

# THE PENINSULIST

Nº23



*Lydia Chan by Casey Moore*

## Art

Meet Lydia Chan, the joy-inspiring set designer and artist who creates beaded alien monsters and gloriously technicolour worlds

## Design

How craft is quietly tackling climate change, one project at a time. Plus, Ravensbourne's class of 2021 showcase their work

## Culture

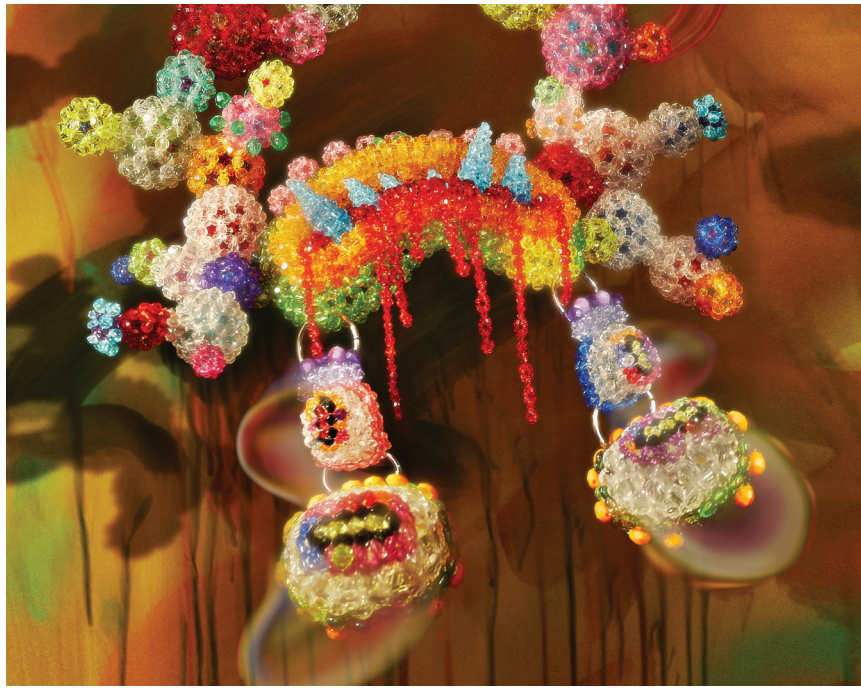
Explore the impact of cuts to arts education and why it's vital that it's accessible and inclusive of everyone

## Food

The street-food vendors moving into the Peninsula's new food hall on the signature dishes you won't want to miss

# Directory

## Lydia Chan, Your Ship Has Landed

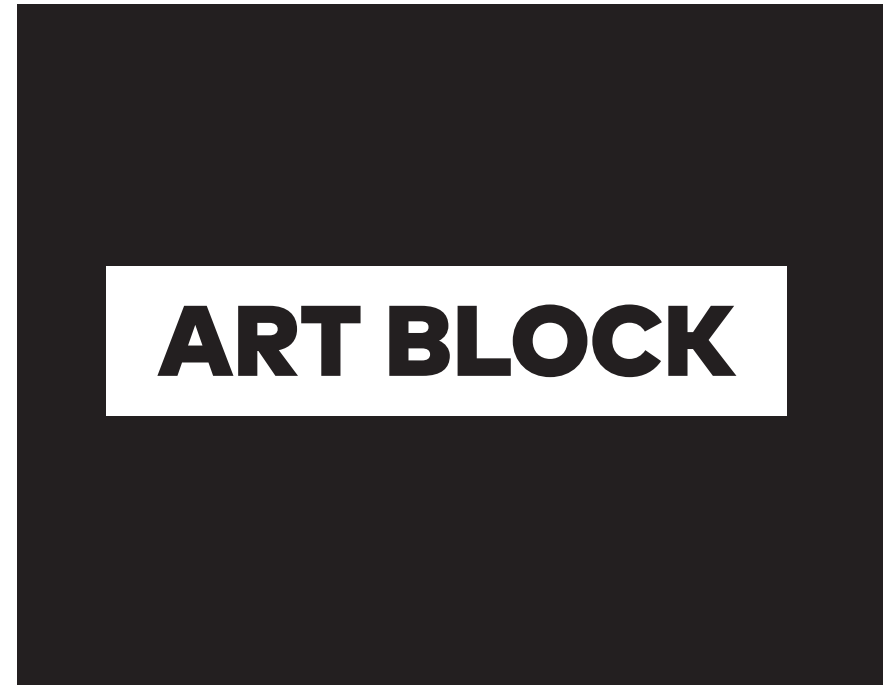


19 Nov 2021 – 13 Feb 2022, NOW Gallery

Come and enjoy an out-of-this-world experience as Lydia Chan takes over NOW Gallery with a colourful, vivid environment and engaging augmented reality for the 2021 Design Commission. A self-defined maximalist, Lydia is a set designer and multidisciplinary artist who loves monsters, designer toys and cartoons. She will be exploring the bubbly fantastical qualities of science fiction in a time where science is so filled with doom and gloom

■ [nowgallery.co.uk/yourshiphaslanded](https://nowgallery.co.uk/yourshiphaslanded)

## Art Block



16 Sep – 17 Oct 2021, Design District

NOW Gallery and Design District collaborate to present a series of pop up exhibition spaces featuring the practices of visual artists Vince Fraser, Charles Emerson and Lisa Wolf over four floors. The takeover celebrates the launch of Greenwich Peninsula's exciting cultural quarter, Design District, a new permanent home for the creative industries. The exhibition will take place inside one of two buildings by Barrozzi Veiga

■ [nowgallery.co.uk/exhibitions/art-block](https://nowgallery.co.uk/exhibitions/art-block)

## Ravensbourne Outdoor Degree Show



From 27 Sep 2021, Upper Riverside

Following the success of the 2020 Outdoor Degree Show, Ravensbourne University London students have once again curated their most impressive work for an outdoor exhibition at Greenwich Peninsula. Celebrating the class of 2021, the Outdoor Degree Show is a bold expression of creativity and resilience from talented students, and is free for all to enjoy

