

OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

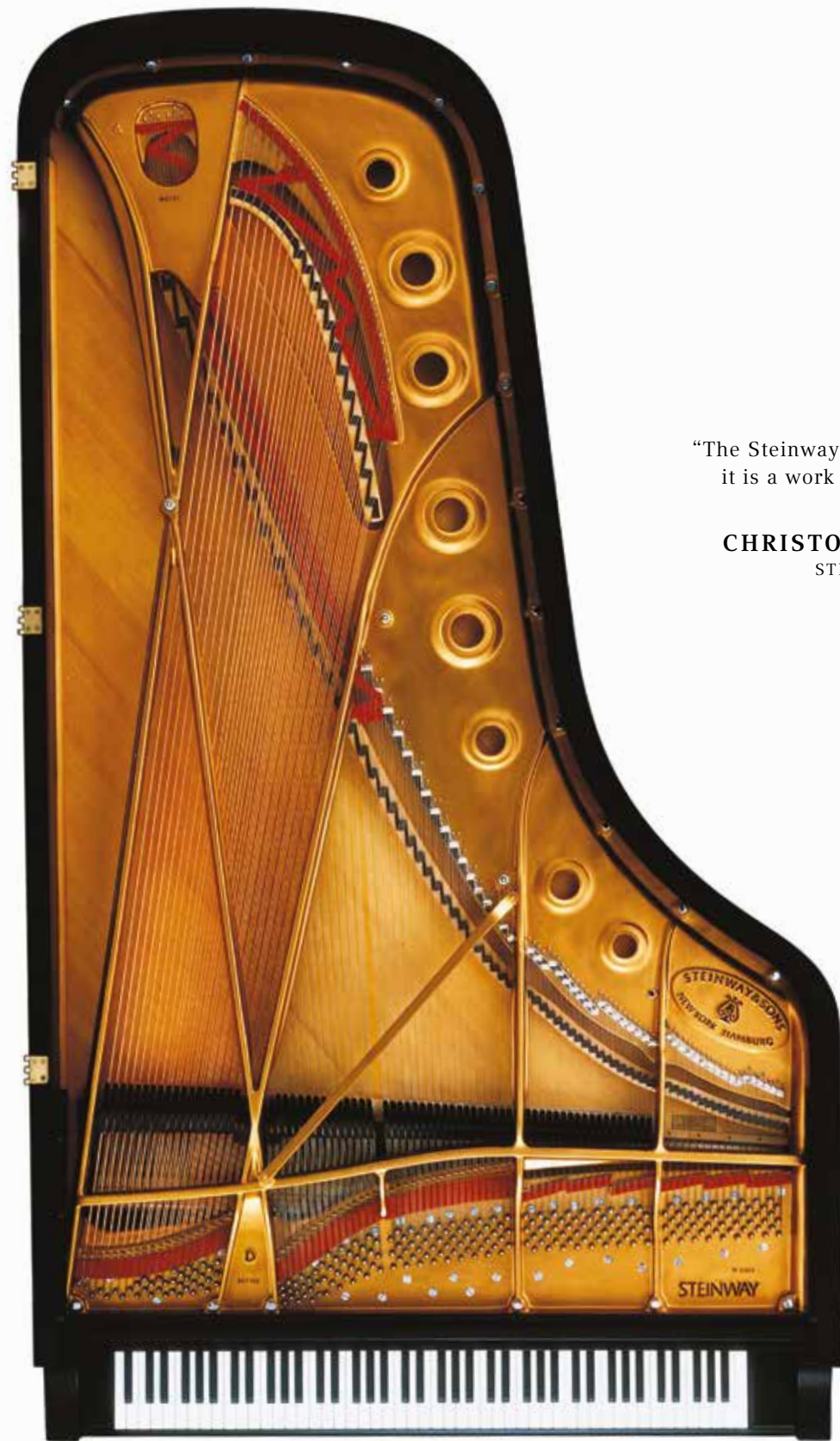


REFOCUS
Fresh perspectives for a new year



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The Royal Over-Seas League is dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding through cultural and education activities around the Commonwealth and beyond. A not-for-profit private members' organisation, we've been bringing like-minded people together since 1910.
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WELCOME

‘Renovations of our historic Clubhouse have made it an even more comfortable place for members to stay’



It is at this time of year that we both reflect on the past year and look forward to the future. I was pleased to meet a member recently who commented that the renovations to the Clubhouse were new and welcome, yet at the same time familiar, very much in keeping with ROSL being a ‘home away from home’.

The last year has seen the successful refurbishment of our Duke of York bar, an important meeting point in the Clubhouse, with a new cocktail menu to match. It's also the second year that our 1910 Dining Room has been open following many years of it being mothballed. We introduced Daily Club Classics and a pre-theatre menu, as well as à la carte, to cater for all members' tastes. The treasured garden also saw an upgrade in facilities earlier in the year. And for those members who stay overnight in the Clubhouse, we started our programme of renovations of the bedrooms, as well as the heating and pressure systems around our historic building, to ensure an even more comfortable stay.

In addition to the articles in this *Overseas* on the theme of renewal, members will enjoy the interview with the new Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Kingsley Abbott, and his vision for the future of the Institute.

I hope many of you will visit during the festive season, or perhaps join us in January to celebrate Burns Night.

Season's Greetings,

Dr Annette Prandzioch
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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Outside the shadow of conflict, Iraq has a richly diverse natural landscape, from its deserts and marshlands, to the snowcapped peaks of the Kurdish north



From the EDITOR

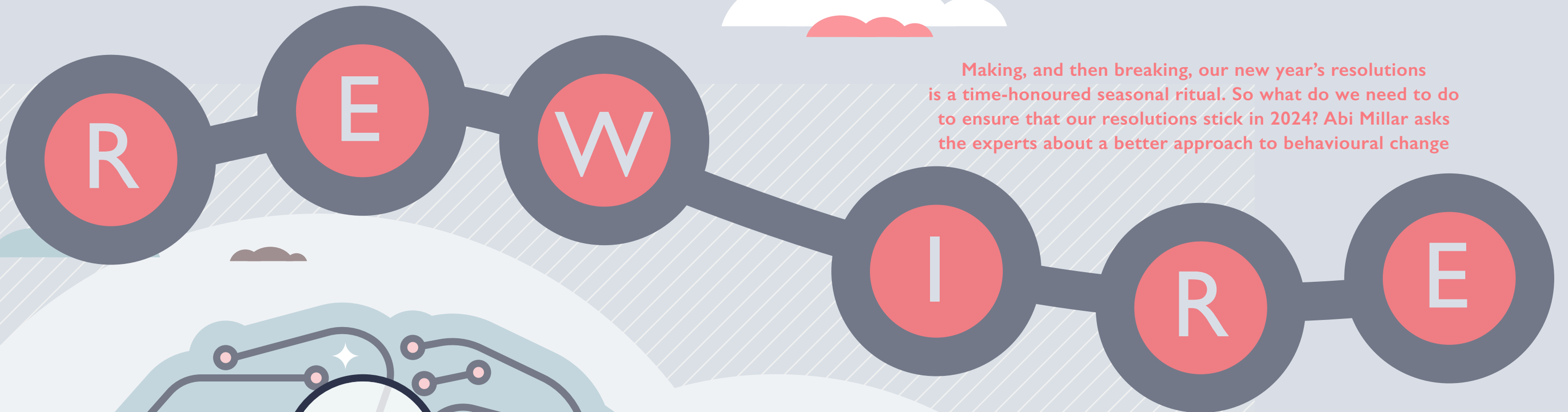
Across the hemispheres the new year will greet us with two very different faces; in the southern of course, summer will be in full thrum, with new intentions for 2024 realised in the revitalising warmth and sunlight of the season. For those of us in the northern hemisphere, we must enviously make do with promises to rehash our diet, be better with money or finally write that novel in the less-inspiring sideways sleet, and dark-bordered slips of light that pass for daytime in the late-winter months.

But the new year presents hope and motivation for us all, wherever we are on the planet; the potential for renewal, and the chance to refocus on changes we'd like to make in the coming months – that's exactly what this edition of *Overseas* celebrates. On page 6 Abi Millar looks at the science behind forming resolutions, and how to make fruitful goals for the year by exploiting the near-magical power of habits. For those of us alarmed by recent headlines about ultra processed food and the dangers it presents, Felicity Cloake – writer of *Fortnum & Mason's Food Book of the Year* – takes a look at the science behind the stories, with practical tips on including more whole foods in our diet.

Fresh perspectives come from my fascinating conversation with James Willcox, founder of travel company Untamed Borders, about the renewal of Iraq as a post-conflict nation and the abundant beauty to be found there; and our PHOTO 23 winners are announced on page 22 with a look behind the scenes at the judging process and the stories behind the images themselves.

We hope you have a peaceful festive season and a very happy new year, from all at ROSL.

Rosie Allen
editor@rosl.org.uk



Making, and then breaking, our new year's resolutions is a time-honoured seasonal ritual. So what do we need to do to ensure that our resolutions stick in 2024? Abi Millar asks the experts about a better approach to behavioural change

YOUR MIND

HOW HABITS MAKE US BETTER

New Year, New You, may be more of a marketing strategy than a philosophy to live by. But it's a hard piece of messaging to shake.

At the start of every year, the question re-emerges: which of your bad habits will you put to bed this year, and which good habits will take their place?

We're encouraged to imagine a new, improved version of ourselves – a kind of Self 2.0 – who goes to the gym every day, never maxes out their credit card, and carefully eats a single biscuit before placing the packet out of reach.

As the cliched trajectory goes, we may keep these resolutions for a while. But by the end of January, motivation starts to wane. The running kit languishes at the back of the wardrobe. We open a bottle of wine on a weeknight. We eat a second biscuit, then a third, and a fourth, and a fifth. According

to a 2016 study, 41% of Americans make new year's resolutions, but only 9% of those feel they are successful in keeping them. Another study, involving 2,000 British adults, found that people tend to give up on new behaviours after just seven weeks.

This poses the question – if our resolutions are doomed to fail, why do we bother with them in the first place? Is there a way we can use our new year's momentum as a genuine spur to change, or must the early weeks of the year be forever characterised by defeat?

Why willpower won't cut it

Dr Ayelet Fishbach, a social psychologist at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, and author of *Get it Done: Surprising Lessons from the Science of Motivation*, maintains success is possible. 'The data we have on new year's resolutions

suggests most people drop them within two to three months, but that a significant proportion of the population is still pursuing them by November,' she says.

The interesting question for Fishbach, and other researchers in this field, is what makes

these people different from the rest of us. A simple answer might be that they have more willpower, that they're blessed with an unusual strength of mind and ability to tough it out. That's not surprising: when you're doing Dry January and nursing a non-alcoholic beer, it can feel like a test of your inner mettle. However, the picture that's emerging from social research is a little more nuanced than that.

Dr Torsten Martiny-Huenger, an associate professor at the department of psychology, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, remarks that the concept of 'willpower' has

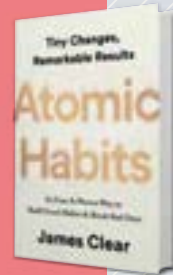
Few habitual runners would claim to be sustained by willpower alone. They love running, and rarely feel like they have to force it



REWIRE YOUR BRAIN

Recommended reading
More inspiration for making new year's resolutions

Atomic Habits, James Clear
If procrastination is killing your progress, then this book might just help you to break the habit of putting off your to-do list, and create helpful motivations to prioritise the things that matter most.



Get It Done: Surprising Lessons from the Science of Motivation, Ayelet Fishbach
Identifying the right goals can be half the battle when it comes to forming resolutions; here, psychologist Fishbach uses new science to help you set a framework for lasting success.



The Kindness Method, Shahroo Izadi
Being kind to yourself is the magic bullet for lasting change according to Shahroo, who believes that focusing on your strengths will empower you to improve your life.



TED TALKS PLAYLIST

How to form better habits
Trust the platform that curates all the best advice from the planet's most talented people to have a specific playlist dedicated to habit-forming; visit [ted.com/playlists/321/talks_to_form_better_habits](https://www.ted.com/playlists/321/talks_to_form_better_habits) for a couple of hours' worth of inspiring viewing.

influenced the research community for decades.

'It was perceived as a strength that individuals possess to varying degrees. It was also assumed to be a limited resource that can become drained when using it,' he says. 'However, more and more evidence has been presented that is incompatible with this idea.'

The obvious counterpoint is that, when you talk to people who *do* maintain healthy habits, they often don't perceive them as being challenging. Take running as an example. Most newbie runners, lacing up their trainers on 1 January, would describe their experience as unpleasant, a battle of mind over matter. But once the habit becomes entrenched, it's a different story. Few habitual runners would claim to be sustained by willpower alone. They love running, and rarely feel like they have to force it.

