are in Germany after all). It's 22:47, the air's cold, and the atmosphere's electric — even before the night's acts have started pumping out soul-shattering bass.

Underground techno, a phrase conjuring up images of airy warehouses and hedonistic pleasures synonymous with the likes of Tresor and KitKatClub, has been a cornerstone of German life since the 90s, along with the all-black get-ups, clumpy Doc Martens, messy hair and makeup that comes with it. But as anyone who once owned skinny jeans and platform shoes will tell you, trends change, and Germany's dark hours are no exception.

Back in 2009, it was the leather-heavy techno temple of Berghain that was all the rage, having been declared king of clubs by DJ Mag in the same year. While you'll still find thousands flocking to Berghain, 15 years later it's Bootshaus — Cologne's EDM-pumping, genre-transcending,

always-innovating superclub — that now stands as Germany's church of choice, topping the former in 2024's 'Top Clubs' list. For those in the know, this comes as no surprise. Home of groundbreaking electro-composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and hyperpop sensation Kim Petras, Cologne breeds musical innovators like most cities breed pigeons.

Previously hosting David Guetta, Chase & Status, Swedish House Mafia et al., my visit to Bootshaus sees pioneering DJ James Hype leading the sermon as part of the club's 20-year anniversary celebrations. And as much as I'm here for the show, tonight's also about connecting with the crowd: a focus group of people weaned on their parents' techno glory days, now boldly redefining club culture in their own image — part legend, part revolution. Are they as rebellious as their predecessors? Has social media tarnished the mysterious, mythical aura surrounding Germany's techno clubs? What does a night at one of these clubs even look like? Only one way to find out.

Jacket shed and exchanged for a small pink ticket stub, inside the main floor is teeming with early 20s to late 50-somethings, peppered with the occasional seasoned raver carrying a 'been there, done that' attitude. Two tall girls previously behind me in the queue, both decked out in oversized graphic tees and statement jewellery, continue to reminisce about the time they saw Charlotte de Witte play here back in 2019. "The floor was actually vibrating," she says, "like, physically moving". Pseudo-science or distorted truth, it's clear the club leaves its mark long after the fact.

Even as a Bootshaus outsider, I quickly get

It's 22:47, the air's cold, and the atmosphere electric - even before the soul-shattering bass has started.



the feeling there's something special about this place. It's a fundamentally intimate venue at heart. The low ceilings and metal beams that once saw merchant ships pass through contrast the club's newer industrial hardware; the raw, unapologetic bones of the building, once a centre of commerce, now a springboard for Germany's most thunderous nights of techno. The crowd itself seems to embody this duality: a mix of well-heeled scenesters and wide-eyed newcomers, all united by an appreciation for the club's distinctive personality.

Behind the decks, gradually upping the tempo, hometown duo Makla begin to demonstrate why Bootshaus is considered holy ground among techno pilgrims. Beers ripple as the bass isn't so much heard as it is felt, reorganizing internal organs with each kick. By 23:30, the dancefloor's empty spaces have all been swallowed up by the swelling mass of bodies. Everyone has just enough space to throw their arms up without accidentally catching

someone's jaw. Drop after drop of thick beats follows, as the room falls under the booming sound system's mystical trance.

The floor is pitch-black, only occasionally disrupted by the neon of Makla's logo slicing through the darkness. Already the broad man in front of me has been consumed by the sound, head and shoulders bobbing with an intensity that suggests the day's stresses are being methodically pounded away by each bass hit. To my left, a young Dutch couple abandon any pretence of composure, and with eyes closed and arms raised skyward, it's clear they're deeply receptive to tonight's electronic communion.

As the set tops out and begins its descent, the room thins just enough to navigate toward the green room, where photographer Emmanuel Vlasev and I catch up with Bootshaus resident DJ Brandon. Followed by over 300,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, he's a major player in these parts of the world, having been a club mainstay since 2018 and opener for the likes of DJ Snake

in years prior. Perched on the end of a vintage brown leather sofa, groovy bass still thumping, we start unwrapping what it is that gives Bootshaus its edge.

