

HARPER'S BAZAAR

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My Amsterdam by Ilse Crawford

THE INTERIOR DESIGNER BEHIND SOHO HOUSE NEW YORK AND HIGH ROAD HOUSE IN CHISWICK TRAVELS TO AMSTERDAM SIX TIMES A YEAR. SHE IS ALSO HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AT DESIGN ACADEMY EINDHOVEN

IT LAYS MY HEAD... usually at friends' homes. But Lloyd Hotel, 34 Oostelijke Handelskade (+31 20 561 3636), is a great alternative – it's a juvenile-detention centre from 1921 that has been transformed by artists, designers and architects. The rooms in the eaves are beautiful and the concierge service is excellent.

BEST BITES Amsterdam is not known for its food, but there are some really good exceptions. Mamouche, 104 Quellijnstraat (+31 20 673 6361), is a small, cool restaurant serving delicate North African dishes. De Bolhoed, 60 Prinsengracht (+31 20 626 1803), offers wonderful wholesome food. Club 11, Oosterdokkade (+31 20 625 5999), has fabulous views – and you can take a hot 'Dutch tub' in the top bar. More formal is the beautiful De Kas, 3 Kamerlingh Onneslaan (+31 20 462 4562), in what were the old city greenhouses.

MARKET ASSETS The Dutch have a strong reputation for design. Droog Design, 7a/7b Staalstraat (+31 20 523 5050), is a relaxed design shop selling innovative work; the Frozen Fountain, 645 Prinsengracht (+31 20 622 9375), is an established and distinctive design shop and Artimo, 140 Sevilleweg (+31 10 245 3333), is great for books. Head to the Noordermarkt on



Saturday mornings for organic produce along with some interesting bric-a-brac and vintage clothing.

SELF-INVESTMENT Book a blow-dry at cool hairdressers Le Souk, 5 Wolvenstraat (+31 20 427 1651) – ask for Pascual. The Turkish baths Hamam Zaanstraat, 88 Zaanstraat (+31

20 681 4818), are worth a visit, and check out the Rembrandts and Vermeers at the Rijksmuseum, 1 Jan Luijkenstraat (+31 20 674 7000). And you can jump on the train to the beach for long walks all year round.

INSIDER TIPS Everyone cycles, so hire a bike at the station. And no one has curtains, so if you are curious you can whizz along the canal paths and get a really good sense of how people live.



My big idea

FIONA BELL, FOUNDER OF THEIR NIBS
A former high-street fashion buyer, Fiona Bell had been in the rag trade for 15 years. But when she had an idea for a distinctive childrenswear company, she entered 'a whole different ball game'. 'The grounding and similarities were there,' she says, 'but starting up means you need to do everything.'

'The inspiration wasn't so much having a baby, but realising that the gap in the market for children's fashion that wasn't branded or high-street was massive.' Backed by her bank – convinced by Bell's collection of mood boards and sturdy business plan – she left her job at Laura Ashley in January 2003 and spent six months setting up shop.

'The concept was clothes that were eclectic but not alienating, so they would appeal to grandmas as well as young mums,' she says.

Customers in the shop's first week included Sharleen Spiteri and Sadie Frost. Many more followed: Kate Moss, Jude Law, Mariella Frostrup and their little ones are regulars, attracted by the vintage-inspired prints, in-store play area and children's hairdresser.

The name Their Nibs came from the expression 'his nibs', meaning 'his lordship', and the clothing lines include His Nibs, Her Nibs and Little Nibs for babies. Now in her third year, Bell has expanded into wholesale and is being mentored by retailer David James, who also advised Katherine Hamnett and Karen Millen. And the ideas keep coming: possible franchising, and a maternity range. 'It would have to be called "Nearly Nibs",' she says.

Their Nibs, 214 Kensington Park Road, London W11 (020 7221 4263; www.theirnibs.com).



THE RULES Tidying your desk

BY GUY BROWNING

- 1 TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE HAVE CLEAR DESKS: THOSE IN LINE FOR PROMOTION, AND THOSE WHO HAVE JUST BEEN FIRED.
- 2 PUT EXCESS PAPER ON THE MESSY DESK NEXT TO YOU. THEY WON'T NOTICE.
- 3 TIDY DESKS MEAN FULL DRAWERS: USE THEM TO COMPOST NON-URGENT STUFF.
- 4 DEAL WITH ONE PIECE OF PAPER AT A TIME, THEN SEND IT, SHRED IT, FILE IT OR FRAME IT.



THREE OF THE BEST...

Dinner-party caterers

1 DAYLESFORD ORGANIC WILL COVER EVERYTHING FROM CANAPÉS AND DECORATIONS TO THREE-COURSE DINNERS. THE 'READY TO DINE' RANGE OF SEASONAL ORGANIC MEALS MAKES A GREAT COOK'S CHEAT. FROM £35 A HEAD (01608 731000; WWW.DAYLESFORDORGANIC.COM).

2 WITH AN ENVIABLE CLIENT LIST, RED SNAPPER EVENTS WILL CATER FOR A MINIMUM OF 10 PEOPLE AND TRAVEL FOR FREE TO ANYWHERE WITHIN THE M25. FROM £90 A HEAD (020 7064 0851; WWW.REDSNAPPEREVENTS.COM).

3 ORDER ONLINE FROM BANQUET IN A BOX AND A FROZEN FEAST WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR FREE OF CHARGE IN 48 HOURS. FROM £295 A HEAD (0845 678 9510; WWW.BANQUETIN-A-BOX.CO.UK).