'The people who keep their resolutions are the ones who have found an intrinsic motivation to pursue their goals,' says Fishbach. 'They're doing it because they've found some enjoyment or satisfaction in the process.'

Eloise Skinner, an author and psychotherapist, agrees. 'Instead of setting ourselves up for a fight to achieve what we want by force, we can look at resolutions from a different angle: how can we set up our environment, behaviour, and habits in a way that supports the outcomes we want?' she says.

Pick the right kind of goal

When it comes to keeping a new year's resolution, the first step is to make sure it's the right one for you. If you feel utterly paralysed by the thought of it, then take that as a red flag. 'Let's say you want to start swimming,' says Fishbach. 'Is that going to be fun for you? If you have a job and young children at home, is it feasible for you to go to the swimming pool?'

Skinner thinks it's important to set a habit that aligns with your sense of identity. That means, if you're taking up a new habit or dropping an old one, you can analyse your behaviour from the perspective of the person you'd like to be.

'Allowing your identity to shift into the position of the person who would uphold

a certain behaviour or habit – a gym-goer, or a healthy eater, or an early riser – can provide a great foundation on which to build and maintain new resolutions,' she says.

Danny Zane, a therapist and counsellor at Therapy North London, says you need to think about your 'why'. What is your motivation? How will it change your life? What role might it play in boosting your wellbeing? 'If the goal that has been set is clear, specific, and actually achievable, it is more likely to stick as a resolution,' he says.

Specificity is key here. While you might want to get fitter, 'getting fitter' is a nebulous goal, with no clear way of motivating yourself or monitoring progress. A better resolution would be something with a built-in target, let's say 'running a 30-minute 5K by spring'.

One 2017 study, which looked at nearly ten million marathon runners, found that people were 1.4 times more likely to finish a marathon in 3:59 than 4:01. The dream of running a four-hour marathon (as opposed to just 'being a better runner') was a huge motivating factor that drove them to perform their best.

While our culture tends to valorise an all-or-nothing approach, being too rigid in your goals can mean setting yourself up for failure

Persist through discomfort

Once you know what you want to accomplish, take heart: the scientific consensus is that you can absolutely teach an old dog new tricks. Neuroscience shows that every time you repeat a behaviour, you're strengthening the associated neural pathways, increasing the likelihood that you'll perform that behaviour again.

To adopt a slightly tenuous metaphor, doing something habitually is like following a well-worn path through a forest. It's the easiest thing in the world to retrace your steps. Forging a new path, by contrast, can be challenging – you might need to hack through bushes, clear back obstacles, ford streams. Your goal is to persist through the difficulty until it's no longer difficult, which might take a couple of months or more. At the end of this period, the behaviour has become a habit and the new path is itself well worn.

'It's important to recognise that it's going to feel uncomfortable initially,' says Fishbach. 'That's a sign that it's working and that you're changing. The discomfort is temporary, and eventually it's going to feel great.'

Consider your environment

In the meantime, there are certain 'hacks' you can use to keep the discomfort at a manageable level. Martiny-Huenger has been researching the role of 'situational cues' in forming beneficial habits – which essentially means something in the environment that triggers you to perform that behaviour. If you walk past the off-license on your way home from work, that might be your cue for buying alcohol. If you keep a fruit basket on your kitchen table, that might be your cue for eating fruit.

'The problem with new intentions is that the behaviours required to accomplish the intention are not systematically linked to relevant cues – or the relevant cues still have links to the undesired old habits,' says Martiny-Huenger. 'However, new beneficial links can be achieved.'

One way to do that is through 'if-then action planning', in which you think about what your cues will look like ahead of time, and plan how you're going to respond. For example, 'if I walk past the off-license, then I'll keep on walking', or 'if someone offers me a second drink, then I'll say no thanks'.

Another strategy is to restructure your physical environment. If your resolution is to eat less chocolate, then make sure the chocolate isn't in eye-shot – put it on a high shelf you can't reach. If it's to start your day with a run, prepare your kit the night before and place it by the side of your bed.

'The advice is to take the effect your environment has on you seriously. Failure is not a personal weakness – it merely indicates that one is not using appropriate strategies,' Martiny-Huenger says.

The journey, not the destination

Zane suggests ensuring you have a strong support network in place, celebrating every win no matter how small, and taking a long-term outlook as opposed to chasing immediate results. If you're trying to quit a more negative behaviour (let's say drinking alcohol), it might be useful to look a little deeper into the psychological mechanisms underlying it, and if necessary seek professional help.

'If you can recognise when and where you drink too much, then you must start avoiding these situations,' he says. 'Stress could be a

trigger, so when you are feeling stressed or anxious, try some mindful breathing exercises, or perhaps do some exercise to help remove your stress.'

Patience and consistency are key here. While our culture tends to valorise an all-or-nothing approach, being too rigid in your goals can mean setting yourself up for failure. In other words, slowly reducing the bad habit may be easier than suddenly stopping, and it's important to give ourselves grace when we fall off track.

'Forget about willpower, forget about punishing yourself or scolding yourself – can you find a way of doing it that's enjoyable and which fits around your other goals?' says Fishbach. 'What predicts performance is how excited you are about the journey, not how much you value the destination.'

That's quite different from the way that most of us approach our new year's resolutions. Even the word 'resolution' evokes a kind of dogged steely-mindedness, which for most people isn't a recipe for long-term success. What's required is something softer, smarter, and altogether more strategic – a path to making lasting lifestyle changes this year and into the next.





Felicity Cloake
Winner of Fortnum & Mason's Food Book of the Year, Felicity Cloake has authored *The Guardian's* 'How to Make the Perfect...' recipe column for 12 years and her books have won two Guild of Food Writers Awards

Lunch is trickier for many people, especially those eating on the go, and for whom a packed lunch isn't practical. Try to seek out freshly made items (beware of sandwiches or wraps), don't be afraid to ask about provenance, and remember that, especially when travelling and faced with endless junk, a piece of fruit and some nuts is a perfectly nutritious meal.

At dinner, the same common sense rules apply;

check labels, in restaurants you're not sure of, go for simple dishes, and if in doubt, stay away from ready meals and processed meats or meat alternatives. Nevertheless, like me, you may be relieved to learn that van Tulleken advises readers not to 'worry too much about fat, salt and sugar' when cooking from scratch. 'If you're eating real food, your body will... take care of your intake of those molecules pretty well.'

Finally, should all this have you reaching for the easy comfort of the nearest chocolate bar, bear in mind you don't need to go cold turkey. Professor Tim Spector, expert in epidemiology and gut health at King's College London and award-winning author of books including *Food For Life: The New Science Of Eating Well* acknowledges that 'it's virtually impossible to cut out UPFs and drinks completely'. 'We all eat some,' he concedes, 'but let's try and reduce it.' A reassuringly realistic new year's resolution if ever I heard one.

sweeteners, humectants, flavours, colourings and many other additives are all UPF indicators.'

If you're not sure, a free app, Open Food Facts, offers a barcode scanner to try to determine the NOVA rating of many popular products – but once you've stripped your cupboards of long-life pesto and artificially-sweetened granola, and your fridge of diet drinks and plant-based burgers, what on earth do you replace them with?

The inconvenient truth for many of us is raw ingredients; to avoid ultra processed foods, you need to take back control of your diet, and prepare as much as possible yourself (or outsource the labour to a decent cafe or restaurant where they make everything themselves) rather than relying on pre-made foodstuffs unless you've vetted them first.

At breakfast time, choose bread that contains nothing more than flour, water, salt and yeast or sourdough starter, plus any seeds or other straightforward additions (noting that in many countries, white flour must be fortified by law), butter or virgin oil rather than margarine, and steer clear of chocolate spreads and nut butters containing palm oil. Oats, real muesli, plain yoghurt, fruit, eggs, vegetables and pulses are also good choices. Bacon isn't ultra processed, but sausages and bran flakes probably are.

developed by researchers at Brazil's University of Sao Paulo, food falls in four principal categories: unprocessed and minimally processed (e.g. fruit, vegetables fungi, seeds, meat, milk and so on, or those where the processing does not substantially change the nutritional content of the food, such as pasta, plain yoghurt, tea and coffee); processed culinary ingredients used to prepare and season these minimally processed foods (like oil, butter, sugar, salt, vinegar or honey); processed foods (treated to preserve or alter their flavour or texture, and usually recognisable as modified versions of group one, including canned fruit, vegetables and pulses, cured meat and fish, pickles and traditional breads and cheeses) and ultra-processed foods (defined by a UN report as 'formulations of ingredients, mostly of exclusive industrial use, typically created by series of industrial techniques and processes', a category that encompasses everything from soft drinks to protein bars).

As you've no doubt already realised, the line between groups three and four can be a tricky one to navigate for the average consumer. Even the most virtuous looking brown loaf can be ultra processed, while a bag of potato crisps may contain nothing more than potatoes, oil and salt. So how on earth do you tell the difference?

Dr Chris van Tulleken, author of the best-selling book *Ultra-Processed People* urges those concerned about what they're eating to take the time to scrutinise labels for unfamiliar ingredients from odd-sounding things like gums and E-numbers to so-called natural flavourings, and consider 'Why are the preservatives in there? What is oligofructose? ... just asking those questions starts to make the food a bit weirder and less palatable.'

As the evidence he and Dr Dolly Theis submitted to the British Parliament's Health and Social Care Select Committee explains, 'there's a formal scientific definition of UPF but it can be boiled down to this: if a food is wrapped in plastic and has at least one ingredient that you wouldn't usually find in a standard home kitchen, it's a UPF. Emulsifiers, stabilisers,

The inconvenient truth for many of us is raw ingredients; you need to take back control of your diet and prepare as much as possible yourself

57%
Is the percentage of UPFs that allegedly make up the average UK diet according to a 2019 study

24%
increase in the risk of experiencing heart attacks, strokes and angina among those eating the highest volumes of UPFs according to the British Heart Foundation

47%
Eliminating ultra-processed foods could potentially reduce the prevalence of excessive free sugar intake by almost half according to a report from the UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey

10% rise in each daily intake of UPFs was linked to a **6%** increase in heart disease risk

Food writer Felicity Cloake takes a look behind the terrifying headlines to discover more about our reliance on Ultra-Processed Foods, and what practical – and delicious – steps we can take to avoid them

You've probably heard the acronym UPF bandied about a lot in recent months — often in the kind of alarmist tones that suggest imminent threat to life on earth. Rest assured it has nothing to do with paramilitary groups, or alien invasion; instead the threat lurks much closer to home. Probably in your kitchen in fact, because these ultra-processed foods are now estimated to account for over half of calorie intake in the UK and US, a third in Mexico and Chile, and almost a fifth in China... and global consumption is rising fast.

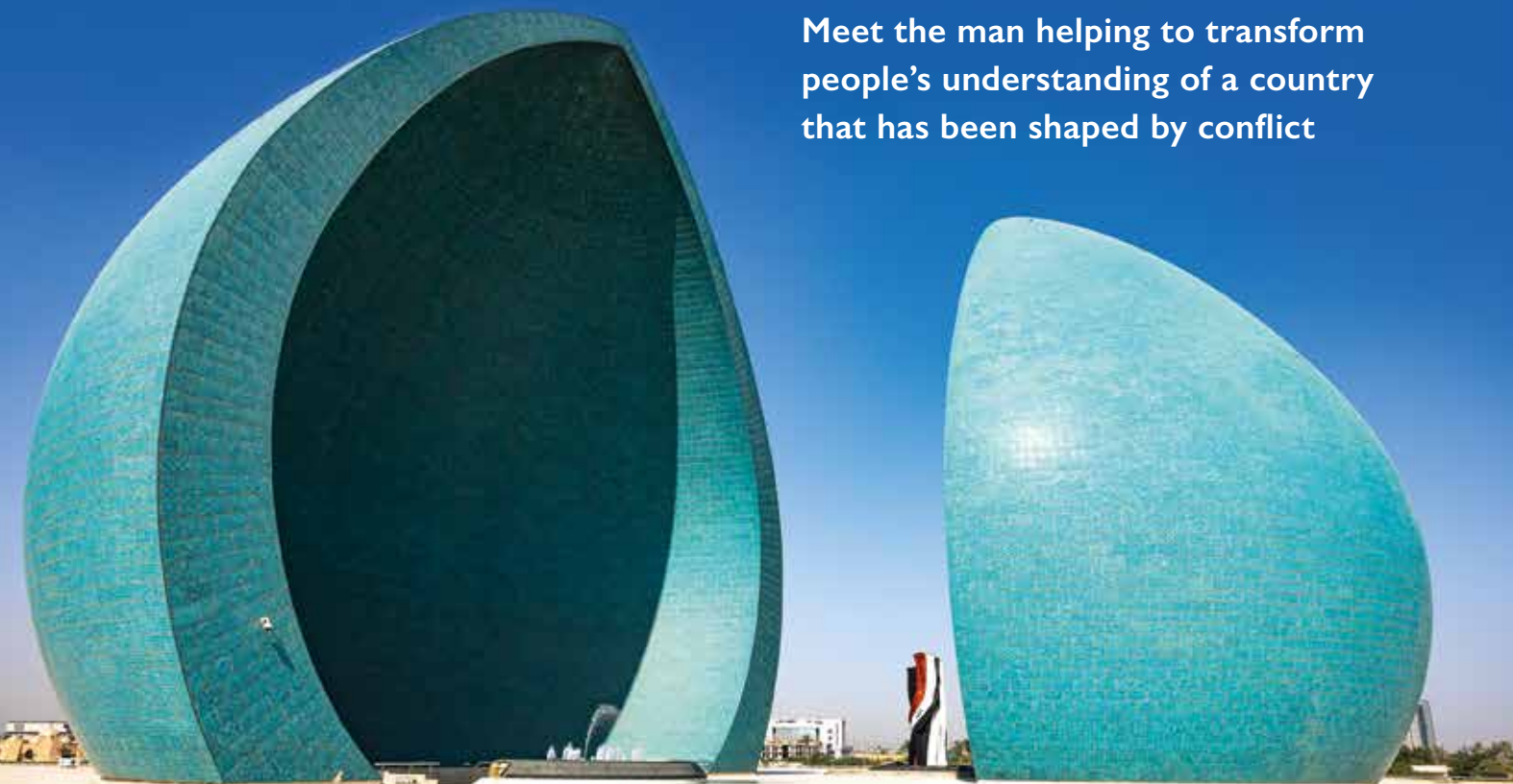
The reasons for their popularity are obvious; such convenience foods are often the quick and easy option, perfectly suited to a world in which there's never quite enough