"As a DJ, you're standing really close to the crowd. It's so easy to build a vibe and connect with people when they're right in front of you" says Brandon, explaining how he's learnt to read the room as if it were a living organism. "I remember the crowd at Bootshaus from 2022. When the pandemic was kind of over, the crowd was massive, they were raging. You could feel they were lacking two years of partying. Nowadays, the crowd is a little different. They're more into vibing, dancing and just having fun."

Reflecting on his earliest memories of electronic music, Brandon speaks about them the way others might describe their first love. "When I started to go to clubs at 16, I was always searching for the music the DJ played. There was no Shazam at that time — just YouTube and SoundCloud. I showed my friends in school,

telling them to listen to the song, and they just went ‘I don’t care. It was a good club night, that’s it’. But I just had some connection to the music.”

If there’s one thing I’ll say about Brandon, it’s that he’s a man of his word. 38 minutes post-interview, decks mounted and room now reverberating, he captures the zeitgeist of the crowd with total ease. Keeping things slow to begin with, his set gradually builds momentum, dropping hints of bassline and rhythm that soon have hands high in the air and pumping in sync. Standing before a mass of rapt devotees, he masterfully controls the tempo of the music as if it were flowing directly from his veins; an extension of the passion that’s driven him since before he could even step foot inside a club. James Hype might be tonight’s headliner, but it’s Brandon’s deft touch that preps the crowd’s energy oh-so perfectly.

01:57. Whistles and rapturous applause signal the end of Brandon’s set. Some make a beeline for the bar. Others take out earplugs and converse with those around them. Two friends to my right, one in a black, slim-fitting, button-up shirt, the other donning wire-rimmed glasses and a Hugo Boss top, swig water together. I strike up a conversation with the man behind me. “I haven’t danced like that in years” he says, a wide grin spreading across his face. Our brief chat gets swiftly interrupted as the lights dim and the club erupts into an almighty roar. It’s time.

James Hype is a man who, without a shadow of a doubt, lives up to his moniker. Three songs into his drum and bass set, he has everyone eating out the palm of his well-manicured hands. The universal head nods. The shoulder-to-shoulder bouncing. The synchronised chanting. Even in the ungodly hours of the morning, the room is electric. The stage is the altar and James the idol. For a little over an hour, the Liverpoolian shows no mercy in orchestrating the crowd’s every movement, his track selections leaving everyone breathless and begging for more.

Whether techno is still true to its roots, or the scene has been marred by social media, it’s clear that it doesn’t really matter. It may not be as secretive as before, but right here, right now, everyone sure seems to be enjoying it. There’s a distinct lack of phones visible throughout the night, and even if they are, it’s only those fulfilling the modern-day need to capture the occasional group selfie — rarely are songs filmed whatsoever. Even in the gap between sets, it’s the small minority whose hands dive into pockets



“It’s so easy to
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front of you”.

