

# H T S I

10 DECEMBER  
2022



A  
PHILANTHROPY  
SPECIAL

## HOW TO GIVE IT

Melinda French Gates  
on her \$15bn  
funding vision

PLUS

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LILY COLE  
LIBBIE MUGRABI  
BJARKE INGELS  
JIMMY CHOO  
CHRISTINA ADANE  
CILLIAN MURPHY  
ALISSA EVERETT



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2022

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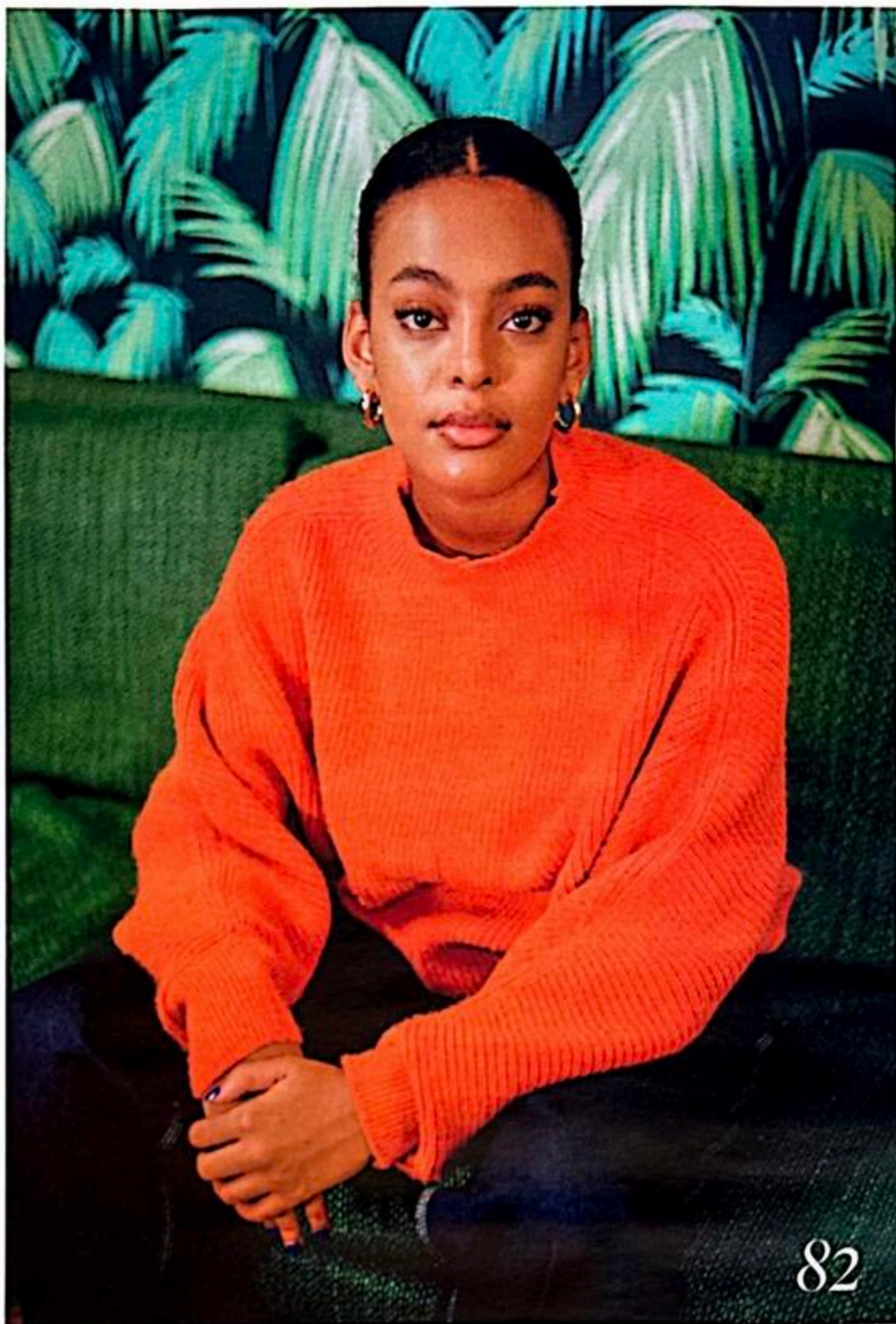
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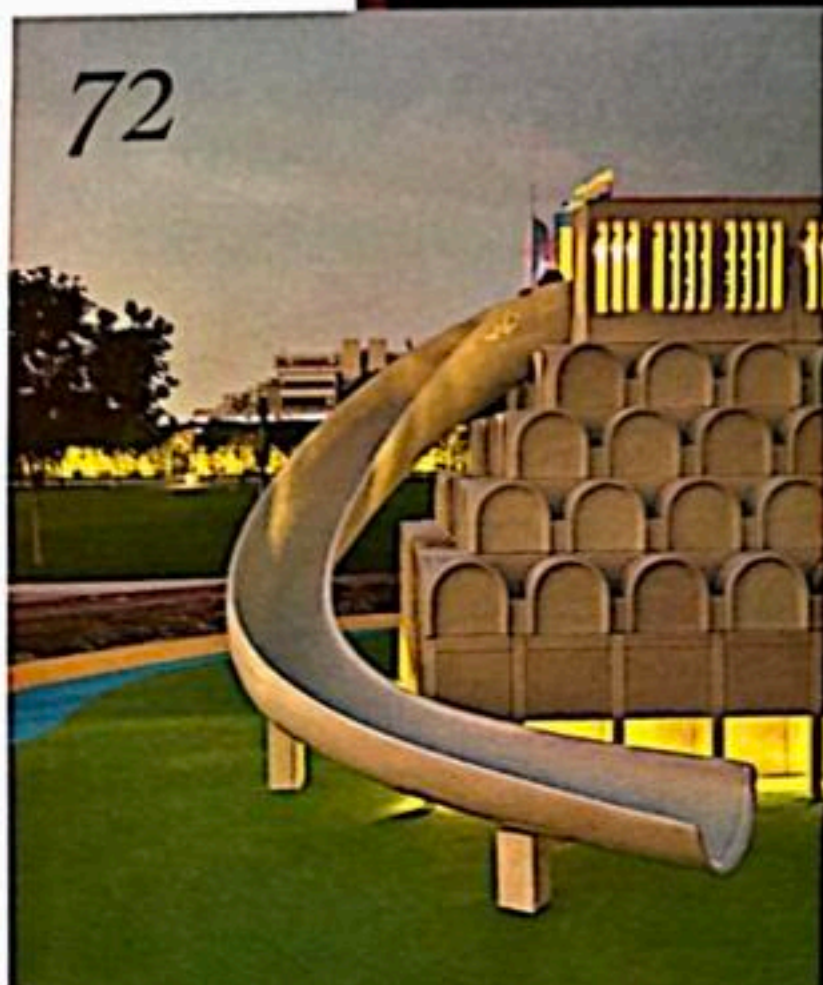
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Photography by MILES FORTUNE