time to go round. Yet despite the bold health claims on much of their packaging – 'low fat!' 'sugar free!' 'high in fibre!' – UPFs have been linked to weight gain and associated issues such as poor heart health. Studies presented at last summer's European Society of Cardiology congress claimed that a highly processed diet, in the words of the British Heart Foundation, 'significantly increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes' even when scientists adjusted for the impact of salt, sugar and fat, thus implicating the processing, rather than the ingredients concerned.

Yet, unless you exist solely on raw fresh produce, almost everything we eat is processed to some degree. According to the widely used NOVA classification system

IRAQ: CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE

Meet the man helping to transform people's understanding of a country that has been shaped by conflict



If there's a country that seems to completely confound and defy expectation, then Iraq may well be it. For many of us, the name conjures uncomfortable images that flicker through the consciousness like rolling news footage (which itself came of age in the years in which US Forces invaded the country, giving the world horribly unprecedented access to a country at war); tragic images of peoples displaced, drone attacks, ancient monuments destroyed; news of massacres, turmoil and political unrest. The 21st century saw Iraq undergo not only invasion by the US and allied forces in the early noughties,

and the deposition of their dictatorial leader Saddam Hussein, but also invasion by ISIS in the 2010s which further threw the country into turmoil after a fragile peace had been established.

But for the people that visit the 'cradle of civilisation', there's so much more to the country than the shadow of conflict, from its beautiful and diverse natural landscapes (including the deserts and marshlands in the country's centre and south to the snow-capped peaks of the Kurdish north) to the myriad archaeological sites that tell of Iraq's rich and storied ancient history.

A key figure in changing the narrative of this post-conflict region is James Willcox,

founder of Untamed Borders, a travel company that runs trips to some of the least visited and most inaccessible places in the world. We talk to him about his mission to try and transform people's understanding of 'so-called failed states', the ways in which Iraq might regenerate after decades of turmoil, and how positive tourism can benefit local communities.

James, Iraq in particular has seen an incredible amount of trauma and upheaval in the past 20 years, from the War on Terror, to Mosul's occupation by ISIS in the 2010s. That means that people most likely have a preconceived notion of the country – do you



Karbala



The Ishtar Gate



Halgurd, Northern Iraq



Southern Marshes

enjoy turning those expectations upside down and what surprises people most?

There is no hiding from the fact that places like Iraq have suffered severe difficulties and the things you see in the media, such as the aerial bombardment of Mosul and its control by ISIS were harrowing, and very true.

However, that's only part of the nation's picture and the country has many other layers – it's been our mission to highlight those other layers for guests. For example, we began operating trips to Iraq in the early 2010s and we would take guests to Erbil, in the Kurdish-controlled north of Iraq. It was an area undergoing a huge boom period, thanks to oil money and foreign investment, and it largely

escaped the violence of the early 2000s, despite very troubled times not far away.

This would surprise many of our guests because in Erbil you would see high rises, neon lights, huge malls and wide boulevards – it almost felt like a mini Dubai and security was much better there. That's only a small slice of the Iraqi picture – it also has an incredible ancient history, beautiful scenery and it's known as the cradle of civilisation.

Some of our guests, who come with us to Iraq, have a knowledge of this already and may have read about the Ancient

Sumerians, the Babylonians and the Ancient Mesopotamian civilisation, which all called what's now modern day Iraq their home in the past.

Iraq has ancient history and beautiful scenery, and is known as the cradle of civilisation

However, some guests just want to visit a rarely visited nation and their expectations are one of adventure.

Most though will have watched the news over the years and seen the horrors and troubled periods the nation has been through – we aim to help show that all the countries we serve, including Iraq, are more than just their war-torn or troubled past. ●



Michael Palin in Iraq with *Untamed Borders*



Samarra

You organised the planning and logistics for Michael Palin's Channel 5 series Into Iraq, following the Tigris River 1,000 miles south, from its source at Lake Hazar in eastern Turkey, to the Persian Gulf. Did guiding a high-profile western presenter into this situation give you extra cause for concern? And what are the practicalities and potential dangers that must be taken into account when travelling to a post-conflict country?

So given that Iraq went through the war in 2003 and its following period of instability, along with the conflict with ISIS, there are still security risks and for every trip we undertake a full assessment of them. When you're travelling with a film crew those risks can be different, because authorities will often take a different view to the media than they would to tourists for example. They may need different permissions and accreditations.

Also, when filming you potentially create a bigger footprint. People remember you more and might be asking more questions. You might want to film for longer periods of time in an open area such as a street, so you'd need to ascertain how long it would be wise to film in such an exposed area; you don't really want to be in one place for too long. Having someone who is well known potentially increases a risk, but then Michael isn't particularly well known in Iraq, which I think was probably quite refreshing for him; to just be part of the team rather than someone who is feted and recognised.

To what extent would you say that Iraq is now 'renewed' post-conflict? Is there a feeling of hope?

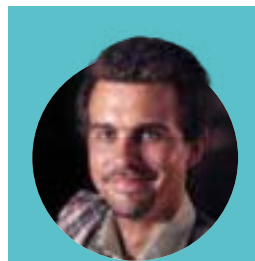
It's very hard to say. There would be a lot of people that would say 'no'. As we speak there are a lot of issues in the KRG region, which used to sell its own oil on a pipeline to Turkey. However, the Baghdad Government have ruled that process as illegal and in contravention of their trade agreement with the KRG region; the international community agreed with Baghdad on that issue too. So the oil pipeline has been turned off and could potentially lead to economic struggles there.

And from 2019 up until Covid there were huge civil protests against the government in all of the big towns. Iraq suffers from a lot of problems; it's heavily reliant on two rivers that start in neighbouring countries, Turkey and Iran, both of whom are building large dams because they want to conserve water as much as possible, so they have ecological issues, huge political issues, a large youth population with low employment. So I think if you spoke to a lot of people on the street, they wouldn't necessarily be full of positivity and hope. However, if you look at the last 20 years this is one of the most peaceful periods

within that time, and so with that there's a hope that the peace allows for things to develop and improve.

And Iraq does have one of the world's largest oil reserves which could mean finance coming into the country in a big way. There's also other potential for wealth there – tourism, precious archaeological sites, all that ancient history: 1,000 years ago Iraq was the centre of the Islamic world and was incredibly advanced, for example the oldest library in the world was in Baghdad. There are so many beautiful natural assets too, including the beautiful Zagros mountains in the north of the country.

So while the country has its problems there are certainly reasons to have hope about its future.



James Willcox

James has guided hundreds of people in hard-to-reach destinations. He is one of the founders of the Marathon of Afghanistan, the Somaliland Marathon and the Iraq Ski Rally. He is also a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

How open are Iraqis to tourism and is there broader appeal for tourists?

For a country where much of the land is made up of flat plains bordered by two rivers, it has a surprising amount of diversity of landscape to explore. If you travel from south to north, you have the marshes in the south which are this vast ecological resource, and you've got the Zagros mountains in the north. In terms of diversity of ethnicity and religion; you have Kurds in the north, Christian communities, the Yazidi people, and we often

go to Lalish which is their spiritual home. Iraq contains the two great pilgrimage centres for Shia people in Karbala and Arba'in, and more people make the pilgrimage to Karbala than go to Hajj in Mecca.

So you have this very rich culture and that taste of modern Iraq mixed with the ancient sites and natural features. It's really a place that's rich in different types of experience.

How can tourism benefit post-conflict regions?

We think a trip has been successful if the guests have had a rewarding experience, but also if the communities we visit benefit in some kind of way and of course there is a financial benefit from tourism as well. In a lot of countries we work in, there isn't a tourism board so if there are ways that we can try and help with that we do. For example, we worked to create a ski community in Afghanistan – guests enjoyed it and it was really positive for the community too. So after we'd worked in Iraq for a couple of years we thought this

could be a really positive thing to try to replicate in the mountains of Kurdistan. We work with a small local community in the town of Choman to develop their ski touring operation, putting on a ski race every year. It turned out there had been a winter festival in Choman in the 50s that Saddam Hussein had stopped, so the locals thought it would be a good idea to tie that in with the skiing. It was great to see that in a small way we were part of rekindling some of the community culture that had been going on pre-dictatorship.

You've said that you want to challenge the view of 'failed states seen through one narrative' – what brought you here?

We're predominantly a tourism company and so have a responsibility to provide a rewarding and safe experience for our guests. But beyond that we have a commitment to the communities we visit, with a duty to

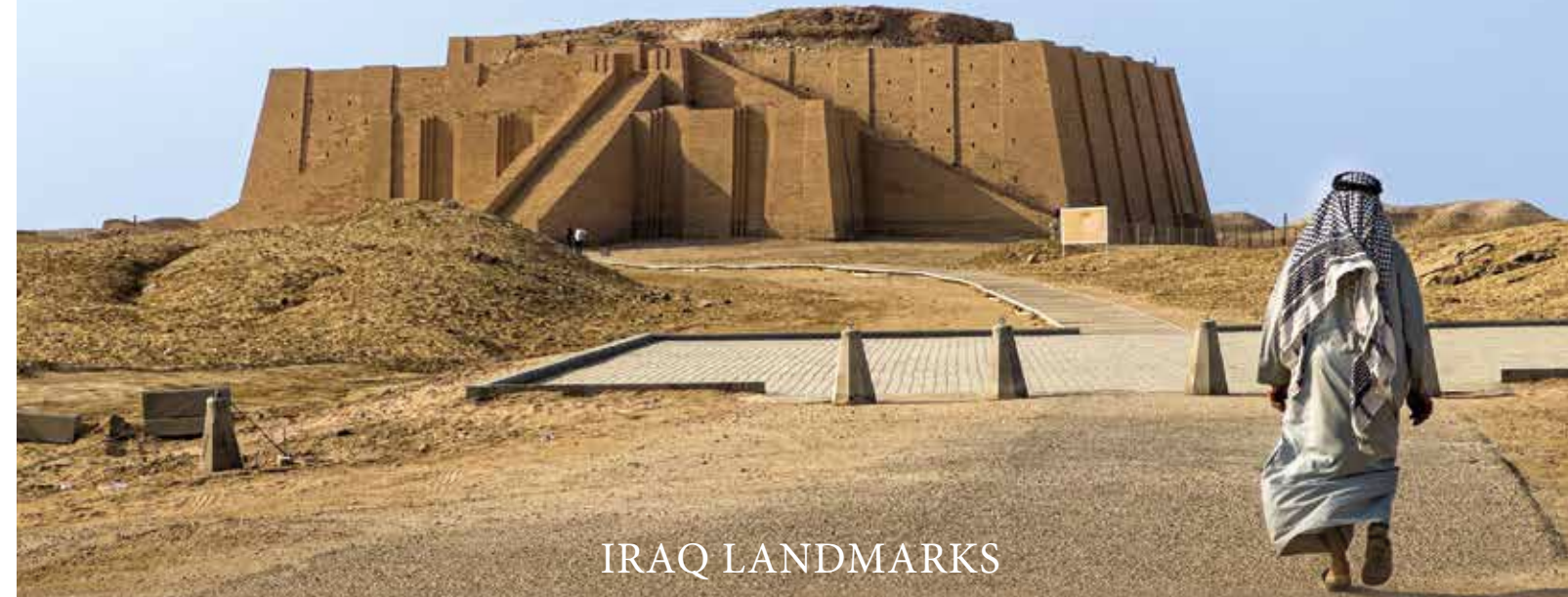
represent these countries as the multi-faceted places that they are, and not through a simple narrative. It's not particularly hard to do – these regions are interesting, so we don't have to embellish their stories, but we do push back against the idea of a single narrative that

plays into a biased view of that country, and try to represent something that's authentic.