## Design District Creates



15 Sep – 17 Oct 2021, Design District

Celebrate the opening of London's new creative neighbourhood with a month-long programme of special events. Meet the people and discover the places that make Design District, with inspiring talks at Bureau, in depth tours by Open City, and Art Block, an epic building takeover by NOW Gallery. Be part of it, from 15 September

■ [designdistrict.co.uk/events](https://designdistrict.co.uk/events)

f i t @ThePeninsulist

[GreenwichPeninsula.co.uk](https://GreenwichPeninsula.co.uk)

# The Creatives Issue

London has always been a cultural melting pot, a hub for creatives to work, collaborate and thrive in. Now, more than ever, we need all the art and culture we can get, which is why this issue celebrates the city's most creative people. We meet Lydia Chan, the set designer and multi-disciplinary artist with an upcoming exhibition at NOW Gallery, whose playful and technicolour work is so uplifting that she's the go-to for the music and fashion industry looking to build joy-filled worlds. We explore how some of the capital's most talented makers are using their craft to quietly tackle the climate crisis on a small scale in an effort to inspire the rest of us to do our part, and find out how the latest round

of government spending cuts is going to impact the accessibility and diversity of creative arts education, and have a devastating knock-on effect on the culture that we love. Check out some of the incredible work conjured up by Ravensbourne University London's graduating classes of 2021. And meet the street-food favourites moving into the Peninsula's must-visit new food hall, Canteen – as well as getting a step-by-step guide to making the perfect falafels at home. Don't miss our supplement, too, where you can find out all about our newly opened Design District. Plus, from tattooists to social enterprises, meet some of the tenants who are moving in.

## Autumn 2021

## Highlights

## Edition 23



### 3–4 She's Created A Monster

Lydia Chan is the artist and set designer that the fashion and music industries call when they want to conjure joy-filled, technicolour worlds. Ahead of her solo exhibition at the NOW Gallery, we visit her studio to meet her – and the beaded monsters she's been busy creating



### 17–18 The Class of 2021

From Advertising to Fashion Accessory Design, we celebrate the very best of 2021's graduating creative classes with highlights from Ravensbourne University London's digital degree show

### 5–6 All You Can Eat

Meet the creative chefs with a knack for street food who moved into the Design District's new food hall, Canteen, and the not-to-be-missed signature dishes you should look out for



### 15–16 The Final Cut

With fresh cuts to arts subjects in higher education on the horizon, we look at what their impact could be – and why it's so important that art and culture is accessible to everyone



### 11–12 The Art of the Possible

What can craft possibly have to offer in the face of the monumental task of tackling climate change? As the world's leaders prepare to gather at COP26 to discuss what can be done on a global scale, we look at the case for small, independent designers as a harbinger of hope



### 13–14 At Home on the Peninsula

Step inside the perfectly harmonious, uncluttered cocoon that is scientist Silvia Ragno's Tom Dixon-designed apartment



Editor: Emma Sells. Sub editor: Victoria Haswell. Editorial contributor: Katie Tregidden. Photographic contributors: Casey Moore, Justine Trickett. Art director: Ashwin Patel

Meet Lydia Chan, the in-demand set designer whose vibrant and playful beaded alien monsters are set to take over NOW Gallery later this year

# She's Created A Monster

WORDS BY EMMA SELLS

Autumn 2021



Lydia Chan, image by Casey Moore



Images by Lydia Chan



either. As we speak, she's wearing an uplifting mix of a tight orange cropped top layered over a skinny, pink tie-dye top with rainbow dip-dye cycling shorts and mismatched leopard-print socks. "Minimalism is so clever," she says. "I feel like maybe I'm too stupid for minimalism. You have to pick the one object that's going to carry the entire show and that's so much pressure. As a maximalist, I feel like it's about individual objects bearing some kind of weight and then collectively creating a real moment. When you have one small cup, for example, it's just a cup, but if you have 100 cups, that repetition makes it almost feel like they're vibrating together to create this incredible experience, and I love that."

Chan was raised by her mum, a computer salesperson and keen seamstress, and dad, a computer programmer with a flair for woodwork, in a picture-perfect suburb north of Toronto. She's been creative for as long as she can remember but a career in art wasn't a given – she got her first degree in interior design but had also been offered a place on a pharmacy course. "There's a cliché in the art industry where, like, 'Oh, you're an artist – you're bad at math,'" she says. "I feel like that's not true, at least for me. I feel like I'm one foot in the pragmatic side and one foot in like the crazy, chaotic, creative side."

After graduation, Chan moved to London to study Fashion Communication and Promotion at Central Saint Martins, with an eye on becoming a stylist. She found it hard to connect with her classmates, though – at 23, she already felt like a mature student – so threw herself into the industry in her downtime, assisting stylist Panos Yiapanis (and realising that the day-to-day job was very heavy on sending emails and packing suitcases). Everything really clicked into place thanks to a game-changing

gig working with legendary London set designer Gary Card, who mentored and supported her for years as she learned her trade. "I always joke with my friends that he's my creative soulmate," she says. Chan found herself at home in the inspiring hustle and bustle of the capital, too. "London is such a creative place," she says. "At Central Saint Martins, there's this concept that you have to be really ambitious, you don't need money, you don't need anything, you just need to make it happen. And I think that's sort of the London ethos: we don't have to have a lot but we can still make something really cool."

“

Chan is planning to conjure a fantastical, plant-filled alien world that riffs on her love of science and science fiction and that centres around the intricate beaded monsters that she's been making since 2016

”

Lydia Chan's Seven Sisters studio is packed. All big windows and paint-splattered floors, it's an Aladdin's cave of tools, paint supplies and odds and ends piled high alongside leftovers from her previous work – a giant shoe here, shards of iridescent plastic there, a wall covered in fluffy and cardboard smiley faces. "I keep a lot," says the 29-year-old Canadian-born, London-based set designer. "I try to repurpose things or strip them for materials. The sad thing about set design is that when people want something, they want it now. And then when they want it gone, they want it gone now – it's very temporary. You've worked so hard, stressed yourself out for weeks leading up to this job; these objects are the most important objects in the

whole world [to you]. And suddenly they depreciate to zero value in two seconds. I find that process quite heart-breaking. That's why I'm a hoarder."