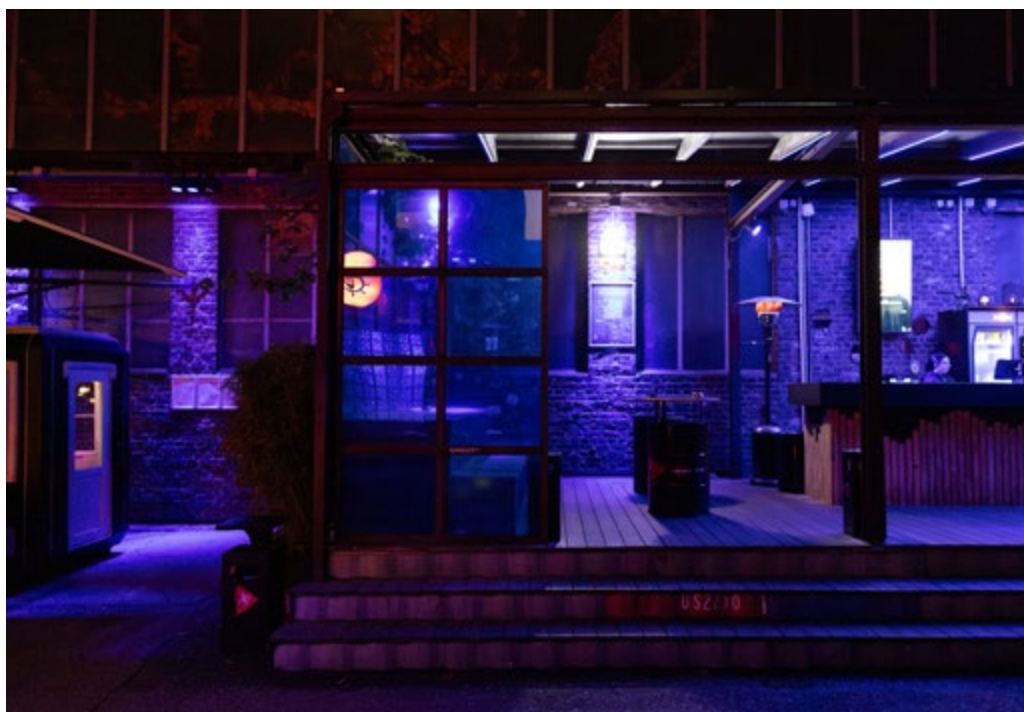
> [Join the
Bootshaus
party](#)

for that hit of instant gratification. Instead, and as shocking as it may seem, most just talk to one another; some even make friends.

For those not in the know, 2024 is a bit of a weird time to be in the techno-sphere. The scene’s soaring popularity with casuals on TikTok and Instagram contrasts the ruffled feathers of purists hell-bent on gatekeeping this underground community. The desire for immediacy — the idea of a track as having large buildups and huge payoffs — doesn’t sit right with the scene’s stalwarts. Yet, at least in Bootshaus, no one seems to care. Novice, veteran or somewhere in between, every single person is finding joy in the here and now. James Hype may stand in direct odds with the likes of Kangding Ray and Cosmin TRG, but techno, and places like Bootshaus, have always been more about a feeling, an atmosphere; a place where everyone can simply

come to enjoy the moment. In the end, the only real faux pas is standing still.

Oliver Magenta is just about to take the reins from James Hype, but I’m not there to see it. My body is spent. At 03:26, while the rest of Bootshaus rings in Unity Day to the tune of 140BPM, photographer Emmanuel and I take a €10 taxi back to art’otel Cologne — a journey that takes all of 11 minutes. Our driver, a local of 32 years and counting, reminds us on how Bootshaus helped put Cologne on the map. “Go to artheater, Gewölbe or Odonien and tell me there’s not a bit of Bootshaus in them”. We don’t ask if he’s a big techno-head or not, but it’s clear the club is a powerhouse when it comes to the social unification of Cologne. If it’s the Dom that tourists flock to by day, it’s places like Bootshaus that keep the city’s heart beating through the night.





Where the need
for water once
dictated every hour,
now there's time
for creativity and
entrepreneurship

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

How Just a Drop are helping craft new possibilities in Uganda

Words by Daniel Fowler



The steady hum of a sewing machine cuts through the afternoon heat in the remote village of Anyangareng. It's a sound that would have been impossible here just a few years ago — not because the technology didn't exist, but because no one had the time. Time, in north-east Uganda's Kapelebyong region, was once measured in footsteps: the endless trek to distant water sources, the weight of jerry cans cutting into palms, the hours lost to queues that stretched like shadows in the scorching sun.

Now, that same precious time flows through fingers that guide fabric under needle and thread; through hands that weave vibrant banana leaves into intricate mats; through communities that are rediscovering and reimagining their textile traditions. This isn't just a story about water access — though that's where it begins. It's about what happens when women reclaim their hours and transform them into art, income, and legacy.