We also can't go the other way and present places in a completely positive light with no nuance. I remember reading an airline magazine recently that had a breezy article on how lovely Mogadishu (capital of

Somalia) is with no consideration of some of the dangers and unrest present to tourists in that location at the moment. It didn't mention the conflict at all, and was all about markets and beaches, which feels irresponsible. You have to be honest but not get bogged down in one particular narrative either.

We have a duty to represent these countries as the multi-faceted places that they are and not through a simple narrative



IRAQ LANDMARKS



Erbil Citadel

Cited as the oldest continuously occupied site in the world, the visually arresting citadel comprises a fortified settlement atop a large mound



Al Shaheed Monument

Known as the 'martyrs memorial' and dedicated to Iraqi casualties of the Iran-Iraq war



Hatra

A rich archaeological site from the Parthian Empire, also seen in the film *The Exorcist*



Zagros mountain range

This beautiful range stretches across the north of the country, and includes Mount Halgurd, the county's highest climbable peak



ROSL's Coronation Appeal

Support ROSL with a donation to our appeal

The ROSL Foundation was founded during the Golden Jubilee of the Royal Over-Seas League, with the purpose of supporting our aims, and over the last few decades we have promoted and supported hundreds of young musicians and artists. The ROSL Foundation has more recently looked to support the heritage of ROSL and upkeep of our unique Grade I-listed properties in which these important and uplifting activities take place, including the Public Affairs series now into its third year. Renovating, preserving and modernising our home at Over-Seas House is critical to the work we do.

In the year of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, this is an ideal moment to look forward to many more years of bringing people together through shared interests and cultural engagements. The Coronation Appeal was set up to help grow the funds already held by the Foundation, and you can build on the generosity of current and previous generations, and help to maintain our long-held traditions of international friendship and support. If you would like to make a financial donation to the Coronation Appeal of the ROSL Foundation this can be done online by secure link <https://community.rosl.org.uk/>.

If you would like to discuss giving a substantial donation or leaving a legacy please get in touch with the Director General at Dgoffice@rosl.org.uk

Thank you very much for your support.

Dr Annette Prandzioch, Director-General



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REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

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– visit [www.rosl.org.uk/
accommodation-offers](http://www.rosl.org.uk/accommodation-offers)



January can be a great time to embrace the fresh, crisp promise of a new year with a trip to the Capital; and there's no better way to overcome the post-Christmas slump than with a visit to ROSL to look forward to. Whether you're taking advantage of our New Year accommodation offers, indulging in a winter-warming drink in the Duke of York bar or enjoying some fresh seasonal flavours in the 1910 Dining Room after exploring St James's, let our guide to London in the new year be your inspiration.

Start 2024 in style with drinks and dinner at Over-Seas House

Greet the new year in laid-back style at ROSL; on the evening of 31 December our dining room will be open until 9pm, and our Duke of York bar will be serving a selection of wines, cocktails and beers to help you toast to a wonderful 2024; we'll even have the Champagne on ice to help members celebrate until half past midnight.

London's New Year's Day Parade

With its carnivalesque mix of impressive floats, wild costumes and colourful characters from London's history, the New Year's Day Parade, which ends in ROSL-adjacent Green Park sees a cornucopia of colourful performers march along the streets of Piccadilly in celebration of the dawn of 2024. The New Year's Day Parade makes its way to 500 million TV viewers worldwide,

according to the organisers, so why not join the 500,000 other people who'll be enjoying this spectacle in person?

Explore the city

While there's no denying the magic of Christmas in the city, with its twinkling lights and festive bustle, January is the perfect time to get to know London with a bit of breathing space. There's no better time to visit London's big tourist

attractions and museums than at the quietest time of year (ROSL is round the corner from historic Westminster, with Southbank and its stunning views across the Thames and city skyline within walking distance too); you can take in some lesser-known galleries and museums, or even just marvel at Mayfair's beautiful architecture for some new year inspiration. Search for some self-guided walks around London's varied and

characterful boroughs (livinglondonhistory.com has some great suggestions) or take in the peace and beauty of historic St James's Park, bordered by three Royal palaces and featuring a beautiful lake, not forgetting the famous pelicans that call the park home.

January sales

After the bustle of Christmas, January makes a great time to enjoy the – relative – quiet of Mayfair and the mix of



independent boutiques and high street names. There are so many options for retail therapy in the beating heart of London's shopping district, but here's three we'd recommend.

Oxford Street is Europe's most prominent shopping street and early in the month you'll be able to enjoy the sparkle of the world-famous festive lights illuminating big-name high street favourites; but expect lots of crowds jostling for the best January bargains. Fortunately, you can retire to close-at-hand ROSL for a refreshing cup of tea or a bite to eat afterwards.

New Bond Street is where you'll find London's ritziest shopping experience, with old-luxury brands such as Burberry, Bulgari, Cartier and Gucci sat alongside the newer kids on the luxury fashion block (think Victoria Beckham).

Burlington Arcade probably won't present much in terms of bargains, but take advantage of the post-festive solitude to explore this stunning arcade and self-proclaimed 'first department store', where bespoke perfumers, jewellers and fashion designers create an atmosphere of unique old-school luxury.



1910 SATURDAY NIGHT JAZZ

January Jazz at ROSL

Make it your resolution to enjoy some first-rate music, with our January Jazz Nights; dive into a year-round Saturday night spectacle at our 1910 Dining Room, featuring live music by our resident jazz singer, Oliver Lord, as seen on TV's *The Voice of Belgium*. Executive Chef Elliot Plimmer and Head of Food and Beverage Serge Pradier have put their heads together to create an exquisite menu of seasonal food and perfectly matched wines to enjoy while you take it all in.

New Year's Concert

Celebrate with some of our brilliant recent Annual Music Prize Winners as they toast the new year with some Viennese inspired classics on 27 January, preceded by a special Friday Jazz night on the 26 January. With the New Year's concert featuring a programme including: J Strauss II Overture to *Die Fledermaus* and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A Major K581 this promises to be a delightful weekend of music.

Tickets will include a glass of sparkling wine after the concert and accommodation offers for members booking both events. See rosl.org.uk/accomodation-offers

Burns Night

Celebrate the works of Scotland's iconic Bard, Robert Burns, with our Burns Night supper; expect a delicious four-course meal featuring the iconic haggis, followed by beef wellington and cranachan.

Every year, Burns Night is celebrated in Scotland to mark Robert Burns' unique contribution to Scottish culture and history. Enjoy an evening of poems, singers and pipers as ROSL commemorates the life of Scotland's most beloved bard, poet and lyricist.

The first Burns supper was held in July 1801 when nine of Burns' close friends got together to mark the fifth anniversary of their friend's death. Join us to continue this tradition with an exquisitely crafted supper accompanied by wonderful entertainment.

Public Affairs

Our popular Public Affairs series continues, with some wonderful events lined up for January, including financier and political activist Bill Browder and journalist Robert Hardman who'll be talking about his new book on King Charles III.

Visit rosl.org.uk/events for more details.

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ADELAIDE FESTIVAL | 5–10 MARCH 2024 | SOLD OUT

MUSIC & MOUNTAINS FESTIVAL, NEW ZEALAND | 9–14 APRIL 2024

WAGNER'S RING CYCLE IN ZURICH | 17–27 MAY 2024 | SOLD OUT

OPERA IN THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE | 1–14 JUNE 2024 | SOLD OUT

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BACH | 4–17 JUNE 2024

OPERA & ART IN NORTHERN ITALY | 12–25 JUNE 2024

THE LONGBOROUGH RING & THE COTSWOLDS | 15–23 JUNE 2024 | SOLD OUT

ENGLAND'S SUMMER OPERA FESTIVALS | 26 JUNE–9 JULY 2024

MUSIC ON THE SHORES OF LAKE COMO | 5–16 JULY 2024

FESTIVAL D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE & THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE | 12–21 JULY 2024 | SOLD OUT

THE ART OF THE PIANO TRIO, HAYLLAR CHAMBER MUSIC WEEKEND | 15–18 AUGUST 2024

FESTIVAL VERDI, OPERA & ART IN NORTHERN ITALY | 13–25 OCTOBER 2024

THE ART OF THE ROMANTICS, HAYLLAR CHAMBER MUSIC WEEKEND | 17–20 OCTOBER 2024

OPERA & THEATRE IN IRELAND | 17–28 OCTOBER 2024

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR IN EUROPE | 20 DECEMBER 2024–2 JANUARY 2025



ROSL PHOTO 23

We were blown away by the quality and volume of submissions to our biennial photography competition, ROSL PHOTO 23, with photographers the world over finding dynamic interpretations of the theme 'viewpoint'. Here Rosie Allen documents the judging process, and we hear from the three winners of this year's prize

'Viewpoint' proved to be a particularly inspirational theme for entrants of this year's ROSL PHOTO 23 competition, inviting some creative interpretations on the subject, and some emerging themes that seemed to reflect the strangeness and uncertainty of the post-Covid world in which these images were created. A topic such as viewpoint may at first glance appear divisive in the sense that all things are seen from one perspective or another, but in a modern world where even the authenticity of an image cannot necessarily be trusted due to artificial intelligence, we are challenged to assess what is shown to us and experience each visual story. The multiplexity of reading a photograph provides an opportunity to engage and challenge our own perception of what we observe when we adopt the position of camera lens.

Bleak outlooks

The judges (who comprised industry experts within the broader sense of contemporary photography including an arts journalist, documentarian, photojournalist and two artists) noted that there was a particularly bleak feel to many of the images, depicting lone figures, and faces turned away from the camera; a sense of isolation was commented on, appearing to reflect a solitude, or subjects captured in vulnerable situations. 'Dislocation and disconnection' were how one judge put it, perhaps a reflection of the perpetual feeling of being online and connected, yet increasingly fractured in the post-Covid society in which these pictures were created. 'It seems like the gloominess may reflect on the fact that our collective viewpoint is rather bleak at the moment,' observed Robin Footitt, Arts Curator and Project Manager of ROSL PHOTO 23.

Masculinity was another recurring theme, which is perhaps no surprise given high-profile conversations in the media over recent years around ideas of 'toxic' masculinity, and changing attitudes around the concepts of sex and gender. Some chose

to portray male figures in stereotypically 'female' dress and poses, while others reflected on emotions and repression behind more archetypal depictions of men. There was plenty of conversation around how context and narrative could both illuminate and challenge the interpretation of a photograph, with opinions completely altered by further description of the subject and its creator's story and background too, and how this could add meaning and life to the picture.

'The quality of entrants for this round of the competition was really impressive' says Robin, who had the unenviable task of curating the 3,150 images into a shortlist of 100 photographs for the judges to make their final deliberations. It was then their

task to take ownership of the selection, whittling down to a shortlist of 20 for exhibition before choosing three winners; the overall prize winner and recipient of a £2,000 bursary, a runner up who would receive a £1,000 bursary and a £500 prize for the winner of The Madiha Aijaz Prize, an award for a young photographer of promise under the age of 23.

Images were received from all around the world with applicants from 81 countries submitting their work. Robin adds, 'the competition is growing in strength and reputation every time we run the it; ROSL PHOTO 21 received 500 entries from 40 countries in 2021, so it's incredible to see how much more reach we've had this year. It's been incredibly difficult to sort through a large volume of images with such richness and diversity and in their interpretations of the theme, taken across a wide variety of subjects. I'm really excited to present the shortlist to members this December.'

Robin assembled an impressive panel of judges to assess the entries to this year's competition, each bringing many years of professional photographic experience and diverse viewpoints to the table on the judging day, in which the team viewed and judged 100 entries to come up with a final winner.



The judges deliberated on over 100 images to whittle down to three winners



Md. Zobayer Hossain Joati's powerful image of his grandparents impressed the judges with its technical excellence, interesting angles and perspective, such as the striking framing of Joati's grandmother through his grandfather's arm, along with the composition's seemingly endless opportunities for interpretation. For some the focus appeared to be on the relationship between the grandparents; was this a couple in conflict or deep conversation? For others the focus was on the photographer's relationship with the subjects, and the importance of the grandfather's body, the textures and nakedness sparking conversation around the ideas of both intimacy and ageing.