MELINDA FRENCH GATES  
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Seattle office



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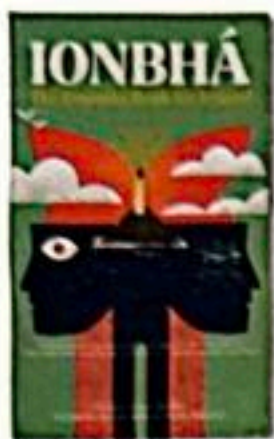
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Above: Murphy's own essay in *Ionbhá* is titled "On Connection". Below: Murphy in the library at Russborough House, County Wicklow

And that's when I think it's at its most powerful. So it isn't just talk – it's action. "This isn't some hocus-pocus thing. It isn't sloganeering," he promises. "We've done randomised control studies on kids that have come through the programme, and not only are they empathetic at the end of it, they actually perform better academically as well. It's win-win." The practical side of the programme, which has four distinct modules (Understanding Empathy, Practising Empathy, Overcoming Barriers to Empathy and Putting Empathy Into Action) is vital: "That's the thing that I feel strongly about."

**MURPHY IS AN ELEGANT, ELOQUENT** talker, his voice as deep and sturdy as his cheekbones are lofty. He admits that his day job – done well – is a good training in empathy. "Listening is key to all acting. At the beginning, you're so petrified that you just learn your lines, and then it's rhubarb-rhubarb-rhubarb – my line!" But with experience you learn to listen and engage with your fellow actors. "I'm not saying I'm the most empathetic person in the whole wide world," he adds wryly. "Of course, I spend a lot of time thinking about myself and worrying about myself." Would your wife say you're a good empath? "I mean, definitely not. But at least, you know, I'm trying."

Both Murphy's parents were teachers (his mother doing French, his father eventually working in the Department for Education), and several other family members too. "Good teachers make the pupils feel acknowledged, make the pupils feel recognised," he concedes. He very much felt this at home, where he was the eldest of four children. "I had the problem, or advantage, depending on how you looked at it, that I would study French at school, and then my mother would teach me French at home also. And I would study

Irish at school, and then my father would teach me Irish at home also. So I probably had too much focus on education," he laughs, "and pretty much focused on me, at times!" (An attempt to go on and do a law degree, when his heart was already set on performance, ended in failure. "It was a terrible mistake – and I knew it, you know? I failed catastrophically in the first year, and I was almost sabotaging it.")

Murphy's sons, Malachy and Aran, are now in their teens, and in *Ionbhá* he writes in his own essay, "On Connection", that "raising boys in this world is difficult. You do everything in your power to avoid raising proto-bullies or proto-misogynists, to avoid all the evil tropes of masculinity we are confronted by every day." Is empathy a more feminine thing? "There probably is some pre-judging there about boys and girls, but I just think that if you're around it, and exposed to it, and that muscle is exercised, then I think there should be no difference."

**"THIS ISN'T SOME HOCUS-POCUS THING"**

That said, he believes that "schools should be mixed... I don't know why you would have boys and girls in separate schools. I went to an all-boys school all the way up, but it just seems insane to me. My boys

have gone to mixed schools, and I think it's been really beneficial for them."

All of which leads to the inevitable question: just how empathetic is macho cold-blooded killer Tommy Shelby? "Well, here's what I'll say to you," he starts – he has clearly thought about it before. He points out that Tommy is, when we first meet him, deeply traumatised after fighting in the first world war. "He's seen men blown apart in front of him – he's lost belief in authority, in faith, and he's arrived at this position. I think that what we tried to do over the course of the series is to defrost him. And interestingly, a lot of that comes from his kids." That said, he sighs. "Listen: he's a fictional character."

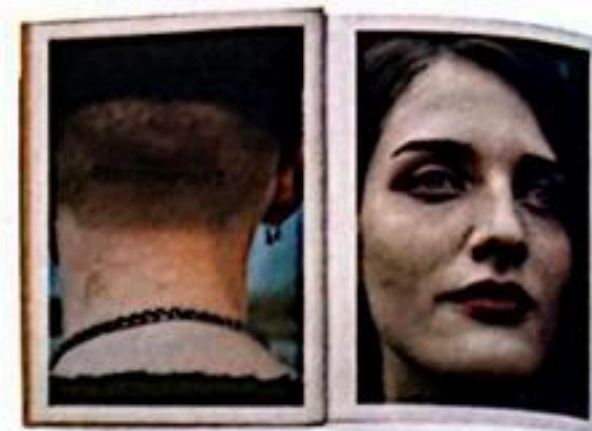
Murphy hopes the *Peaky Blinders* film does happen next year, but he also seems fine with a small wait. "I think we need a little break from each other," he says. "It was very, very intense... I think everybody just needed to go home to their families and to themselves." Then comes Nolan's blockbuster *Oppenheimer*, due next July, in which he takes the title role as the atomic-bomb-creating physicist. "Oppenheimer is a very complex character, and they're the sort of characters that I'm drawn to. And sadly, I think it's a very relevant tale, given the threat that the world is living under right now."