Chan is the set designer that the fashion and music industry call when they want joyful, playful, gloriously technicolour worlds created for their shoots and videos. To date, she's worked with *Vogue China*, *The Face*, Vivienne Westwood and Adam Lambert among others, all drawn in by her signature more-is-more aesthetic: jaunty, childlike shapes heavily inspired by the diet of Nickelodeon cartoons – *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Fairly Odd Parents* – that she grew up on, with a hint of romance thrown in and a Tim Burton-like subversive edge. It's not just her studio that embodies this more-is-more spirit



Images by Casey Moore



to-day work. "Set design is about creating a context for a person or a thing and I think as an artist you can make whatever: I can make a sculpture, a painting, a digital experience, and it doesn't have to link to a person or a brand, it's a standalone thing. Set design isn't supposed to be the star of the show; we're like the beautiful leaves on the bouquet, the supporting artist that's there to enhance the star. As an artist, you can make objects that are the star, which is why I want to move in that direction."

Her first opportunity will come this winter courtesy of a solo exhibition at the NOW Gallery as its 2021 Design Commission. Chan is planning to conjure a fantastical, plant-filled alien

“

I try to repurpose things or strip them for materials. The sad thing about set design is that when people want something, they want it now. And then when they want it gone, they want it gone now – it's very temporary

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world that riffs on her love of science and science fiction and that centres around the intricate beaded monsters that she's been making since 2016 – employing a time-consuming technique picked up during a school fad when she was a child (she made herself a beaded monster necklace and became obsessed with creating bigger and more vibrant and elaborate creatures). Their planet is inspired by Chan's experiences over the past 18 months and the idea of being able to escape lockdown for somewhere far more fun. "For me, science is a lot about the unknown and discovering things," she says. "When something is unknown, it can be really scary but it's also an opportunity for your imagination to be like, what if I could time travel? What if I could laser beam somewhere else? I always felt that lockdown was sort of like in *Interstellar* when they're stuck in the spaceship for years and they're getting old. You're stuck in this artificial world for so long and then you go outside to nature and suddenly it becomes a new sort of a new experience. So I think that's why I love making all these alien monsters and bright things, because I'm like, what if you could leave lockdown and enter this amazing colourful space where everything is really bubbly and fun and joyful?" She's looking forward to bringing something to life that so many people can interact with, something with more permanence than those here-today, gone-tomorrow sets that are packing out her studio. And to bringing a little of her colourful world into the rest of our worlds. "You know, life is so dreary," she says. "Creating something happy is so important."

Autumn 2021



Image by Lydia Chan

***Your Ship Has Landed* will run at NOW Gallery from 19 Nov 2021 - 13 Feb 2022**  
**■ [nowgallery.co.uk](https://nowgallery.co.uk)**

# Ehla

Ehla offers up all things eastern Mediterranean, which means they know their way around a falafel and have a flair for whipping up technicolour salads that are pretty enough to tempt even the most reluctant. Whether you're after something to share or keep to yourself, their nourishing fare is sure to satisfy.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Healthy, vibrant flavours.

**What drew you to this kind of food and what do you love about it?**

We both have links to Cyprus and grew up eating this delicious, healthy and wholesome food. Cypriot food consists of a whole array of cuisines from Turkish, Greek, Arabic, English and Middle Eastern, so we wanted to bring this incredible merging of cuisines to the streets of London in the awesome form of Ehla.

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

The falafel wrap – everyone loves it! Some people aren't keen on falafel until they have tried ours; we make everyone love falafel as much as we do. Our Falafel Wrap has grown and evolved with the business and it continues to get more and more incredible.

■ @ehla.eat



# All you can eat

Canteen, the Design District's joyful, SelgasCano-designed food hall, has just opened. We meet the creative chefs with a knack for street food who have set up home there to find out what they'll be cooking up and which not-to-be-missed signature dishes you should look out for. Hope you're feeling hungry...



## SUGO

Like the idea of Italian food that doesn't hinge around pizza and pasta? Sugo has you covered. From focaccia paninis and sauce-laden rice boxes to standout sides (carbonara fritters anyone?), it offers up low-key, fast food made from top-quality ingredients.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Fresh, quality, authentic.

**What drew you to this kind of food and what do you love about it?**

When walking down the streets of Rome, Palermo or wherever you may be, you will always be met by delicious, fresh food served quickly on the streets. We've tried to replicate this vibe and provide London with amazing food you won't forget. Our team of Italian chefs work on recipes

dating back hundreds of years to keep our authenticity on point!

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

It has to be the porchetta focaccia: a side of pork filled with herbs and spices, rolled and put in the oven for six hours. The porchetta is then thinly sliced and placed between fresh focaccia, accompanied with roasted peppers and our homemade chilli sauce – it's incredible!

■ @sugo\_uk

## Raastawala

Whipping up Northern Indian-inspired food from recipes handed down through generations, Raastawala (that's 'street vendor' in Hindi) is a family affair. Founded by Rinku Dutt and her husband, Neelan, and father, Ron, the idea was sparked after she clocked how much the guests at her wedding enjoyed the traditional Kolkata food that was served up.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Gastronomic Kolkata street food.

**What drew you to this kind of food and what do you love about it?**

It's food from my parents' hometown, Kolkata, cooked with honour and love. Each dish has a story and history behind it, which I find fascinating. Being able to share these dishes and seeing the satisfaction on our customers' faces makes all the hard work worth it!

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

Our Kolkata kati roll – a soft pillowy naan, cooked with an egg and spices, filled with either our spicy lamb kebabs, 24-hour marinated tandoori chicken or cheeky chickpeas, loaded with salads and drizzled with award-winning sauces, wrapped and served to you with love. The meat is prepared according to our family recipes handed down by two generations, and our chilli and coriander chutney has been awarded three stars at the Great Taste Awards – you'll know why it's special once you've tried it.

■ @raastawala



## Toasted by GB Charcuterie

These guys are charcuterie experts and know just where to source the very best cured meats and fine cheese. And, at Design District Canteen, they're turning their attention to next-level sandwiches filled with everything from fish and chips to wagyu salt beef. As if that wasn't enough, they're serving raclette, too. The stuff that dreams are made of.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Delicious, artisan, British.