ROSL PHOTO 23 WINNER

My Beloved Grandparents

Md. Zobayer Hossain Joati (b. 1994, Rajbari, Bangladesh) based in Dhaka, Bangladesh

'I wasn't particularly interested in photography as a child, but my parents used to ask me to take family pictures because they liked the way I did it; even my relatives praised my pictures, but I never thought of doing photography as a hobby. In 2012, I felt inspired by a India's first photography reality show called *Nat Geo Covershot*, a competition on the National Geographic Channel. From then, without any photographic training, I started to take photos with one of my school friends using my Samsung Galaxy S Duos phone. Now I study photography full time and work as a freelance photographer.

My winning picture reflects my feelings on the fact that I don't get to meet with my grandparents or spend quality time with them very often, due to familial problems and the physical

distance between us among other things. They live in a very rural area and I live in an urban one which often affects my relationship and communication with them. In 2022, I went to my village with my parents and paid a visit to my grandparents. On a gloomy afternoon, my grandparents were in conversation and deep in thought when I took this photo with my mobile phone. This photo reminds me of their growing age and also their decaying relationship with me; my grandmother died about eight months after I captured this photo.

I'm not especially inspired by one particular photographer, but I admire the work of those whom illustrate the social, cultural and political aspects of a society or a community; they're the ones that really speak to me.' 📸

ROSL PHOTO 23 RUNNER-UP

'She Said'

Ypatia Kornarou
(b. 1974, Athens, Greece) based in Athens, Greece

I was born and raised in Athens, the capital of Greece, where I still live to this day. I fell in love with photography aged nine when I discovered a water gun shaped like a camera. Later, I faced a dilemma choosing between photography and my studies in economics; logic prevailed, and I chose a secure professional future. However, an unexpected health issue prompted me to return to the things I really love, and of course that meant photography.

The photographic series *'She Said'*, narrates the emotional connection between a winter swimmer and the sea and the photos were taken in March

2023 just as winter was ending. The birth of the idea came from a personal relationship I had already developed with my student Eleni Aliferi during my photography classes.

I wanted to sketch her inner monologue, to find myself an invisible spectator to observe her as she ventured into the cold sea on a winter morning.

When I met Eleni, she said she had a seabed inside her; she said that when she dives into its depths, it is because she is looking for a bouquet of flowers with which to rise together to the surface. She also said that if anything were to happen to her while she was in the sea, she would be gone happy.

Aside from the obvious beauty and poignancy of Ypatia's composition, the judges were unanimous in appreciating the ambiguity of the composition. For some the image represented the beauty of the female figure's connection with the water, the waterline on her coat matching the horizon line in tribute to this kinship; for others there was a more melancholic feel to her contemplation of the water.

It was also noted that the viewer cannot see any of the subject's body; the hands are hidden within the coat and the face is hidden, adding an eeriness to the composition.



THE MADIHA AIJAZ PRIZE

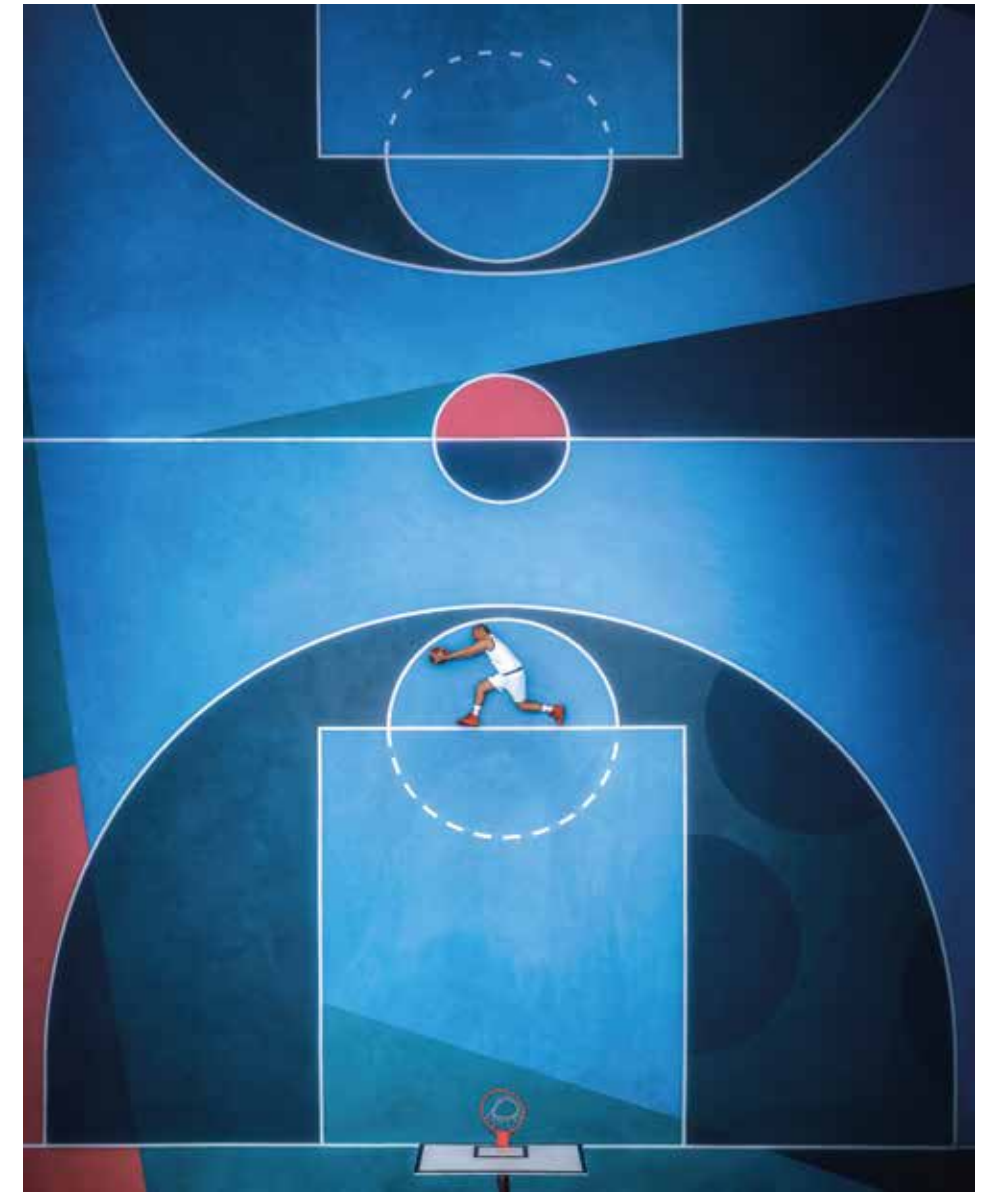
'BasketGlow'

Radoslav Sviretsov (b. 2000, Burgas, Bulgaria) based in Sofia, Bulgaria

About The Madiha Aijaz Prize: Created to honour the memory of filmmaker and photographer Madiha Aijaz (1981–2019), one of ROSL's 2017 Visual Arts Scholars in partnership with Hospitalfield, Liverpool Biennial and Open Eye Gallery. This prize is awarded to an exceptional young photographer to help them develop on their future creative career.

For me, photography is akin to listening to classical music; it offers a form of relaxation and a deeper sense of tranquillity. When I'm behind the camera, I feel truly in tune with myself. The joy of capturing and preserving a fleeting moment in time is a driving force in my photography. I believe that the moment you are reading these words will never be replicated in exactly the same way, in any place, or under any circumstances. This is where the essence of a skilled photographer lies, in the ability to immortalise those significant moments that deserve to be remembered for eternity.

The story behind this image started with the exciting news that a newly renovated basketball court had been unveiled right next to my former workplace. However, this wasn't your typical basketball court; it was a canvas of unique, vibrant, and captivating colours, adorned with fascinating forms. The artistic



vision behind this transformation was that of Nikolay Petrov, also known as 'GLOW'. His mission was clear: to reimagine and present familiar sports grounds in a non-standard and aesthetically pleasing way.

As I delved deeper into the details of this remarkable project, I couldn't help but visualize potential photographs in my mind. I found myself pondering a question: 'What if we removed the constraints of the third dimension and allowed everything to exist on a single plane? How would this altered perspective transform the world of sports?' The photoshoot was a collaborative effort with my university architecture

teacher, who happened to be a passionate basketball enthusiast. Together, we embarked on a journey to the location, armed with our cameras and creative vision.

While this image serves as a snapshot of that particular moment and place, it also reflects my broader photographic work. It captures my fascination with combining artistic expression with the world of sports, as well as my ongoing quest to find new perspectives and dimensions within familiar settings. This image is a testament to the power of creativity and collaboration, as well as the potential for beauty and inspiration in unexpected places. ♦

The judges loved the slightly abstract and 'painterly' quality of BasketGlow, and praised its unusual composition, commenting on the pleasing symmetry of the basketball court, thrown slightly off-kilter by pops of red.



Raphaël Neal (b. 1980)
Saint Leonards-on-Sea, UK - 'Shane'



Panagiotis Dalagiorgos (b. 1989)
Athens, Greece - 'Caterpillar Under the Spotlight'



Md. Shamim Al-Noor (b. 1989)
Gazipur, Bangladesh - 'Return Home'



Francisco Salgueiro (b. 1972)
Lisbon, Portugal - 'Angel'

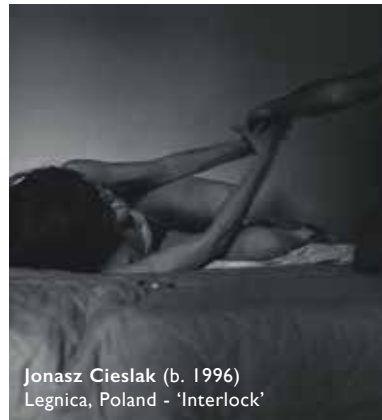


Felicitas Yang (b. 1994)
Paris, France - 'Three Princesses'



ROSL
PHOTO 23
— HIGHLIGHTS —

Barbora Koubková (b. 2004)
Prague, Czech Republic - 'The Mountain Point'



Jonasz Cieslak (b. 1996)
Legnica, Poland - 'Interlock'



Javier Arcenillas (b. 1973)
Madrid, Spain - 'Horse'



Visule Kabunda (b. 1997)
Lusaka, Zambia - 'Slowly, Surely'



Daniel Bassett (b. 1984)
Cornwall, UK - 'Dark Energy'



Daniela Calò (b. 1970)
Rome, Italy - 'Nunset'



Mpumelelo Buthelezi (b. 1994)
Soweto, South Africa - 'Isolation'



Guillaume Petermann (b. 1985)
Brussels, Belgium - 'Delousing Time'



Diwakar Redhu (b. 1992)
Portsmouth, UK - 'Forbidden Fruit'

The judges

Jocelyn Bain Hogg, documentary photographer and educator, author of four photographic books including *The Firm* (Trolley, 2001), Course Leader at London College of Communication for BA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography



Charlotte Jansen, journalist and author of *Photography Now: Fifty Pioneers Defining Photography for the Twenty-First Century* (Tate, 2021) and *Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze* (Laurence King Publishing, 2017)



Seamus Murphy, documentary photographer and filmmaker, recipient of seven World Press Photo awards for his photographic work in Afghanistan, Gaza, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Peru and Ireland



