

# the aesthete

Designer of iconic shoes, **Manolo Blahnik** has 200 sales points worldwide, including a pop-up store in Liberty of London.

**My personal style signifier** is my cuff links – 19th-century Sicilian coral and gold from the Pennisi boutique in Milan. I've worn them nearly every day for the past 25 years. 29 Via Manzoni, Milan 20121 (+3902-862 232; [www.gioielleriapennisi.it](http://www.gioielleriapennisi.it)).

**The last thing I bought and loved** was a selection of silk bow ties from Charvet, one of those wonderfully old-fashioned places of which there are now so few. I almost always wear a bow tie. These are Scottish plaid with spots and bright colours. 28 Place Vendôme, Paris 75001 (+331-4260 3070; [www.charvet.com](http://www.charvet.com)).

**And the thing I'm eyeing next** is a collection of Irving Penn's photographs. The rigorous perfection in each image is unique. I would love to have the shots of Sophia Loren or model Penelope Tree.

**A recent "find"** is Potterton Books. It has the best collection of picture books. When I came across it about a month ago, I went slightly mad with excitement. The lady who runs it is lovely too. 93 Lower Sloane Street, London SW1 (020-7730 4235; [www.pottertonbooks.com](http://www.pottertonbooks.com)).

**The grooming staple I'm never without** is Roger & Gallet hair gel. I apply it every morning, ritually, after my shower. I would pull my hair out if it hung over my forehead! [www.roger-gallet.com](http://www.roger-gallet.com).

**The book on my bedside table** is *L'Education Sentimentale* by Gustave Flaubert. I've read it so many times, but I love the descriptions of the characters and events – they are so beautiful. I have trouble sleeping, so I read a lot. Also, at the moment I'm looking over my new book of drawings with Thames & Hudson, double-checking that everything is exactly the way I want it.

**In my fridge you'll always find** a few pints of semi-skimmed milk (I drink lots and have a glass or two before going to bed), marmalade, butter, vegetables and fruit. In the morning I have two slices of brown bread from Le Pain Quotidien with butter and marmalade. I like having a set routine. [www.lepainquotidien.com](http://www.lepainquotidien.com).

**"I was heavily into chocolate – Moroccan, Swiss, Cadbury – everything."**

**The last music I downloaded onto my iPod** was some opera by Cecilia Bartoli. I love medieval songs. I also love Arabic music, especially Natacha Atlas. [www.ceciliabartolionline.com](http://www.ceciliabartolionline.com). [www.myspace.com/natachaatlas](http://www.myspace.com/natachaatlas).

**The best gift I've given recently** was a wedding present for friends; I painted a picture of a polka-dot shoe for the couple.



**And the best one I've received recently** was a bottle of Viennese Knize Ten cologne. It has a very discreet and clean scent, and I couldn't find it anywhere other than New York. But I recently came across it in Mazzolari in

Milan. I told the kind shopkeepers how happy I was to have found it and they gave it to me for free. I was really touched. [www.knize.at](http://www.knize.at). Mazzolari, Galleria San Babila 4/D, Milano 20122 (+3902-7600 0063; [www.mazzolari.net/it](http://www.mazzolari.net/it)).

**The site that inspires me** is the Kuskovo Estate in Moscow, today home to the Russian State Museum of Ceramics. I've

loved neoclassicism ever since I learnt about it at school – people thought it was strange how enamoured I was of it. The estate was badly damaged during the French invasion in 1812, but the impressive oak panelling was left intact. 2 Ulitsa Yunosti, Moscow 111402 (+7495-375 3131; [www.kuskovo.ru](http://www.kuskovo.ru)).

**An indulgence I'd never forego** used to be chocolate. I was heavily into all kinds – Moroccan, Swiss, Cadbury – everything, really. But it's not good for the liver, so I've had to cut down. The other day, though, I went to Fortnum & Mason for tea and had a delicious piece of chocolate cake; you have to occasionally. 181 Piccadilly, London W1 (020-7734 8040; [www.fortnumandmason.com](http://www.fortnumandmason.com)).

**The one artist whose work I would collect if I could** is Francisco de Zurbarán. I love each one of his pieces but, sadly, I could never afford any. My favourite painting is *Saint Francis in Meditation*. I go to see it at The National Gallery; it inspires me every time. Trafalgar Square, London WC2 (020-7747 2885; [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)).