**What drew you to this kind of food and what do you love about it?**

I've always loved a good sandwich and it seemed the natural next step, combining amazing GB Charcuterie products with the best bread we can get our hand on.

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

The pastrami sandwich. We've spent years working on the recipe for this pastrami and it's definitely paid off. It's a 12-day process from start to finish but worth it! We use great wagyu beef for the extra fat and organic timut pepper for a fruity, vibrant finish.

■ @toastedgbc

## Eat Lah

Husband and wife duo Rob and Mel started Eat Lah in 2019, offering Londoners the chance to give Malaysian food the love it deserves. The menu is hooked around nasi kerabu, a flavour-filled dish served with blue (yes really) rice, alongside snack boxes for the indecisive and Insta-worthy desserts.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Delicious, colourful, exciting.

**What drew you to this kind of food and what do you love about it?**

We go back to Malaysia at least once a year and every time we go, nasi kerabu is always on the list to eat. The blue rice gets people curious and it's a great conversation starter. We're constantly creating new dishes with South-East Asian flavours, like

pandan panna cotta and matcha bun with coconut jam. Ultimately, we just want to share food that is really delicious but not that well known.

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

It's got to be our nasi kerabu with a cham cham (mixed) topping. The most popular is nasi kerabu with coconut chicken and satay chicken and, for our veggie lovers, grilled tofu with grilled aubergine is also very yummy. When it comes to our sweets, pandan panna cotta is always a fan favourite, too.

■ @eatlahuk



## GUASA

Guasa serves up an irresistibly heady combination of Venezuelan arepa buns (fluffy corn buns piled high with decadent fillings), nourishing bowls and rum cocktails. A London street food stalwart dreamed up by David Gutierrez (it has an outpost in Madrid, too) that you'll love.

**Describe your food in three words:**  
Tasty, unique and gluten-free.

**What drew you to Venezuelan food and what do you love about it?**

I am Venezuelan, and I wanted to share part of my culture with the world, bring some innovations to what we do and create incredible experiences for our customers – we love seeing people's reactions when they have one of our arepas for the first time.

**What's your signature dish and what makes it so special?**

The Two Little Pigs arepa. It's an amazing mix of flavours; roasted pork loin mixed with caramelized onions and served with grilled goat's cheese and fresh coriander, topped up with pork belly crackling. It's one of our bestsellers and proof that you can create mouth-watering combinations and keep them 100% gluten-free.

■ @guasalondon

Find out more at  
[designdistrict.co.uk/canteen](https://designdistrict.co.uk/canteen)  
and @designdistrictcanteen



1



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9



Images by Justine Trickett

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# Falafel

The team at Ehla share their step-by-step guide to conjuring their not-to-be missed falafel wrap

When it comes to food that's delicious, visually appealing and good for you, Mediterraneans have the edge. Which is why Ehla's feasts, inspired by dishes from Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, and Israel, have such a following. As the street-food favourites settle into their permanent home in the Design District's incredible new food hall, Canteen, they share their how-to guide to making the perfect falafels by hand, and to whipping them up into the best pitta wrap you could ever hope to eat. Grab your friends – this is too good to keep to yourself and doesn't food taste better when it's shared anyway? – and get your chickpeas at the ready.

**Serves 4 to 5 people**

**Ingredients**

- 50g red cabbage
- 100g white cabbage
- 50g grated carrot
- 50g sultanas
- 50ml pomegranate molasses
- Half a cucumber, sliced
- 50g pickles (of any kind, we prefer pickled turnips)

- 400ml tahini sauce
- 4-6 khobez flatbreads
- 1 aubergine
- 1 litre rapeseed oil
- 200ml lemon juice
- 150ml olive oil
- 200g canned chickpeas
- 500g raw chickpeas
- 5 cloves minced garlic
- Half a minced white onion

- 100g falafel spices
- 100g sesame seeds
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 100ml cold water

**For the crispy falafels**  
Soak 500g of chickpeas in cold water overnight. They will become soft and double in size.

Using a food processor, crush the soaked chickpeas until they become minced, add three cloves of minced garlic and onion and blend for a further five minutes. Add the cold water, baking powder, sesame seeds and falafel spices to the ground chickpeas and mix very well. Once everything is combined, set aside.

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# Wrap

**For the houmous**

Drain and wash 200g of canned chickpeas and blend in a food processor with two cloves of minced garlic. Add 100ml of lemon juice, 250ml of tahini, 100ml olive oil and a pinch of salt. Blend until smooth.

**For the Eastern Mediterranean slaw**

Chop or use a mandolin to grate the red and white cabbage into thin shredded strips. Grate the carrots and mix the cabbage and carrots together. Mix in the golden sultanas and then add 100ml of lemon juice, all the pomegranate molasses and 50ml of olive oil. Mix all of this together and set aside so the cabbage can begin to slightly pickle in the juices of the lemon.

**Frying your falafel and aubergine**

Peel the skin from the aubergine – this

removes any bitterness. Chop into chunks or slices (whichever you prefer), spread out on a plate and very gently sprinkle salt over it. Leave to stand for five minutes.

Using a deep saucepan, heat 1 litre of rapeseed oil to around 180–200°C. Once the oil has reached the desired temperature, slowly submerge the aubergine chunks and let them fry, turning occasionally so they are evenly cooked. If the oil is at the correct temperature, they should be cooked in under a minute. Using a slotted spoon, remove the aubergines when golden brown and place on a piece of kitchen towel to soak up any excess oil. Now it's time to cook the star of the show, the falafels! If you are able to get your hands on a falafel maker (usually

found online) then this will really ease your falafel-making life. However, using your hands or a spoon to make a circular shape is also possible. Take your set-aside chickpea mixture and carefully shape it into balls – there should be enough for around 25 falafels. Slowly and carefully submerge the falafel into the hot oil. You'll know they're cooked when they've turned dark brown and the outside is crispy. Using a slotted spoon, remove your cooked falafels from the oil and place on some kitchen towel to soak up any excess oil.