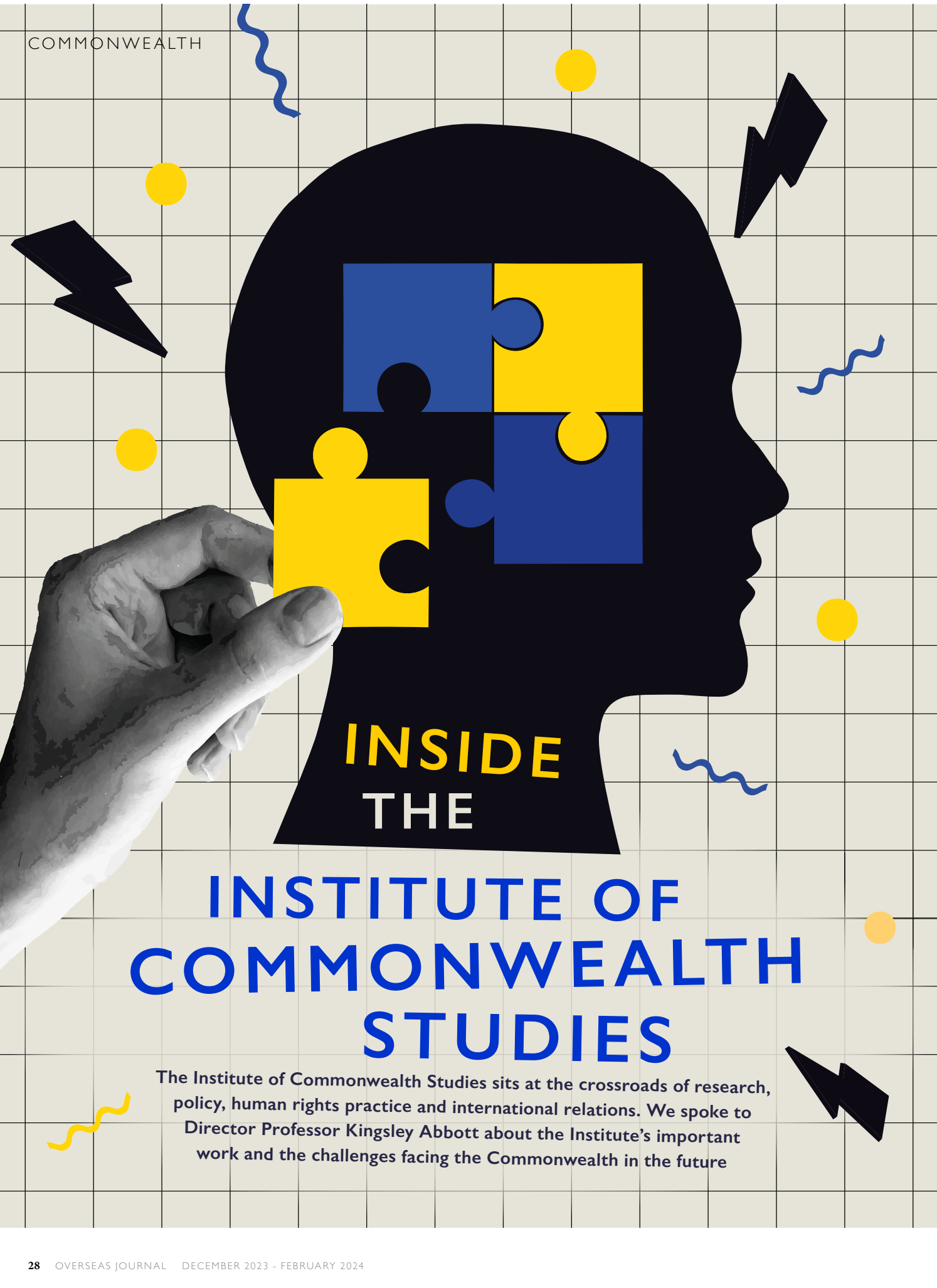
Hannah Starkey, artist, awarded the Vogue Condé Nast Award (1997); the 3rd International Tokyo Photo Biennale's Award for Excellence (1999), the St. James Group Ltd Photography Prize (2002), and the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society (2019)



Nilupa Yasmin, artist and educator, included in many permanent and private collections including Government Art Collection, The New Art Gallery Walsall and Birmingham Museums Collection. She is a Lecturer in Photography and recently completed her MA in Photography Arts at University of Westminster



ROSL PHOTO 23, an exhibition of the top 20 shortlisted entries will be displayed at Over-Seas House, London from Friday 8 December until 4 February 2024. Please join us on Thursday 7 December, 6-8pm for the opening drinks reception. To RSVP please visit rosl.org.uk/events



INSIDE THE INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES

The Institute of Commonwealth Studies sits at the crossroads of research, policy, human rights practice and international relations. We spoke to Director Professor Kingsley Abbott about the Institute's important work and the challenges facing the Commonwealth in the future

Kingsley, could you give readers an idea of the role of the ICWS and its aims?

The Institute brings people together to develop policy solutions and recommendations to address the many challenges facing the modern Commonwealth and the world, from inequality and climate change to conflict, emerging technologies and the rise of authoritarianism. We do this by working with States and the Secretariat, supporting civil society, and engaging with the Commonwealth's extensive global networks, which have been developed over its long history. Our main areas of focus are strengthening the rule of law, combatting climate change, and promoting freedom of expression and digital rights. The Institute also offers several groundbreaking PhD and Masters programmes on human rights, including through distance learning, an impressive research library and a dynamic community of fellows.

You're a criminal and human rights lawyer with more than two decades of experience in this field; how has your career prepared you for the challenges and opportunities that the role of Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies represents?

It is a real honour to be entrusted with this role by the University of London. Since its inception in 1949, the Institute had a long history of engaging on many of the pressing issues of the day from apartheid in South Africa to the various decolonisation processes that took place around the world.

Our ambitious aim is to harness the potential of the Institute to contribute towards improving the lives of those living throughout the Commonwealth and the world, together with our partners.

I have had a varied, mostly international, career. I started off as a solicitor in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. I then worked as a criminal barrister alongside a leading King's Counsel, acting for both the defence and prosecution on a variety of matters from murder to terrorism. 17 years ago, I left Aotearoa New Zealand to work with the United Nations in Cambodia at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, then as a prosecutor at the Special Tribunal for

Lebanon in the Hague. Before joining the Institute, I spent nine years in Thailand, working as the Director of Global Accountability and International Justice for an international human rights NGO called the International Commission of Jurists. In this role I worked on different human rights and rule of law projects around the world, supporting civil society and victims, providing technical support to State justice sectors, carrying out human rights advocacy and working to develop international human rights standards and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Governments are adopting increasingly extreme nationalistic, authoritarian and xenophobic policies which lead to violations of human rights

This work brought me into contact with different perspectives and people from all walks of life from ambassadors and politicians to the most vulnerable, including victims of serious human rights violations living in appalling conditions in refugee camps. The most inspirational people I have met are human rights defenders, often working

tirelessly and at great personal risk to improve their societies. To be able to call some of them my friends has had the greatest impact on my life and worldview.

These experiences taught me that one of the most powerful forces for positive change, peace and stability is a strong civil society at the national, regional and international levels, something that is often overlooked or forgotten, sometimes conveniently. As such, one of the Institute's key aims will be to support civil society around the world, including by helping facilitate civil society engagement with policymakers.

Another experience that has been ever-present in my work has been the prevalence of the many unequal power structures that exist, some of which are manifest in the Global North and Global South divide. The Institute

will use its unique position to bridge this divide by exploring ways to engage and mentor early to mid-career people living in the Global South (and smaller countries) working in different sectors, including through our fellowship programme.

What are the biggest challenges facing the Commonwealth in the coming decades in your view (e.g climate change, political instability...) and how can the institution overcome them?

I believe the concerns of the world are the concerns of the Commonwealth, given that it is home to 2.5 billion people.

The world is in a considerable state of flux and instability right now at a time when greater cooperation and solidarity is needed to address our many shared challenges such as economic, social and political inequality, climate change, conflict, emerging technologies and the global pandemic. At the same time, the rule of law, which is critical to the realisation of other priorities, such as sustainable development and the protection of the environment, is also under attack. Governments are adopting increasingly extreme nationalistic, authoritarian and xenophobic policies which

lead to violations of human rights and the suppression of human rights defenders, civil society and marginalised and vulnerable groups. We are also witnessing the scourge of conflict and impunity for serious human rights violations in almost every corner of the world.

Global South countries are concerned at the concentration of wealth in the Global North and are calling for greater, meaningful, contributions toward development.

The makeup of the Commonwealth and its global networks puts it in a unique position to engage on many of these challenges.

To explore ways of supporting the Institute as it tackles these issues visit

www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk



Director Professor Kingsley Abbott

Kingsley Abbott is an experienced international criminal and human rights lawyer with more than 20 years experience in international non-governmental organisations and the United Nations. He has developed and led numerous human rights and rule of law initiatives in Asia and around the world.



*Wishing all of our members across the world
a joyful Christmas and a peaceful new year
from all at ROSL*



The above image is available as a Christmas card – please visit
<https://community.rosl.org.uk/s/store> to purchase



STEP INSIDE THIS CHRISTMAS

*A warm welcome awaits where splendour and historical richness intertwine perfectly
this festive season. Members are invited to celebrate in style choosing from one of
our overnight stay packages or simply join us for our Christmas Day lunch.*



CHRISTMAS LUNCH ONLY*

*from £135,
(£35 per child under 12)*

Celebrations begin at midday with a sparkling drinks reception, Executive Chef Elliot Plimmer and his team have crafted a classic festive menu including roast Norfolk turkey with all the trimmings.

Food and Beverage Director Serge Pradier has selected a charming chardonnay from the south of the Rhône Valley and a fantastic Bordeaux, our Club Claret, made by the famous Sichel Family in the Medoc.

INCLUDES

- Sparkling drinks reception (25th)
- Delicious Christmas lunch and half a bottle of wine per adult
- Coffee and homemade mince pies
- A gift of festive chocolates
- King's speech

CHRISTMAS TWO-NIGHT STAY

from £255

Choose our two-night stay package (24th and 25th December) and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine on arrival. Members can choose to dine in the stylish 1910 Dining Room (last sitting 8pm on the 24th), where a festive menu will be served (evening dining on the 24th not included in package price). A selection of family board games can be enjoyed in the Drawing Room. Wake up on Christmas Day in the grand surrounds of our historic Grade I-Listed Clubhouse. Celebrations begin at midday with a sparkling drinks reception, followed by a spectacular lunch menu, with all the trimmings.

INCLUDES

- Two nights' accommodation including breakfast
- Mulled wine and mince pies on arrival (24th)
- Family board games in the Drawing Room (24th)
- Sparkling drinks reception (25th)
- Delicious Christmas lunch and half a bottle of wine per adult
- Coffee and homemade mince pies
- A gift of festive chocolates
- King's speech

BOXING DAY THREE-NIGHT STAY

from £233

Extend your celebrations a further night (24th, 25th and 26th December) and join us for a Boxing Day walking tour of the local area. This exciting tour will explore St. James's and the surrounding area and is hosted by a London Blue Badge Guide. You will discover hidden corners, secret treasures, meet the Grand Old Duke of York and Laurence Olivier. The tour includes listening devices. Starting and finishing at Over-Seas House, from 11am to 1pm.

INCLUDES

- The full Christmas Two Night Stay Package
- Accommodation on 24th, 25th and 26th December
- Walking tour of the local area with an expert guide

PRICE PER ROOM PER NIGHT (inclusive of Christmas lunch)	SINGLE ROOM	DOUBLE ROOM (single occupancy)	DOUBLE OR TWIN ROOM (double occupancy)
Two nights (24 th and 25 th December)	£255	£270	£383
Three nights (24 th , 25 th and 26 th December)	£233	£248	£338

For information on local church services, please ask at Reception

PLEASE BOOK CHRISTMAS LUNCH (ONLY) VIA [DINING@ROSL.ORG.UK](mailto:dining@rosl.org.uk)
PLEASE BOOK CHRISTMAS PACKAGES, INCLUDING ACCOMMODATION, VIA [RESERVATIONS@ROSL.ORG.UK](mailto:reservations@rosl.org.uk)

PRICES ARE PER ROOM PER NIGHT INCLUSIVE OF VAT

THE CREATIVE SPARK

Looking for some inspiration to get going with a new year creative project? Rosie Allen speaks to two ROSL-connected creatives about their work, process and motivations



Wole Talabi

Wole is a writer, engineer and Editor from Nigeria. In 2018 he won the ROSL's Reader's Award in the Caine Prize for African Writing with his short story 'Debut', a prescient tale about AI and its mind-boggling potential to create art – but not as we know it. Wole's debut novel *Shigidi And The Brass Head Of Obalufon* is out now.

Nigeria is a fascinating place; the blend of languages, cultures, philosophies, religions, beliefs and economics all existing side by side is dizzying. And the modern country, especially in large urban centres like Lagos, is full of young, eager people and tends to have a chaotic energy that's hard to describe.

I'm from Yoruba in Western Nigeria and Yoruba culture has an intricate traditional belief system called *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* that includes a rich pantheon of complex philosophies and technologies, intricate rituals and so much more. While I grew up an urban Christian and a bit divorced from traditional religion, I have always found Yoruba traditional belief and history fascinating; I try to incorporate as much of it as I can into my work, along with my engineering interests. Sometimes I build my imagined future technology on a scaffold of Yoruba spiritual beliefs. This is because as much as I consider myself a logical and scientifically minded person, Nigeria is a place where the physical and spiritual exist side by side. Humans have had magical and spiritual beliefs since we formed societies and I believe we will continue to do so, therefore the blending of both seems natural to me, even when speculating about the future.

Engineering and writing may seem diametrically opposed on the surface, but I don't really see them that way. In fact, I find more overlaps between engineering and writing than I see differences. For example, both skills require a keen sense of observation, attention to detail and a curiosity about the world. And in many ways, everything is storytelling, even engineering. We are all made of stories.

While I did think AI would change the creative landscape relatively quickly, I did not foresee the current situation with AI-generated creative work when I wrote

'Debut' back in 2018.

And that's perhaps the problem; we don't yet have any true artificial intelligence. Not really. What we have are (to paraphrase Cory Doctorow) plausible content generators – in the sense that these AI tools have no true intent or directed intelligence behind them. They are probability engines that are very good at guessing what should appear next, given a set of constraints and based on past data. Many of these tools are good at generating things that look like

literature or art, but which aren't upon any serious inspection, because art requires context and intent and expression.