Breaking the Cycle

The statistics paint a stark picture: 77% of Kapelebyong's population lives below the poverty line, far exceeding Uganda's national average of 21.4%. But numbers can't capture the daily reality of walking four kilometres for water — twice a day, every day — in an endless cycle that consumed women's lives for generations.

Fortunately, that cycle is breaking. Buoyed by Just a Drop's clean water and income-generating loans programme, communities are

finding their rhythm again. Where the need for water once dictated every hour, now there's space for creativity, entrepreneurship, and the revival of time-honoured crafts that were slowly slipping away.

Threading Dreams into Reality

At 24, Janet doesn't waste a minute. Her fingers fly over fabric while she talks, the sewing machine's rhythm a counterpoint to her words. In her small workshop in Anyangareng — where 98% of homes still bare rudimentary grass-thatched roofs — she's building something remarkable.

Before the borehole outside her house was built in 2022, Janet's day revolved around the pillars of survival: water collection, tending to her crops and looking after her six children. The 85 pence a week her tomatoes and onions generated at the local market brought in just enough to keep food on the table and the family afloat. Between farming and the gruelling eight-kilometre trip for water, there was no room for anything else.

Now, that same woman who once spent hours carrying water runs a thriving tailoring business. Brought to life with a £40 grant courtesy of Just a Drop, her enterprise has grown into something few in her village could have imagined. Crafting everything from school uniforms to intricate Gomesi dresses (vivid floor-length pieces that require skill and precision), it's more than a labour of love for Janet — it's where her soul finds its rhythm.

"My future aspiration is to undergo further training for all sorts of tailoring and



“These women aren’t just building businesses, they’re reconstructing the very fabric of their villages”



crafting” Janet confesses, eyes sparkling with determination. “It’s my dream to open a skill centre at my home village... I want to be one of the most famous tailors within my parish and the neighbouring areas of Kapelebyong.”

Seeds of Possibility

Janet’s success story is built on a foundation of comprehensive business training that many women in Kapelebyong are accessing thanks to the work of Just a Drop and donations from PPHE Hotel Group. Local entrepreneurs receive instruction in essential skills including business management, basic bookkeeping, and financial planning. The training emphasizes practical knowledge: how to manage savings, market products effectively, and maintain sustainable growth.

This educational foundation has proven crucial for the diverse range of businesses emerging in the region. Women are establishing enterprises in various sectors, from liquid soap manufacturing to beauty product distribution. Some focus on agricultural ventures like market gardening and rabbit rearing, while others pursue crafts and textile production.

The emphasis on financial literacy and business planning has led to impressive repayment rates and sustainable growth. Women entrepreneurs are not just running businesses; they’re building legacies that can support their families and communities for generations to come.

The Weavers of Bugaluube

Twenty miles away, in the isolated village of Bugaluube, a somewhat similar transformation unfolds through the hands of Dorcus, 67, and her mother Anasitazia, 83. Their story spans decades, a bridge between past and present where traditional craft meets modern opportunity. Their home, once a brief stopping point between water collection journeys, has become an unlikely creative hub.

Prior to 2015, Dorcus, and Anasitazia before her, would walk over five kilometres to the nearest borehole to collect water each day. It would take them at least six hours a day going back and forth, spending long hours queueing to wait for their turn, before spending even longer walking back; heavy, awkward-to-carry jerry cans in tow. It was a long and daunting task — one Dorcus had been forced into since early childhood.

Once the newly drilled boreholes at the centre of the village were ready to go, Just a Drop also took the time to install rainwater harvesting jars outside each home — simple technology that has quietly revolutionized lives. No more five-kilometre walks. No more pre-dawn starts to beat the queues. No more watching Anasitazia, even in her eighties, struggle with heavy water containers.