If Murphy loudly advocates empathy, he has no truck with woolliness. He is also an ambassador for Montblanc, and as he praises the elegance of its products, it leads me to ask which of his past characters' styles he'd like to revisit. "Oh God! I'm so unsentimental about my work," he says immediately. "I finish it, and I just move on. I never used to keep scripts or anything, I'd just throw them all out." And yet. He has started to, a bit, because "you know, for my kids, maybe", he says tentatively. "Maybe there's a film in there that they might just be interested in..." A middle-aged dad hoping his teenage sons might care about his career? You'd have to be truly hard-hearted not to empathise. ■HTSI

*Ionbhá: The Empathy Book for Ireland* is published by Mercier Press at €24.99

Worth(y) reading

Three art books for altruists.  
By Taanya Garg



ODESA

In 2015, a year after Russia annexed the peninsula of Crimea, Kyiv-born photographer Yelena Yemchuk set out for the city of Odesa to photograph its residents. The resulting photobook is an ode to a place and its people under occupation. Yemchuk is donating 20 per cent of the proceeds from every book bought at [gostbooks.com](http://gostbooks.com) to Voices, a charity providing psychological support to children of conflict. £45, [gostbooks.com](http://gostbooks.com)



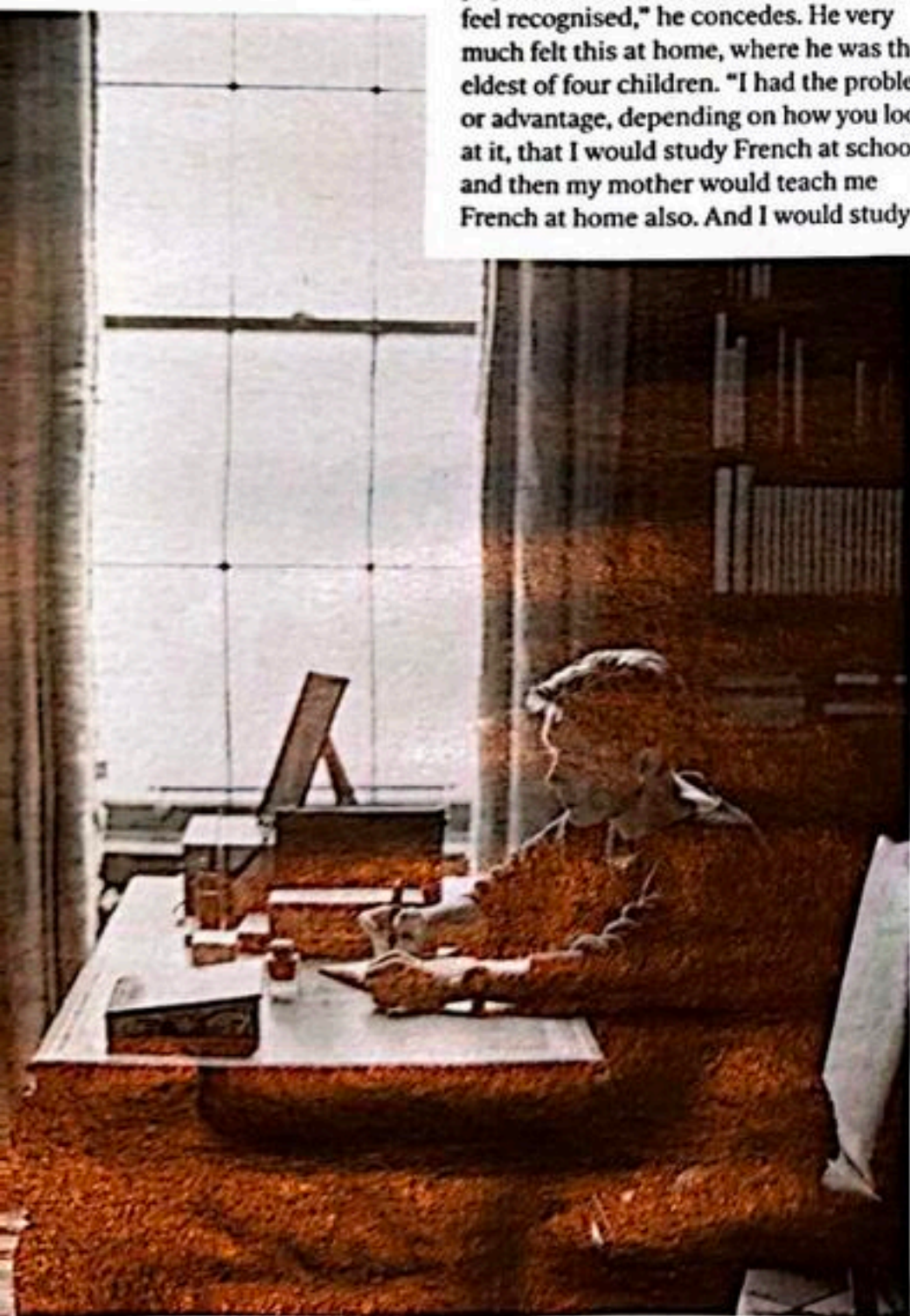
TOP DOGS: A BRITISH LOVE AFFAIR

For the dogs of the rich and famous, a standard day could involve flying to Mallorca, walking the Venice Film Festival's red carpet, or dining on olive oil-sautéed spinach. Tales of such pampered pooches have been compiled in a new book by Georgina Montagu and Dylan Thomas, who travelled across the country to capture the nation's most devoted owners with their hounds – from the Queen Consort to Andrew Lloyd Webber. A percentage of the proceeds will go towards Medical Detection Dogs, a charity training dogs to diagnose human medical conditions. £60, [triglyphbooks.com](http://triglyphbooks.com)



TREASURES OF UKRAINE

What role does culture play in times of crisis? For Ukrainian writer Andrey Kurkov, art and architecture are vital mediums for reinforcing the collective memory of a nation threatened with erasure. Alongside other artists, curators and critics, he has contributed to a new book documenting Ukraine's heritage through images and essays – from their ancient Byzantine icons and gold-domed cathedrals to ceramics and folk art. All proceeds from the book's sale will benefit PEN Ukraine, supporting authors in need and rebuilding museums damaged by the war. £25, [thamesandhudson.com](http://thamesandhudson.com) ■HTSI