And now artists and writers are left to pick up the pieces and navigate their way in a world where several poorly conceived tools exist. Some have found good uses for it – drafting repetitive writing tasks, improving grammar for non-native writers etc. And others, some bad actors, have used AI-generated content to flood publishing with poorly thought-out work or tried to use it to cut out the actual writers and artists from the process of creation.

My new novel *Shigidi And The Brass Head Of Obalufon* is an urban supernatural thriller in which a former Yoruba nightmare god, a succubus, and a reincarnated Aleister Crowley (English occultist) team up for a heist to retrieve an item (the titular brass head) from the British Museum.

But it's more than just a heist story; it's also a globe-trotting historical tale, a love story, a journey of self-discovery and a social satire about capitalism, cultural theft, and religion.

For the novel, I really wanted to explore the nature of religion and belief and reinvent the wonderful and under-represented Yoruba pantheon for a modern audience. In it, I reimagine the pantheon of Yoruba gods as running a 'spirit company' much

HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL

I always hesitate to give writing advice because nothing is universal, and there are many ways to arrive at the same destination; we all write for different reasons. But I think the pieces of advice that worked best for me were these:



Don't try to force a story, and don't question it, especially in the first draft. We are all made of stories and somewhere in your mind, the story you want to tell already exists. So simply write it. Write what comes to your mind and don't get caught up in trying to make it perfect or make sense at first. That can come later. Perfection is the enemy of progress. If you keep trying to force the story to come out a certain way, you are likely to keep struggling, doubting and second-guessing and may never finish it. Give yourself permission to write the story messy, ugly, disjointed, however it comes out if you, just let it happen, and then afterwards, you can edit it into something more polished and structured.



Be consistent. Once you start, find a system that works for you and don't stop. Some days, we feel inspired, motivated and some days we do not. Write even on the days you feel uninspired and unmotivated – even if only a few words or sentences. Leave placeholders if you must. But once you have found a system that works for you and the demands of your life – children, work, disability, social obligations, etc – then be consistent with it and write. You'll finish eventually. It's just a matter of time.



Read a lot. I don't know a single good writer who also doesn't read and read widely.

like a modern corporation that trades in faith and belief, with a CEO, HR, Accounting, and minor gods such as my primary protagonist, Shigidi.

My creative process really varies by story.

In general, though, I like to think about a story for a while before I start writing. Once I get an idea, I sit on it, read about it, listen to related podcasts, discuss it with my wife or with friends, and just generally soak my mind in it for a while. Once I feel I have a proper sense of it, I usually start writing. I might have a bit of a rough outline of what I want, but I usually don't build detailed outlines – I like the story to come to me as I am writing it, especially in the first draft. I am not a fan of editing during the initial draft as it is very easy to get caught in a loop of second-guessing yourself and getting stuck. I prefer to draft completely first, rough as it may be, to get everything down on the page, quick and dirty; a muddy slurry of words that contains the gems of the story that was in my head. Then I refine, revise and edit; drafting and editing are two separate skills. I like to write early in the mornings, between 4am and 8am, typically; before all the other concerns of the day rise to meet me like hungry predators.

Extensive research was vital in creating the costumes for This England as I wanted to make sure I was as accurate as possible, particularly for the more well-known public figures. Not only to portray the real-life person but to also reflect how and why they were dressed the way they were at certain times during such a critical time in world history. I also needed to create their looks behind closed doors when they weren't in the public eye; intimate moments between Boris and Carrie at Chequers for example. Exploring ideas with Kenneth (Branagh) and Ophelia (Lovibond) was great fun in the fitting process and helped form a more personable side to their characters (Boris and Carrie). My research guided me in capturing essential character elements without turning them into caricatures. Attention to detail, like Rishi Sunak's daughter-made bracelet, added authenticity. It's something that was



Anthony Unwin
Costume Designer
Anthony Unwin studied costume design at the Central School of Speech & Drama, he moved into print shortly after graduating where he then began his career working at cult magazines like *The Face*, *Dazed & Confused* and *LOVE* magazine. He's also worked on costume design across film and television, notably Sky's Covid-era-set drama *This England*, featuring Kenneth Branagh as former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, with some scenes filmed here at Over-Seas House.

probably only ever seen by me and Shri (Patel, the actor playing Sunak) but it helped us both cement the realness of the role.

Dominic Cummings' strategic wardrobe choices were another great example. From the outside his look *appears* scruffy and unconsidered but the brands he purchases are very eco-friendly and not easy to find – so very much considered, just as every decision he makes professionally appears to be. I would also try to match clothing worn on certain pivotal days from press photos for accuracy. One example was a bright orange knit Cummings wore to Number 10.

It's only when we shot the scene with them all around the table in the cabinet room, during a critical time that you realize how much he stands out from all the navy and grey suits. A clever tactic to make sure you're noticed and heard.



Left, clockwise from top: Kenneth Branagh is transformed into Boris Johnson; Simon Paisley Day as Dominic Cummings; Shri Patel as Rishi Sunak

Opposite, left to right: Kenneth Branagh and Ophelia Lovibond as Boris and Carrie at The Chequers; Andrew Buchan as Matt Hancock



In terms of the creative process, the script is always my starting point and motivation. I immerse myself in research to make the costumes feel authentic; the V&A library is a favourite resource. I like to begin with reality and let the script and actors shape the costumes into working wardrobes.

I've worked on some amazing projects across film, tv and editorial and Shoshana is a recent standout, a true-life period drama set in British Mandate Palestine during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The script and characters were compelling, and it was my first full period film, which I loved working on. Researching these true-life characters was so interesting, the lives they had led and

Attention to detail adds authenticity, and helps cement the realness of the role

difficulties they had to overcome was inspiring.

Starting my career in the fast-paced environment of fashion editorials was extremely beneficial to me. Exploring and playing with costume and film, as well as creating films with friends, can be a valuable path. Degrees aren't essential; industry experience and a passion for costume and film are key. Reading and watching plays and films for inspiration is a constant source of growth for me.

When I asked an old magazine colleague, costume designer Arianne Phillips, how I should get back into costume design she said; 'just be one. Make films with your friends'. And that's exactly what I did.

SUPPORT CREATIVITY AT ROSL

Our outstanding and unparalleled programmes have offered our alumni experienced mentorship and advice, networking, promotional support and concert opportunities around the world. From those crucial early career stages in a challenging industry to becoming part of our family of creatives who continue to connect with us throughout their careers, ROSL is there for them.

To support our creative programmes please consider becoming an Arts Patron at rosl.org.uk/artspatrons

NEWS & EVENTS

The latest from our Clubhouse; branches; art, music, and announcements



Charles Court Theatre's *The Mikado*, Summer Place Festival



Champagne Garter wine dinner



Clement McIntyre talks to Alexander Downer at our Public Affairs series



Emile Souvagio, AMC Gold Medal Final



George Gershwin tribute concert



ROSL Recitals at Edinburgh Fringe

REVIEW of the year

Look back on a year of wonderful arts, public affairs talks, wine dinners and more at ROSL



D-G Dr Annette Prandzioch with a member at a Summer event



Viewers enjoying our Illustrated Guide to London exhibition



ROSL
RECITALS

News & views
ROSL NEWS

A successful year for our Pettman scholars

Artistic Director Geoff Parkin reports on an exciting year for our 2023 Pettman Scholars, cellist Jack Moyer and pianist Otis Prescott-Mason

ROSL has long supported young classical musicians from New Zealand, and we have been enormously grateful to receive generous funding from Barrie and Maureen Pettman to run these exceptional opportunities, since 2006. This year we were pleased to welcome two young musicians, both hailing from Wellington, cellist Jack Moyer and pianist Otis Prescott-Mason.

This year marks the start of a new format for our NZ scholarship, in partnership with a new chamber music festival based in Queenstown New Zealand, the *At the World's Edge* Festival. Founded by former ROSL Strings Prize winner, violinist Ben Baker, the festival will act as our 'ears on the ground' in New Zealand, helping to identify the most exceptional young musicians, who are invited to participate in the festival's young artists programme, and be considered for a ROSL Pettman Scholarship the following summer.

The scholarship period is designed for young NZ musicians who are keen to experience the musical world in the UK and Europe, meet fellow musicians and professors and investigate

the options for international study.

In late July, Jack and Otis arrived in London for the start of their scholarship period, where they spent two weeks staying at Over-Seas House for activities including lessons, coaching, performances and attending concerts at Wigmore Hall and the BBC Proms.

They both performed in concerts at St James's Piccadilly Church, the Yorke Trust in Norfolk and here at ROSL, in the presence of H.E. Phil Goff, the New Zealand High Commissioner to the UK.

The scholars then joined the ROSL ARTS team and 11 other ROSL alumni in Edinburgh to participate in our regular Edinburgh Festival Fringe series at the Royal Scots Club. Both played in three concerts each. Jack joined Ben Baker and violist Scott Dickinson (principal viola in BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra) for a performance of the chamber version of Bach's Goldberg Variations. Otis was joined by Daniel Lehardt for a concert of piano

duets and solos from each of them.

Following their week in Edinburgh Otis flew to Switzerland to take part in the Cours international de piano Blonay where he took part in several masterclasses and concerts within the setting of the Swiss Alps. Jack travelled with Ben Baker and Daniel Lehardt to take part in the North York Moors Festival.

They had a second performance of Bach's Goldberg Variations and Jack performed in two further concerts, as well as taking lessons with Rebecca Gilliver (principal cellist LSO),

Bartholomew Lafollette (Yehudi Menuhin School), Alice Neary (principal cellist BBC National Orchestra of Wales) and Jamie Walton. He then (following a two-day delay due to Air Traffic Control problems) travelled to take part in the Cello Classics Tuscany course in Italy, taking lessons and performing with cellists Raphael Wallfisch and Sebastian Comberti.

The scholarship period is designed for young NZ musicians who are keen to experience the musical world in the UK and Europe

From the archives: ROSL Photographic Competition

As we announce the winners of ROSL PHOTO 23 competition (page 22) we resurface a piece from archivist Natalia Sedunova who looks back at the history of members getting behind the camera.

Our iconic Overseas Photographic competitions started to be advertised in the journals as early as 1936. Sometimes they were thematic, bound to some memorable event or process; for example, the contest of photographs featuring the celebrations of King George VI's coronation in 1937. From 1936 the Overseas journal launched a monthly 'Amateur Photography Notes' section, shedding light on various aspects of this art; everything from tips on how to prepare your entry for a competition, to advice on how to master a new-fangled Dufaycolor photography. Those informative pieces were running for the whole of 1938, apparently purposed to promote Overseas Colour Photography competitions, which were organised regularly during those years.

Some typical problems of photographers discussed in those notes can still find relevance today. Apart from quite technical issues, such as eliminating 'grain' effect on the film or protecting your negatives from heat and damp, they address the issues of finding truly original topics and subjects for snapshots, 'particularly

in those days when cameras are so common' (written in 1938!). However, it goes on with an optimistic outlook: 'Submit an entry that contains enough human interest to make people smile and say, 'How charming!' and it will always stand a chance.'

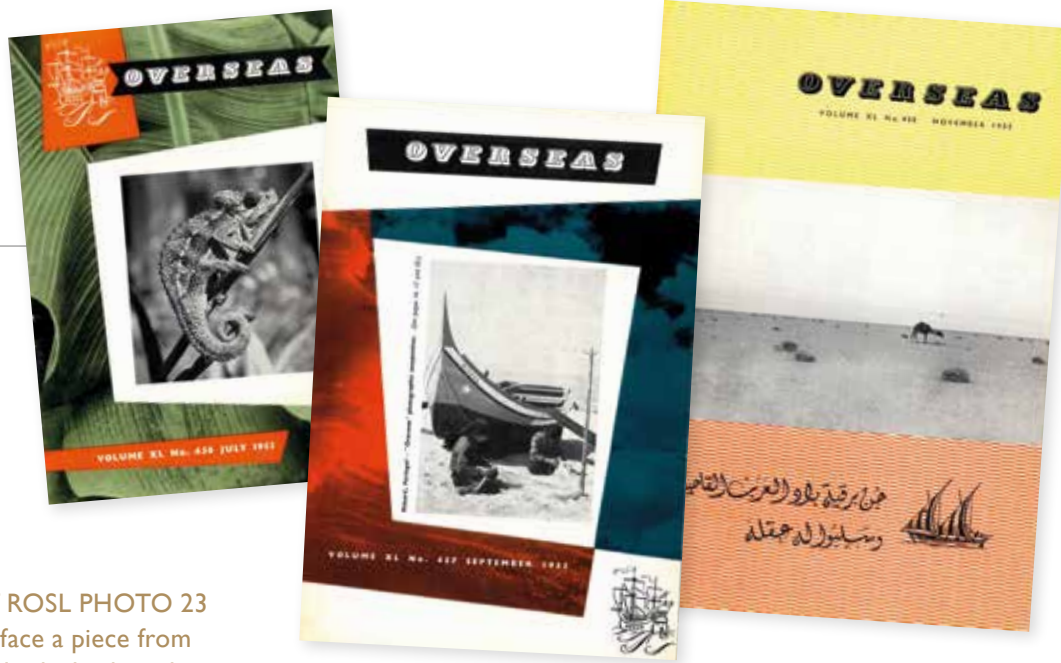
This was only the beginning of ROSL's long association with fostering artistic expression in photography. With a newly redesigned style for Overseas, along with the improvements

in journal printing quality, it became possible to publicise the winners' artworks in the journal. Thus, we can see the black-and-white entries

for the 56 contest in March 1956 issue, with a winner's work straight on the cover:

'The ideal competition entry is a photograph that expresses strong human interest in a novel and original way, and which is perfect from the technical point of view' – such a succinct, yet accurate description of ROSL's approach to photography is as relevant now as it was in 1938, when written by the 'Amateur Photography Notes' editor. 'The soul of a shot is what will always come first.'