In 2025, their home now buzzes with activity as they practice their art: creating exquisite mats from dried banana leaves. The process is mesmerising. Leaves are carefully selected, dried to perfection, then dyed in colours that echo

Uganda's fertile landscape. Each mat takes days to complete, the leaves braided with techniques passed down through generations. The £11 earned from each one they sell represents more than income — it's a piece of preserved heritage, a testament to reclaimed time.

"Water is life," Dorcus says, her practiced hands never stopping their weaving. "We used to face the difficult challenge of accessing water and I was the one fetching it very early at 6am, to avoid long queues". For Dorcus, Anasitazia and many others, water doesn't simply represent life: it represents time. And time, for this region of Uganda, is simply everything.

A New Measure of Time

In communities where time was once measured by the distance to water sources, new markers have emerged. Time is now counted in the number of dresses completed, in mats woven, in children taught, and in stories shared. The extra hours in each day have become seeds of transformation, planted in fertile ground and growing into sustainable businesses that support entire families.

For Janet, success is measured in the proud faces of her children as they watch her work, in the growing stack of orders from satisfied customers and, more fundamentally, in the food she can now afford to put on the table for her family every day. For Dorcus and Anasitazia, it's in the continuation of long-established skills; in the strengthening of neighbourly bonds, and in the knowledge that the younger generation of Bugaluube will never have to suffer the burden of walking hours upon hours for water.

The impact extends beyond economics. In households where women have started these enterprises, children can now afford to attend school more regularly. Family meals are shared together rather than rushed. Traditional crafts that might have been lost to the daily struggle for water are being preserved and passed down to new generations.

The textiles produced by Janet, Dorcus, and Anasitazia are imbued with meaning and value beyond their utility too. Bark cloth, banana leaf fibre, and other local materials are all prized for their durability and sustainability. While the process of crafting each item is labour-intensive and requires great skill, the pieces these women are producing represent a unique alternative to the mass-produced standard — one that values craftsmanship, heritage, and environmental responsibility.

Weaving New Futures

As evening settles over Kapelebyong's grass-thatched houses, the rhythms of work continue. Janet's sewing machine hums its steady song. To the east in Dorcus and Anasitazia's village, banana leaves rustle as they're transformed into art. These sounds — so different from the splash of water

into jerry cans — are the soundtrack of change.

These women aren't just building businesses; they're reconstructing the very fabric of their villages. Each stitch sewn by Janet, every leaf braided by Dorcus and Anasitazia, represents a step toward a future where time is measured not in water journeys but in moments of creation, connection, and growth.

"My advice to the community," Janet shares, her voice full of conviction, "is to learn what is good for their households, to generate income and transform our villages, starting with their individual homes." It's advice that resonates through the actions of women across Kapelebyong, who are using their reclaimed time to weave stronger family connections, preserve cultural traditions, and build more resilient communities.

Holding up a finished dress that catches the last rays of sunlight, Janet intricately traces her day's work. In its folds and seams, you can read a new story being written across Kapelebyong — one measured not in kilometres walked, but in futures transformed, one stitch, one weave, one dream at a time.

[Learn more about Just a Drop's crucial work](#)





For locals, it's a way of life; a custom with roots going all the way back to pre-Christian Pagan times



KARNEVAL UNMASKED

An insider's guide to Cologne's riotous fifth season

Words by Daniel Fowler

Unlike its Brazilian and New Orleans counterparts, Karneval (or Carnival) isn't just a festival in Cologne. It's a full-blown season. The party kicks off months before Ash Wednesday, culminating in a crescendo of landmark events that fill diaries throughout the days before Lent.

In what is a dizzying series of celebrations — Germany's largest in fact — expect the same colourful clown and steam-punk revellers who line the streets by day to filter into buzzing bars and raucous galas by night. Its energy is simply inescapable. Layered with tongue-in-cheek anecdotes and hints of dark humour, you can count on its street parades, family-friendly festivities and copious amounts of free chocolates to create memories that last a lifetime.