## Good spirits

Five great causes to raise a glass to.  
By Taanya Garg



### SIMPLE VODKA

This farm-to-bottle vodka is made using locally sourced Idaho Russet potatoes and spring water from the Snake River Aquifer. The distillery is powered by wind energy, it recycles waste water, upcycles byproducts and the brand has donated more than 90,000 meals to charities working to end hunger in the US. \$24.99



### EQUIANO

Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped into slavery in the 1700s, eventually buying his freedom by selling puncheons of rum. Centuries later, his legacy has inspired Equiano, the world's first African-Caribbean rum that donates £2 from every bottle sold (plus five per cent of global company profits) to Anti-Slavery International. £49.95



### EVERLEAF

As a member of 1% for the Planet (a global alliance of businesses committed to protecting the environment), award-winning non-alcoholic aperitif Everleaf donates 1 per cent of its turnover to charity. Launched by conservation-biologist-turned bartender Paul Mathew, the brand uses ingredients such as vanilla, cherry blossom and bergamot, which it sources sustainably. In its last financial year, about £7,500 was raised, with support given to initiatives including The Drinks Trust and Equal Measures. £19



### JURACÁN RUM

Founded in response to the wreckage caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, Juracán Rum donates £5 from every bottle sold to disaster-relief charity ShelterBox, which has helped thousands of families to rebuild homes. Its debut Blend #001 is all things spice and nice, with notes of smokey caramel and light ginger. £40



### ELEPHANT GIN

Inspired by its founders' travels across Africa, Elephant Gin donates 15 per cent of profits to conservation projects including Rangers Club and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. Each bottle comes with a handwritten label bearing the name of an elephant protected by a partner foundation, and more than €1mn has been raised so far. £32.90 ■HTSI



Right: Nichole Johnson at Saint Aymes, Canary Wharf

**T**here are many things that are out of the ordinary about Lapin Rouillé. It's one of only three marques wholly owned by a black female in Champagne. It's a zero-dosage, 100 per cent meunier recipe, which goes against the grain. But the thing that really strikes you as you go to untwist the cork's wire cage on the Brut is the image on top of the cork: a smiling portrait of a black woman in middle age.