**If I weren't doing what I do**, I would want to be a film historian, or restore and repair old and silent films.

AS TOLD TO NATASHA HIGGINS



From top: bread from Le Pain Quotidien. Knize Ten is available at Les Senteurs in London, £104 (125ml edt). The great palace at Kuskovo Estate in Moscow. *Diaspora* by Natacha Atlas.



## THE AESTHETE WEB VERSION

**My style icon** would have to be someone like Julie Christie, Lady Amanda Harlech, Lucy Birley or Daphne Guinness. English girls always look great in whatever you throw on them.

**An unforgettable place I've travelled to in the past year** is Greece. After many years I visited again. I was there for work but took a day off to visit the Parthenon in Athens, which is absolutely magnificent. The whole edifice is so unique, even with the renovations taking place at the moment. From the metopes to the beautiful columns – how enormous and divine the gold and ivory statue of Athena must have been! The statues which used to stand in the Parthenon are now in the new Acropolis Museum, and the light in the hall where they're displayed complements the colours of the marble and really brings out their beauty. *15 Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, Athens 11742 (+30210-900 0900; www.theacropolismuseum.gr).*

**My favourite website** is Amazon, but for me the internet is a last resort. I've just ordered Mary Beard's *Pompeii* online. I don't mind if it comes through as a little paperback, I'm just eager to read it. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

**If I had to limit my shopping to one neighbourhood in one city**, I'd choose the King's Road in London. I mainly only like shopping for books, music and DVDs, so I generally go to HMV or the Slightly Foxed bookshop on Gloucester Road. I like the John Sandoe bookshop too. You can order any book and they send them worldwide. *HMV, 122 King's Road, London SW3 (0843-221 0241; www.hmv.co.uk). John Sandoe, 10 Blacklands Terrace, London SW3 (020-7589 9473; www.johnsandoe.com). Slightly Foxed, 123 Gloucester Road, London SW7 (020-7370 3503; www.foxedquarterly.com).*

**My favourite room** is my work room at my house in Bath. When I work, I feel content. This room is full of books and is the only place where I feel that time slows down. It is on the ground floor and the windows overlook a hill covered with beautiful rose bushes and Tuckamore trees.

**The objects I would never part with** are two of my mother's paintings. She never had any formal art training but she was very talented. One of her *nature morte* paintings is of two floppy flowers and the other is of apples alongside a copper pot.

**The last meal that truly impressed me** was at Wiltons on Jermyn Street. It feels like an extension of home as I am very familiar with the place. They don't cook with any vinegars and wines, which I'm allergic to. Last time I ate there I had cauliflower soup, turbot with mashed parsnips, and bread and butter pudding. *Wiltons, 55 Jermyn Street, London SW1 (020-7628 9955; www.wiltons.co.uk).*

**The people I rely on for style** are the tailors Anderson & Sheppard. I don't really like to buy clothes in shops, so every couple of years I get in touch with them for a new suit. They know my measurements and what colours I like. *32 Old Burlington Street, London W1 (020-7734 1420; www.anderson-sheppard.co.uk).*

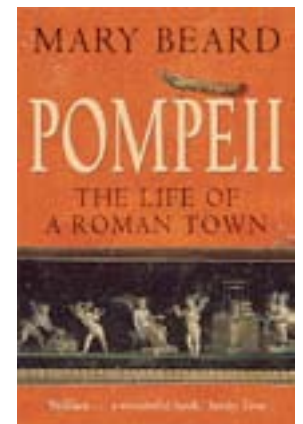
**If I didn't live in London, the city I would live in** is Bath, which is where my other home is. But I'd like to take a few things out of the city. I'd pull down everything that was built in the 1960s – for example, the Hilton: it's hideous and doesn't work at all.

**The last item I added to my wardrobe** was more of my favourite pink Matador pumps. *Made to order; 49-51 Old Church Street, London SW3 (020-7352 3863; www.manoloblahnik.com).*

AS TOLD TO NATASHA HIGGINS



Left: tailors Anderson & Sheppard in Old Burlington Street.



Above: *Pompeii* by Mary Beard.



Above: Wiltons on Jermyn Street.

Right: Manolo Blahnik.



RICHARD GRASSIE.