For locals, it's a way of life; a custom with roots going all the way back to pre-Christian Pagan times. For you, it's a chance to connect and partake in time-honoured traditions. It's all somewhat medieval in spirit. A place where you'll find yourself linking arms with strangers to belt out songs you don't understand, and somehow loving every minute of it.

Karneval is a lot to take in, but that's just part of the excitement. There's a reason over a million people eagerly flock to Cologne for it every year. To ensure you savour rather than drown in the revelry, we've packed all its best festivities into a day-by-day, hour-by-hour, easy-to-digest itinerary. So convenient, right?

Weiberfastnacht (Women's Day)

Morning

Coffee downed and costume donned, head straight to Alter Markt: the de facto centre of the city and the beating heart of Karneval. Here, at precisely 11:11am, you'll witness the official opening ceremony, complete with costume-clad jecken and the introduction of the Dreigestirn — the triumvirate of Karneval royalty consisting of the Prince, Peasant, and Virgin (traditionally all men, despite the latter's title).

Our recommendation? Women, bring scissors. Men, be prepared. On a day dedicated to Cologne's frauen, snipping men's ties and collecting them as symbolic, power-neutering trophies has long been tradition. Go ahead and get stuck in.

Afternoon

Brauhaus boozing aside, it's the legend of Jan un Griet that takes centre stage post-lunch. Make your way over to Chlodwigplatz to catch a reenactment of the (somewhat) true story about a local farm boy, Jan, who becomes enamoured with a snooty maid, Griet. A tale of love, arrogance, rich and poor, picture Romeo and Juliet but spiced up with some endearing, no-nonsense German honesty.

Stick around once the curtain drops too—Karneval's first parade is about to begin. As Reiter-Korps Jan von Werth and local Karneval clubs weave their way through the streets, do as the locals do: open your bag, scream at the top of your lungs, and prepare to have flowers, chocolates and sweets thrown your way.

Evening

It's time to party. Zülpicher might attract the biggest crowds, but you'll find tonight's best parties in brauhäuser just off Altstadt and Südstadt. Früh am Dom is always a favourite for crisp Kölsch (Cologne's signature beer) and a hearty plate of Himmel un Ääd (heaven and earth) — a local dish of mashed potatoes, apples, and blood sausage.

Do as the locals do: open your bag, scream at the top of your lungs, and prepare to have treats thrown your way



Karneval Weekend Weiberfastnachtsfreitag (Friday after Women's Day)

Shake off yesterday's excesses with breakfast in bed and a long, lazy morning in art'otel Cologne's sauna. Friday is well known to be a day for nursing hangovers and recovering from last night's revelry, so if you want a gentler day with some sightseeing, do it now.

Once afternoon blends into evening, it's all eyes on Sternmarsch: a family-friendly, sparkler-lit, no-ticket-necessary celebration featuring Cologne's 37 neighbourhood clubs. Starting around 18:00 (with grandstand seating opening at 16:00), this colourful gathering at Adler Markt guarantees plenty of songs, performances and goosebumps for anyone in attendance.

Karnevalssamstag (Carnival Saturday)

Drag yourself out of bed (trust us, it's worth it) and join the merry masses converging on Neumarkt for the Funkenbiwak — a morning spectacle brought to you by Cologne's original party pioneers, the Roten Funken.

What started over two centuries ago as a tongue-in-cheek mockery of Prussian rule has now evolved into a magnificent morning parade. One where uniformed guards march with tongue firmly in cheek and brass bands blast away any remaining hangovers. Serving traditional pea soup and Kölsch from 09:30, this lively affair proves that Cologne doesn't just do breakfast better: they do it with brass bands, beer, and a hearty side of historical sass.