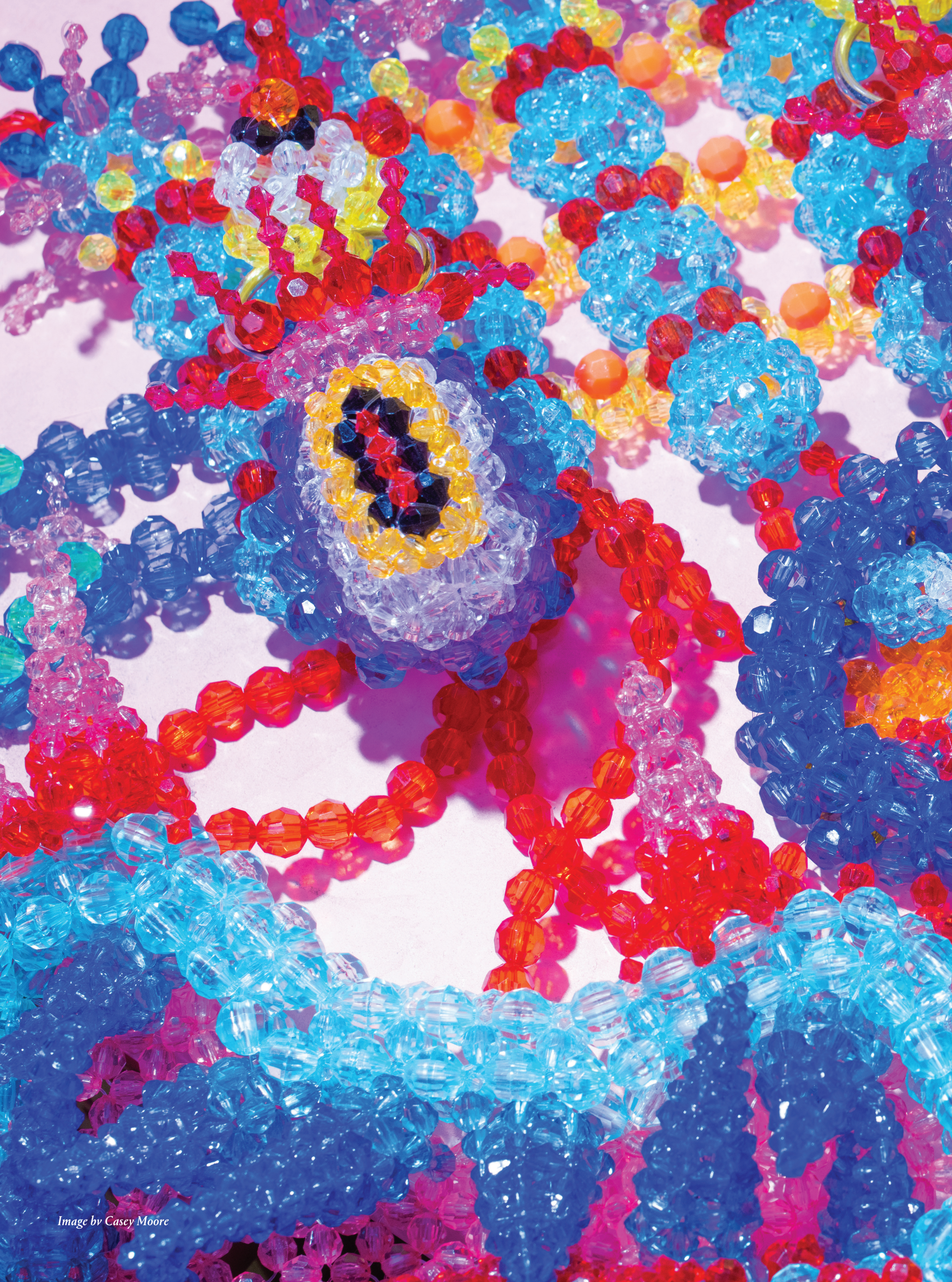
**Assembling your falafel pitta**

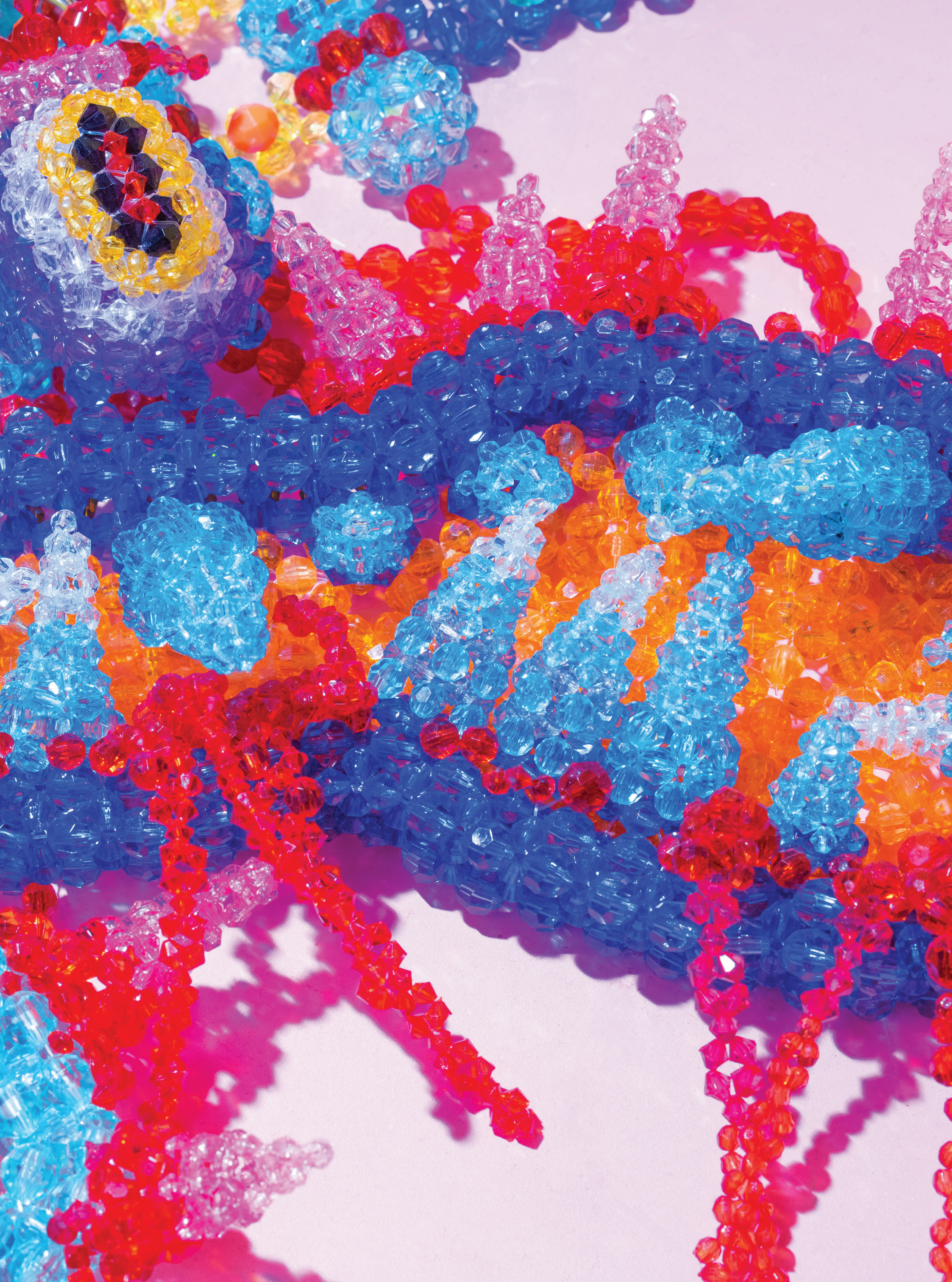
Warm a flat frying pan on the stove top and place your large Lebanese khobez pitta in the pan – this will gently warm the bread but not toast it. Once your bread is warmed on both sides and feels fluffy, remove it