That woman, Hazel Lee Brown, is the late grandmother of Nichole Johnson, the 38-year-old CEO of drinks agency Rusty Rabbit International and the creator of Lapin Rouillé. "My grandmother was such a strong figure in our community when I was growing up – she was a real inspiration to me," says Johnson. "She gave me the nickname Rusty Rabbit. After she died from uterine cancer in 2017 I named my company and my champagne in her memory."

Johnson was raised in California by parents who both worked for the American brewer Anheuser-Busch. As a child she often accompanied her father on work trips to Europe. It was there, in Champagne, that she befriended the family behind Champagne Bourdairre-Gallois, the eight-hectare organic estate where Lapin Rouillé is produced.

Family connections run strong throughout the Lapin Rouillé range: Johnson's mother is on the rosé; her paternal grandmother's on the demi-sec. Her sister Avelina is on the blanc de blancs. But this gallery commemorates more than just family ties: all of these women have battled, survived or succumbed to cancer at some point in their life. "Unfortunately it has run amok in my family on both the maternal and paternal side," says Johnson.

In November 2020, just months before launch, Johnson discovered she had cancer too. "I was diagnosed with stage-two vaginal cancer, which requires aggressive treatment. And the whole experience was a real eye-opener for me because I learned, through my own experience and through speaking to other women, that women of colour, and black women particularly, are not listened to, not advocated for and not fought for as they should be, compared with other ethnicities."

Johnson's answer was to found Rusty Rabbit Cares, a foundation raising awareness of, and funding for, cancer treatment and care for black women on both sides of the Atlantic. "In most countries, women of colour are the least likely to be listened to or believed when expressing their health concerns," says Johnson. "So we want to help to challenge that system and give back."

### "CANCER RAN AMOK IN MY FAMILY"

In the case of breast cancer, black women are around 40 per cent more likely to die of it than white women, according to the Susan G Komen foundation, the world's largest non-profit source of funding for the fight against breast cancer. Black women are also more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age and at a later stage. This gross lack of parity, according to Komen, is down to a combination of factors: financial and social barriers to early diagnosis, treatment and care; discrimination and systemic racism in the medical world; and a susceptibility among black women to certain, particularly aggressive, forms of breast cancer.

These problems are exacerbated by a simple lack of data on cancer in ethnic minority groups. Researchers behind a recent study in the US that found a genetic link between people



DRINKING

## The fizz kid

As a black woman making champagne, Nichole Johnson is a pioneer both in her industry and in the fight against cancer.

By Alice Lascelles

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICH BARR

with African ancestry and an aggressive type of breast cancer called on more black people to get involved in clinical trials in a bid to improve survival rates for people with the disease.

From January, \$1 (or £1 in the UK) from every bottle of Lapin Rouillé sold through the company's site will go to the Rusty Rabbit Cares foundation. The brand is also calling on restaurants and bars to donate a portion of profits from by-the-glass sales. These funds will then go towards funding cancer treatment for black women in the UK and US. The fund officially launches on 28 December, but has already contributed to treatment for women on both sides of the Atlantic; it has also pledged its support for the EnCourage Kids Foundation, a charity that works to enhance the lives of children receiving hospital treatment for cancer and other critical illnesses in the US.

"Next year I plan to hold a Lapin Rouillé Trésor fundraiser event showcasing black excellence in food, music, fashion, art, wine and spirits," adds Johnson. A partnership with *Ebony* magazine is also in the pipeline.

When we speak, Johnson is in the middle of another gruelling programme of chemo, radiation and surgery. She is drained but not deterred.

"Right now, I am a small brand with a big vision. But anyone who knows me, knows I shoot for the stars. So while

I have breath left in my body, that's exactly what I am going to do." ■HTSI

@alicelascelles



LAPIN ROUILLÉ BRUT, £44.99