Karnevalssonntag (Carnival Sunday)

Another day, another parade. Today's main event? Schull-und Veedelszöch, a community-focused celebration run by nearby schools and neighbourhood groups. Taking an almost identical route to the one on Rose Monday, it's a wholesome homage to the city's youngest creatives and future partygoers. Expect to see lots of floats packed with imagination and tomfoolery moving through the city centre.

Elsewhere you'll find Veedelszüge — smaller, local parades that are the essence of what makes Karneval so special — also start to pop up. It's the suburban streets of Rodenkirchen that are the real highlight here. Line up alongside 60,000 locals, step to the beat of the 1,200 marching in procession, and embrace the infectious energy of the afterparties along Maternusstrasse and Hauptstrasse.

Rosenmontag (Rose Monday)

Morning

This is it. The pinnacle of Karneval. Rose Monday hosts the largest and most spectacular parade of the festival. Indulge yourself with a substantial breakfast and stake out your spot in Altstadt early. Want a pro tip? The open-air and covered grandstands along Severinstraße and Mohrenstraße are the places to be. Make sure you nab a ticket when they go on sale in November. At precisely 10:00, a cannon blast signals the start of this 8-kilometre spectacle. Expect floats, music, mayhem, and around 300 tonnes of sweets to be passed out as the city's population nearly doubles for the next 24 hours.



Afternoon

The procession runs long into the afternoon, so pace yourself. Refuel with a 'Mettbrötchen' (a local delicacy of raw minced pork on a roll) and wash it down with — yes, you guessed it — more Kölsch.

If you want a change of scene, make your way to the Heinzelmännchenbrunnen, a fountain depicting the legendary gnomes of Cologne. Legend has it that these little creatures once did all the city's work at night, until a curious tailor's wife scattered peas on the floor to trip them up. They left in a huff, never to return — except, perhaps, during Karneval when the city seems touched by magic once more.

Evening

Parades officially over, the party continues at pretty much every single bar, restaurant and home around the city. If you want to avoid the crowds, head to Agnesviertel, Südstadt or Ehrenfeld. Otherwise, you'll find plenty of local bands playing to a chorus of 'Kölle Alaaf!' — Cologne's traditional Karneval greeting — in the city centre until well into the early hours of the morning.

Veilchendienstag (Violet Tuesday)

Morning

Set off bright and early to Wilhelmplatz for the Nippeser Veedelszöch — one of Cologne's oldest and liveliest neighbourhood parades. Don't be fooled into thinking this is more of the same though. While other parades are invite-only, this one's open to the public. Any group, of any size, can take part.

Some groups use the freedom to make political statements. Others simply as a platform

for their own in-jokes. Previous years have seen everything from schools turning up with sinking-ship floats (a nod to Cologne's teacher shortages), to local, long-time friends donning glittery-white cockatoo outfits in a love letter to one of the group's pet birds. This is Karneval carnage at its flamboyant best.

Afternoon

Attending Nippeser Veedelszöch is a six-hour affair, so don't worry if you miss the start. Just make sure to be there for the ever-impressive Nippeser Bürgerwehr group at the end: a dancing, prancing stalwart of all-things Karneval since 1914 and, to most in attendance, the headline act of the day.

Colloquially known as 'Appelsinefunke' due to their bright orange uniforms, you'll know it's them when you hear a 50-strong live marching band singing songs about wanting more potato pancakes, or 'Kartoffelpuffer' in German. If you've never tried them before, take this as your sign to. They're heavenly.

Evening

By this point, you might have noticed straw effigies popping up above the city's pubs and restaurants. That's Nubbel: witness and scapegoat to all of Karneval's excesses. In true medieval fashion, he's about to be burnt at the stake, taking all the preceding week's indulgences with him. Pick your pub of choice and watch as his ashes restores the city's innocence just in time for the coming season of Lent. When the clocks strike midnight, Karneval officially reaches its end. Time to head to bed, enjoy a well-deserved lie-in and probably phone reception to book late check-out.