from the pan. Using a large spoon, slather a big dollop of houmous onto the bread. Next, add a generous handful of the slaw, cucumber, a small handful of fried aubergine and a few pickles. Above the salad, place four hot and crispy falafels and smash them against the khobez with your fist! Then add a generous drizzle of tahini. Fold the khobez into a wrap and devour your falafel pitta.

@ehla.eat

Find Ehla in the Design District's new food hall, Canteen







*If Chairs Could Talk* by Yinka Ilori

Autumn 2021

# The Art of the Possible

What can craft possibly have to offer in the face of the monumental task of tackling climate change? As the world's leaders prepare to gather at COP26 to discuss what can be done on a global scale, we look at the case for small, independent designers as a harbinger of hope

WORDS BY KATIE TREGGIDEN

Craft as a tool in the fight against the climate crisis – really? I know what you're thinking. Either you associate craft with Tom Daley's poolside knitting, in which case you're probably more than a little bemused, or you've seen independent designer-makers coming up with some pretty cool ideas, but you're not convinced they're scalable. Either way, craft is small; craft is marginal; craft is gentle. It hasn't got the scope or seriousness to tackle the problems the planet is now facing, and certainly not at the scale we now need. "Independent designers with the greatest of intentions and the greatest of ingenuity are still the merest rounding errors of the real problem," says craft historian Glenn Adamson. "The real problem is of such hugeness that it requires a radical rethinking of our production and consumption patterns as a species." And he's right. But what if craft – small, marginal and gentle as it might be – could help to prompt some of that radical rethinking?

Co-founder of Studio Swine Alexander Groves describes the Sea Chair that he and his partner, Azusa Murakami, designed as a "flight of fancy". Inspired by the crafts practised by seafarers for generations, it was conceived to provide potential solutions to both the plastics crisis and declining incomes from fishing by providing fishermen with an open-source design they could make from ocean plastic while out at sea. However, he admits that they didn't actually expect to solve either problem. So why design the chair at all? "Transforming the

undesirable into something desirable makes you do a double-take and reassess your perception of the world," he explains. "We wanted to bring [ocean plastic] to the public's attention and introduce some poetry, which we felt was lacking in sustainable design at the time. We wanted to engage people with the issue and demand change in the way we use plastics."

With director Juriaan Booij, Studio Swine made a film depicting a day boat heading out to sea in the romantic light of dawn. It shows fishermen catching both fish and plastic, turning the latter into Sea Chairs as they gut and prepare the fish. "The film was as important an outcome from the project as the chair itself," says Groves. It went on to be awarded at the Cannes Film Festival and viewed by millions of people.

For Groves and Murakami, craft is not necessarily about fixing the planet's problems, but about raising awareness of them with enough beauty to challenge perceptions and perhaps even spur the radical rethink that we need.

The argument often put forward in defence of such flights of fancy is that they serve as independent research projects, generating original ideas that, once proven, can be scaled up in collaboration with bigger companies – and sometimes this is the case. But what if this isn't craft's only role? "In the arena of poetics and persuasion, the designer is not necessarily coming up with the solution that will be scaled up and operationalised but rather using craft as a form

of soft power – a way of getting people to attend to the problem of climate change and think in a more optimistic and hopeful way about potential solutions,” says Adamson.

“  
Craft offers an opportunity to create talismans of hope. Iconic, attention-grabbing, beautiful, charismatic objects can serve as handles on a possible future  
”

Now that there’s unequivocal evidence that climate change is not only real but caused by human activity, and taking us on a path towards our own extinction, the communications task facing environmentalists is less driven by facts and more by emotions. The danger of reports such as this year’s IPCC’s Sixth Assessment is that the facts engender feelings of despair and hopelessness. If we are to reverse, halt, or even slow climate change, the task ahead of us is vast and can seem insurmountably complex. And it is intersected with issues ranging from biodiversity to social justice. It’s all too easy to feel completely overwhelmed, to bury our heads and to do nothing – but the crisis calls, more than anything, for action.

Craft offers an opportunity to create talismans of hope. “Iconic, attention-grabbing, beautiful, charismatic objects can serve as handles on a possible future – a future that is more functional, a future that actually works,” says Adamson. “Maybe the soft power of craft is most important because it gets right to our human understanding of the situation itself.” And if craft can create hope, it can inspire action, too.