Although the techniques and styles of photography are changing constantly, the soul of a shot is what will always come first



In memoriam

It's with sadness that we announce the death of three former ROSL colleagues: former Treasurer Robert Prentice; Alan Chalmers, former Manager of the ROSL Edinburgh Clubhouse; and Edmund Marshall, former Chairman of the London Group

A tribute to Robert Prentice by former ROSL Director-General Robert Newell

Bob Prentice, who died on 4 August 2023 aged 94, provided the Royal Over-Seas League with ten years of exceptional service as Honorary Treasurer.

During Bob's time as our honorary treasurer he oversaw major improvements to the Clubhouses in London and Edinburgh, not least the addition of ten extra bedrooms added to the Westminster Wing and the extensive refurbishment of the St Andrew's Hall as a concert room reopened by Princess Alexandra and named after her. His huge experience of administrative issues and governmental regulations were invaluable when very involved with Sir Geoffrey Ellerton and myself in a revision of the League's Rules and Regulations which were accepted by the Privy Council. Bob's experience of managing multi million-pound budgets was of great benefit in ensuring the financial strengthening of the League's finances during his time in office. But he wasn't just a great honorary treasurer. He was also a wonderfully kind and

interesting person who took a keen and enthusiastic interest in the League's music and arts endeavours and who wholeheartedly supported the establishment of the then new Namibia educational welfare project.

Bob and I much enjoyed working together and we remained good friends. He was closely involved with the Trollope Society and had an interesting intellect but few realised it due to his quiet and modest but delightful personality.

Bob is survived by his son David and daughter Helen. David has told me that his father's overriding comment about his life was how fortunate and blessed he felt to have always worked with and alongside very good, intelligent and interesting people. In his retirement years Bob enjoyed watching rugby and cricket and reading voraciously from the classics and history and keeping up with current affairs by consuming and retaining knowledge in a quite remarkable way.



A tribute to Alan Chalmers by former Scottish Development Officer James Wilkie

Alan Chalmers, who managed the ROSL Edinburgh Clubhouse for more than 20 years, has died following a short illness. He was appointed House Manager at 100 Princes Street in the late 1980s and, under the guidance of Robert Newell, oversaw substantial structural and cosmetic change at the clubhouse. One of Alan's many achievements was to help persuade the organisation to present their acclaimed chamber music programme at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The building had previously been given over to an independent drama group but the new arrangement proved a great success and continues to this day. Alan left ROSL in 2011 and built up a new portfolio in catering which included a splendid 'walk and dine' business aimed at Edinburgh tourists and locals alike. He had found the idea when on holiday in the US with his new wife, Wendy, to whom we send our sincere condolences.

In memory of Dr Edmund Marshall

The Royal Over-Seas League & London Group members will be saddened to learn of the death of Dr Edmund Marshall on 5 October 2023. Edmund was Chairman of the London Group for several years, stepping down in December 2019. He worked tirelessly organising monthly talks on a wide range of topics, as well as presiding over Christmas lunches and summer dinners. He had also served on Central Council. Our condolences go to his family on their loss.

Creativity runs wild at new ROSL sculpture exhibition

A unique new show in partnership with the Royal Society of Sculptors

Notes from the Future, a group exhibition of mailable artworks from international members of the Royal Society of Sculptors will be on display at Overseas House, London from 16 February until 14 April 2024. The form that these artworks take is up to each the artist; they may be constructions to be assembled, sculptural maquette sketches, drawings on paper, interesting materials/production methods, movie files on a USB drive – the choice is only limited to the requisite that these be sent in a mailable envelope or cardboard tube. Get ready to see creativity run wild in this unique prospect of a show in partnership with the Royal Society of Sculptors.



Birchall's tea goes the extra mile for sustainability

You can enjoy a warm glow from your refreshing ROSL cup of tea with the news that our tea supplier Birchall's have created the UK's first fully solar powered tea factory in Wiltshire, making them carbon-neutral, and also have invested to ensure all their plant-based tea bags are biodegradable and industrially compostable.



Gin tasting with the Ontario Branch



The Honourable Barbara Baker AC at a reception celebrating 75 years of the Tasmanian Branch



Elizabeth Murray from Canada Branch meeting with Michael McKay of Switzerland Branch

ROSL around the world

Our branches provide an opportunity for members in all parts of the world and across the UK to enjoy a range of social events close to home. To find out more about getting involved, simply contact your local representative

CANADA

British Columbia

This summer has been a difficult one in British Columbia, due to widespread wildfires, unseasonably hot weather and smoky conditions. However, it seems that members are keen to get back together in the near future. One of the many benefits of ROSL is the opportunity to meet other members in different countries when travelling, and when in Geneva in June, I met with Michael McKay, who is Co-Coordinator for ROSL members in French-speaking Switzerland. We had an interesting discussion with members of the British Swiss Chamber of Commerce, which he also coordinates. I now listen to his regular podcasts which were mentioned in an earlier Journal and would recommend to other members – Elizabeth Murray, President of British Columbia Branch.

Ontario

We held a successful gin tasting event at Reid's Distillery in October. Reid's Distillery is a family business, which started from their passion for craft

spirits and craft beers 2009. In a short time they have created world-class gins using Canadian products. The evening began with the President Ishrani Jaikaran welcoming all guests, members of ROSL, Ontario Chapter and two other Societies: the St. George's Society and the Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America. We were treated to a Reid's classic gin and tonic and a tour around the distillery hosted by Calvin Reid. This was followed by a tasting of their three signature gins and learned about how the choice of tonic water gave character to the drink; it was a very informative and enjoyable evening – Ishrani Jaikaran, President of the Ontario Branch.

AUSTRALIA

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Branch will be holding our Christmas lunch at the Reflections restaurant Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania on the 7 December from 12pm with more details to follow soon.

We also be holding our 'events planning' afternoon tea on Wednesday the 17 January at 25 Bournville Crescent Claremont from 2pm, where we'll discuss and determine future events for 2024.

Over the summer, we celebrated 75 years of the Tasmanian branch with an anniversary lunch held at the Athenaeum Club in Hobart, and a 75th anniversary reception featuring the Tasmanian Governor The Honourable Barbara Baker AC delivering an address to guests.

The Branch Book Group continues to operate each month, with a group of members meeting to discuss books with an agreed focus - Stephen Jones, Chairman, Tasmania Branch.

LONDON GROUP

There are lots of exciting plans afoot for the London Group 2024 calendar, many of which are still being planned. Please keep an eye on the ROSL events pages (rosl.org.uk/events) for details as these are confirmed, and also the ROSL newsletter which sends twice per month.

We are planning a talk at the end of January about the Suffragette movement, which is sure to be fascinating; more details will be released as soon as they're available - Anne Wilkinson, Executive Secretary of the ROSL London Group.

Member-led Activities

Book Group

The Book Group meets in person at the Club, as well as on Zoom for overseas members, on Wednesdays, once a month, to discuss primarily novels. The discussion starts at 6pm, but we meet beforehand for a drink and a chat and afterwards for dinner (optional) at 7.30pm. Dates of meetings with books: 13 December *The Ladies Paradise* by Emile Zola.



Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at ROSL every Monday 2pm - 4pm (except on Bank Holidays) to play ACOL Bridge. Once a month there is a refresher course with a truly excellent tutor £20pp, all other play is free. New members are welcome. Lunch at 12.30pm is optional.



Beginners' Course

10-week course at ROSL at £220pp payable in advance, starting Monday 5 February 2024 at 11.30am to 1.30pm.

International Online ROSL

Bridge Club: 10-week online course at £220 pp payable in advance, starting Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 5pm - 7pm UK time. These sessions will be open to all ROSL members around the world. Members visiting the Club can join the Monday afternoon play.

Backgammon Club

Meets on Wednesdays 2pm - 4pm and for lunch (optional) at 12.30pm. New members are welcome.



To join any of the Member-led activities, please contact Eve at E.Mittleton-Kelly@mittleton-kelly.org.uk

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Support Us

To allow ROSL to continue funding art and music education projects in the UK and around the Commonwealth, please consider donating at www.rosl.org.uk/supportus

News & views

HIGHLIGHTS



ROSL PHOTO 23 Exhibition Private View

Thursday 7 December, 6pm
at Over-Seas House

Immerse yourself in ROSL PHOTO 23, the Royal Over-Seas League's biennial international photography exhibition showcasing 20 shortlisted entries of images taken in the past 18 months from talented photographers around the world, based on this year's theme 'viewpoint'. The exhibition will be on view in the Central Lounge, ROSL Clubhouse, London, 8 December 2023 – 4 February 2024.



Christmas at ROSL

From Sunday 24 December
at Over-Seas House

Why not make it a Christmas to remember by celebrating the season in the historic splendour of Over-Seas House? Whether you'd like to spend the whole festive period (24-26 December) soaking in the atmosphere or want to enjoy our sumptuous four-course Christmas lunch, there's a package to suit you. Please see page 31 for more details of festive offers and accommodation.

New Year's Eve at ROSL

Sunday 31 December, Overseas House

Enjoy a relaxed and elegant start to 2024 at ROSL. To help you celebrate New Year's eve, our dining room will be open until 9pm, serving a selection of delicious festive dishes designed and prepared by executive Chef Elliot Plimmer.

Our beautiful Duke of York bar will be open until half past midnight to help you toast the new year in style, with a myriad delicious cocktails, spirits, wines and beers to enjoy and help you get into the celebratory spirit.

With London's New Year's celebrations in full swing, let ROSL be your home-from-home in the heart of St James, within walking distance of the capital's famous fireworks display and a host of exciting events being held Mayfair and beyond.



Annual Music Competition Finals

Every week throughout February and March

An absolute treat for music-lovers, our AMC finals will be the musical jewel in our late-winter calendar, featuring the brightest and best rising music stars. Now in our 72nd year, the competition boasts of £75,000 in awards and has provided a springboard into the industry for scores of musicians. Join us to see who will join the illustrious ranks of our ROSL Annual Music Prizewinners and support the brilliant young musicians who take to the Princess Alexandra Hall stage. A season ticket for the Annual Music Competition gives you access to each section final. Dates include the Woodwind and Brass Final (13 Feb), Vocal Final (20 Feb), Keyboard Final (27 Feb), Strings Final (5 March), Ensemble A (12 March), Ensemble B (19 March), AMC Overseas Final (26 March).

Season tickets are available, or purchase individual tickets at rosl.org.uk/events Annual Music Competition finals.

News & views

CALENDAR

EVENTS LISTINGS

Settle in for the new season with our vibrant calendar of book talks, art exhibitions, concerts and much more at ROSL. Visit rosl.org.uk/events

ROSL Annual Lecture featuring
Rt. Hon William Hague
Tuesday 5 December

ROSL PHOTO 23 Exhibition
Private View
Thursday 7 December

Christmas at ROSL
Sunday 24 December



New Year's Eve
Sunday 31 December

Saturday Night Jazz
From Saturday 6 January

Public Affairs Series:
Bill Browden
Thursday 11 January

Burns Night
Wednesday 24 January

Public Affairs Series: Robert
Hardman
Date TBC

Notes from the Future
Friday 16 February





How much is your violin worth?

Discover the value of your violin, viola, cello, or bow from our world-renowned experts. Consistently breaking world auction records, Brompton's is the leading auction house for the sale of fine musical instruments in Europe and the UK and holds six auctions per year.

We are now accepting consignments to our forthcoming fine sale in March. All instrument appraisals, whether for insurance or sale purposes, are complimentary and without obligation.

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The Ex-Isenberg. An important Italian violin by Pietro Guarneri, Mantua circa 1700 sold by Brompton's for **a new world auction record price of £691,200**

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