

BILLIONAIRE



THE SAVOIR FAIRE ISSUE THE LEGACY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

COVER • Steinway & Sons; a story of passion and precision

INTERIORS • Decorative wood panelling for the one percent

PHILANTHROPY • The husband-and-wife collectors behind a 100-acre sculpture park
HANDCRAFT • Inside the Danish hat-making renaissance

TRAVEL • Le Bristol, a Parisian institution worthy of any bucket list
DESIGN • Small is beautiful for Lobmeyr crystal

OPINIONS

Each issue we ask the same question to three thought-leaders. This time: if you could re-read one book, what would it be and why?



Helen Brocklebank

Emile Zola's 1883 novel *Au Bonheur Des Dames*, translated in English as *The Ladies' Paradise* and set in the 1860s, is a page-turning story of modern consumer culture and its impact on society, customers and the local economy. His dream-machine overloads his customers' senses with enticing, intoxicating displays; he introduces advertising campaigns and home delivery, a tea-room and a reading area for children — the kind of innovation that feels startlingly contemporary. What's more, Mouret has fallen for one of his shop girls, but while his sumptuous store seduces every woman in Paris, Denise herself refuses to succumb to his charms.

A walk around Harrods last week — every bit as opulently pleasurable in 2023 as the Ladies' Paradise Zola described 140 years earlier — reminds me that a re-read of his novel is long overdue. It's not only another opportunity to luxuriate in Zola's delicious prose or consider how cleverly he wraps his critique of capitalism in a hymn to modern business and entrepreneurial spirit, it's also an education in the powerful pull of luxury consumerism.

Helen Brocklebank is chief executive of Walpole, UK sector body for British luxury



Amy Wardell

One of my favourite reads, and into which I joyfully dip time and again, is Peter Ackroyd's stunning *London: The Biography*. It is inimitable in its scope and erudition, taking the reader through the temporal and spatial journey of the evolution of the UK's capital in a way that is personal and utterly memorable.

His detailed stories reveal the city's layers — historical fragments that we rush past daily — and it is wondrous to imagine all the events that have taken place beneath our feet. It is particularly interesting for me as I am involved in reviving some of the city's finest buildings for future use. I am fascinated by the blend of architectures and histories that populate the very fabric of this city and love being a participant — as we all are in our way — in the capital's evolution for future generations.

Fiction for me is escapism, beautiful creative writing that is medicine for the soul. I am often amazed at a writer's ability to lead us into the geographies of their imaginations, helping us to explore new lands and other ways of thinking. Their storytelling helps our minds to wander and give ourselves space for reflection and meditation.

Amy Wardell is head of brand at developer Northacre



Ralph de Wavrin

I would re-read *Principles* by Ray Dalio. In this book, Dalio, who successfully founded Bridgewater Associates from his bedroom, 40 years later went on to being the fifth-biggest private company in the US.

Dalio discusses the need for a key set of principles that you live and die by through all areas of your life. He outlines the principles he used to successfully deal with reality to get what you want out of life.

What this book did for me, was made me focus and really think about my values in life. As I was reading, I would scribble my own personal values and thoughts on the page in pencil as they came to me.

The book has now become almost a bible for me when I am in a situation, in both personal and work life, where I am unsure how to solve a problem. I've learnt when things don't work out, that they are just lessons to improve on.

It's enabled me to be consistent and effective with my decision making, which has been invaluable for the direction of our brand Oliver Bernard Escapes and its early success.

Ralph de Wavrin co-founder of Oliver Bernard Escapes, a luxury travel company