London-based designer Yinka Ilori agrees. “Storytelling is such a huge part of design; without a narrative, design is pointless,” he says. “It’s got to make me feel something.” Ilori’s If Chairs Could Talk project comprises five chairs, each made from the discarded pieces of others, which he uses to explore issues of both sustainability and social justice by telling the stories of five of his childhood friends. “I suddenly saw chairs not just as seats, but as objects that could explore power in society and, viewed in a gallery setting, perhaps even change perspectives,” he says.

Similarly, designer Simon Ballen tackles both the colonisation of his native Colombia and the waste and pollution generated by gold mining in his Suelo Orfebre (‘Golden Soil’) collection. His vessels and vases are hand-blown using recycled glass and ‘jagua’ – the crushed ore left over after gold mining. “I wanted to use design as a narrative medium that must stop striving to ‘mirror’ the coloniser, but instead to foster practices that make use of our own local realities, to create objects and tools for discourse and empowerment,” he says. He worked with the local community to develop the collection and, in doing so, demonstrated the value of something that was, until then, dumped into rivers at a rate of 100 tonnes a day, creating pollution downstream. “The people of the local community reacted with surprise to the transformation of the jagua,” he says. “They perceived it differently after the transformation. It was no longer a waste product but a material that could be transformed into something valuable. In the future, I would like to think that, metaphorically at least, every waste stream could be transformed into gold.”

“Artistic endeavour and wild leaps of creativity can sometimes lead to massive transformations in the way the material world operates and is understood,” says Adamson. And massive transformations are exactly what we’re looking for. Perhaps we’ve just been looking in all the wrong places – and the poetics of persuasion are rooted in the small, marginal and gentle after all.



Sea Chair by Studio Swine



Vessels and vases by Simon Ballen

# At home on the Peninsula



Images by Daniela Condo

Step inside the perfectly harmonious, uncluttered cocoon that is scientist Silvia Ragno's Tom Dixon-designed apartment



When Silvia Ragno bought her first apartment on the Peninsula in 2013, The Tide hadn't even been completed yet. She and her husband, Ricardo, were living in Brighton but working in London and searching for somewhere for them to stay during the week – a flat overlooking the Thames so that they would be reminded of the sea, and a modern space that would act as a counterpoint to their Grade I listed home. The Peninsula fit the bill and, they were sure, had real potential to become an incredible community to live in, so they decided on an apartment in Lower Riverside. Right now, though, Ragno is living in a two-bedroom, Tom Dixon-designed flat in Upper Riverside; life changed and the pair first moved permanently to London and then decided to switch to one of the newly developed buildings, buying off-plan in 2015. Devastatingly, Ricardo passed away just as they were preparing to move in and so Ragno has had to adjust to living there alone.

“

I would say I'm quite a minimalistic person so it's very modern, very decluttered with a few details that soften it.

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The fifth-floor apartment, with its plant-filled balcony and views over The Tide (“I love plants but not gardening,” says Ragno) is a minimalist's dream, all clean lines and neutral shades with flashes of deep red alongside Dixon's signature copper detailing. Decorating it was a fun but understandably emotional affair for Ragno and very much a team effort; she enlisted the help of friend and interior

designer Daniela Condo to help her transform the compact space into a sanctuary where she could work and relax. “My husband and I spent 20 years together and always furnished everything together, so suddenly I found myself in this new environment and not

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**You’d go out to do your usual walk around the river and you would always bump into someone you know. It’s a very beautiful feeling.**  
”

knowing what to do,” she says. “I’ve got a busy job and I don’t like to spend time scrolling through thousands and thousands of choices.” Condo helped her work out exactly what she wanted from the environment, finding fittings and furniture options for her to choose from and helping to filter through her existing pieces and decide which ones to keep. “I think that’s the most difficult part – that you have things that you’re attached to but then they don’t fit,” says Ragno. “To share [that process] with another person means really exposing yourself and being vulnerable. That’s in part why we became such good friends; because we had to discuss all that history and the emotional attachment.” Ragno grew up in Milan but has been living in the UK for 30 years. A scientist and biotech expert, she’s the Chief Operating Officer of a start-up that she

co-founded, which is developing a pioneering new medicine for a rare disease of the eye. On a day-to-day basis that means working from home, so it was important that her apartment offered a calm, comfy space that could both act as an office and a place for her to switch off. “For me, my flat is an expression of myself; my home is my cocoon,” she says. “I would say I’m quite a minimalistic person so it’s very modern, very decluttered with a few details that soften it. It’s a warm but at the same time very linear place, with a harmony of colour and shape. Dani really helped me a lot to make a home that’s practical but also really beautiful and welcoming and that uses the space very carefully.” For the past two years Ragno has been learning tango, taking classes remotely when they weren’t running face to face, and transforming the flat’s second bedroom into a peaceful tango/yoga studio complete with an enormous mirror and practice bar. “I love everything about tango,” she says. “I think it’s the ultimate dance in terms of elegance, structure, posture. It takes a long time to learn so you need a lot of discipline and commitment but I love the music and the sensuality; I love that it’s a couples dance and there are very distinct roles that you have to follow – it’s very fulfilling actually.” And, aside from her dancing and yoga, her local friends and neighbours have offered her much-needed escape and support. “The Peninsula has been a real blessing over the past year and a half,” she says. “It’s extremely social: we’ve got this huge WhatsApp group and I have a core group of neighbours that I’m friends with. You’d go out to do your usual walk around the river and you would always bump into someone you know. It’s a very beautiful feeling. There’s an amazing community spirit and I absolutely love it.”



# The Final Cut

With fresh cuts to arts subjects in higher education on the horizon, we look at what their impact could be – and why it’s so important that art and culture is accessible to everyone

WORDS BY EMMA SELLS

Autumn 2021

What happens to our art and culture when access to it is restricted to a niche group of people who can afford it? “Mumford and Sons,” says Neil Griffiths, co-founder of Arts Emergency. “And Coldplay. All of those pop stars are a great example; privately educated with private money and producing middling art that speaks to no-one but people like themselves. And that’s already where we are with opera, ballet and high-level theatre, made by and consumed by the very same small strata of people. And that will happen with creative arts and the creative industries more broadly. It means you have a narrow group of people dictating the menu for working class people like me, of what we can actually aim for, what we can see and be on our screens and in our books, and that exacerbates the issue of representation, and that sucks. It completely ruins our society.”