> Stay with us for Karneval



Essential Lingo

Narren or Jecken

Jester or reveller. Quite simply anyone who takes part in Karneval.

Kamelle

Caramel. Typically screamed as sweet-scattering processions approach.

Strüßjer

Posies. An alternative for anyone who doesn't want chocolate at parades.

Bützje

A kiss, usually cheek to cheek. Given as a thank you or just for fun.

Kölle Alaaf

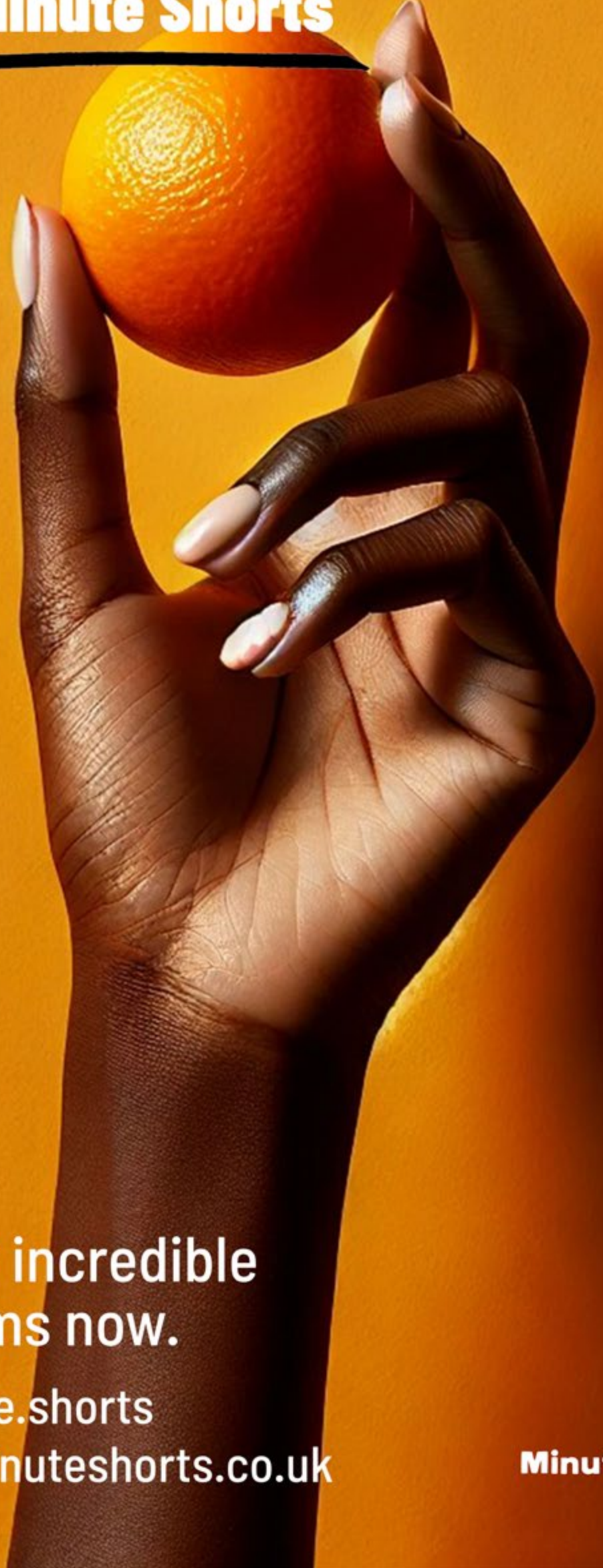
Cologne above all else. The battle cry of the city.

Karnevalssitzung

Events during karneval. Think big tables, group dances, live music and the like.



This is not an Orange.
It's **Minute Shorts**

A close-up photograph of a hand with dark skin and light-colored nail polish holding a whole orange. The hand is positioned in the center of the frame, with the orange held between the thumb and index finger. The background is a solid, warm orange color, creating a monochromatic effect. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the dimples on the orange's peel.

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