Earlier this year the government voted through a new round of 50% spending cuts to a funding stream given to art and design higher education courses with a view to shifting the budget towards ‘high-cost, high-value’ STEM subjects instead. There was an outcry from institutions and creatives alike given that the move both threatens the viability of the courses for the universities and colleges that run them and devalues the arts as a whole. But the truth is that this is just the latest in a long line of cuts and policies designed to scale back arts education in schools and universities alike. Over the past decade, repeated budget cuts have meant that state schools forced to tighten their belts have made the difficult decision to reduce subjects like art, drama and music that call for specialist teachers and extra resources. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate in 2010, the system that measures the percentage of GCSE pupils getting grades 5-9 and that focuses solely on traditionally ‘academic’ subjects, discounting the arts completely, and ultimately narrowed the curriculum. A 2019 study showed that there had been a 38% decline in arts GCSE and a 29% decline in A Level entries between 2010 and 2019.

Griffiths founded youth organisation Arts Emergency in 2011 with comedian Josie Long in the wake of the coalition’s austerity programme. What started as a local scheme has grown into a game-changing programme that pairs 16-25 year-olds with an eye on a career in anything from video game programming to graphic design with a mentor already working in that world. The aim? To help level the playing field and make sure that those without the money to spend on extra-curricular activities or to fund themselves while they work for free

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If we don't have people from all backgrounds, creating the culture we live in, and if we assume it's an aphoristic thing to say that culture is politics, we just lost the war already.

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or who don’t have an already-existing network that they can call upon for favours still have the opportunity to follow their dreams. It’s currently working with around 10,000 students and mentors in London, Manchester and growing proof that kids will aspire to the arts no matter what obstacles are in front of them.

There’s sometimes a feeling among politicians and parents alike that creative subjects are nice to have but ultimately disposable, a little bit fluffy and unserious, especially when the lack of formalised career path is factored in. And while economics are far from being the most important aspect of this discussion, the numbers do stack up: according to the Creative Industries Federation’s 2020 report, pre-pandemic the creative industries combined contributed £115.9bn and were growing at four times the rate of the UK economy. They employ more than 2 million people and are projected to create 1 million more jobs by 2030.

And it’s not just students that miss out when they’re unable to participate – the rest of us, both individually and as a society, feel the lack too. “When people talk about the cultural war that’s going on all around us, we forget that actually what’s fundamental to that, fundamental to democracy, is a set of citizens that can think critically, that have agency and can imagine alternatives,” says Griffiths. “The ‘culture war’, is basically the struggle across generations for equity in all forms and it hinges on that ability to imagine, to convince and communicate. If we don’t have people from all backgrounds, creating the culture we live in, and if we assume it’s an aphoristic thing to say that culture is politics, we just lost the war already.”

Happily, there are reasons for optimism. Thanks to the internet and the meteoric rise of social media, the ability to create and find an audience for your work has arguably never been more democratic. The possibilities for creating great art outside of the traditional structures are infinite, whether that’s making music on an iPhone and uploading it to YouTube or dreaming up inspired and inspiring video content for TikTok. But there’s untold benefit to studying your chosen subject in a more formal setting, having the time to immerse yourself in that world and hone your craft and skills with experts in your field. And the option and opportunity to do that should be available to everyone. For all our sakes.

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There’s sometimes a feeling among politicians and parents alike that creative subjects are nice to have but ultimately disposable, a little bit fluffy and unserious, especially when the lack of formalised career path is factored in.

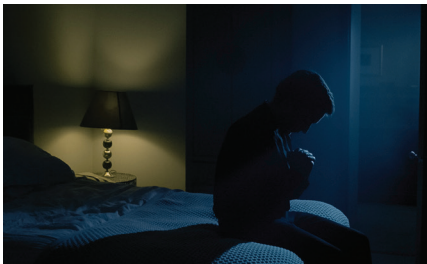
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Image by Lorena Pipenco, BA (Hons) Fashion 2021, Ravensbourne University London



Rebecca Waite  
BA (Hons) Architecture



Faisal Khan  
BA (Hons) Digital Film Production



Jasmine Hibberd  
BA (Hons) Editing and Post Production



Lucy Iisle  
Foundation Diploma Art & Design

If you want to know if the future of the design world is in safe hands, then you only have to look at the incredible work that the next generation of creatives have been dreaming up over the past year – and in the face of such adversity, no less. From Advertising to Fashion Accessory Design, we celebrate the very best of 2021's graduating classes with highlights from Ravensbourne University London's digital degree show

# The Class of 2021

Autumn 2021



Charlotte McGee  
BA (Hons) Fashion Accessory Design



Nico Froehlich  
BA (Hons) Digital Photography



Nicole Pulickal  
Access to Higher Education Award



SEEDS cohort  
SEEDS Zine Kaleidoscope



Jo Eccles  
BA (Hons) Music and Sound Design



Andjela Despotovic  
BA (Hons) Fashion Promotion



Julian Sterling  
BA (Hons) Illustration for Communication

## BLUE IS FOR BOYS. PINK IS FOR GIRLS.

Gender roles in society means how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing. Men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold.

Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, but they can be very different from group to group. They can also change in the same society over time. For example, pink used to be considered a masculine color in the U.S. while blue was considered feminine.

## NO PINK. NO DOLLS. NO TEARS.

2

Ross Hajowyi  
BA (Hons) Graphic Design



Sianna Leid  
BA (Hons) Fashion Buying  
and Brand Management



Edward Pond  
BA (Hons) Motion Graphics



Gurjit Choda  
BA (Hons) Product Design



Lorena Pipenco  
BA (Hons) Fashion



Isobel Clancy  
BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures



Ester Wikstrom & Mica Helger  
BA (Hons) Advertising and Brand Design

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