

FASHION DILEMMAS / A BRILLIANT BRUNCH / MARY DOWEY'S FESTIVE FIZZ / BEAUTY BOMBSHELLS

THE GLOSS

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THIS MONTH

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OFF THE RECORD

Is it true you were born in the Wilde family's summer house in Co Mayo?

Yes. Moytura House, on Lough Corrib. But we were a downwardly mobile family, so we moved when I was about seven. The Edge bought it afterwards.

Were you aware of nature from an early age?

Always. My parents didn't work, and we were tutored at home so we roamed about quite freely.

Did you love or loathe boarding school?

When you said the words "boarding school", my hair stood on end. I hated Alexandra [Alexandra College in Dublin 6]. I loathe regimentation of any kind.

What does it feel like to operate without your surname?

I come from an old Protestant family and have a long-winded name. When you have your own name, you create yourself - you don't fit into some family filing cabinet.

How did you start out on your working life?

I'd broken my back in a riding accident, and I read an advertisement in *The Irish Times* for the Grafton Academy of Dress Designing. After six weeks there, I set up my own business with a loan from my mother. My father wouldn't let me home for six months - people like us didn't go into trade.

How do you get to work?

I either walk to the studio or have a car pick me up so I can get my emails done on the way. I don't take the subway - I don't like going underground.

Do you wear your own clothing designs?

I do. I've just designed a totally green, environmentally sound range for Hessnatur. They're very casual, but I usually have one piece on.

What will your Christmas tree look like?

I don't have one. I don't believe in cutting down trees. Though I'm a bit of a vegan hypocrite - I wear leather shoes.

Where will you celebrate Christmas this year?

We haven't decided. Ireland's a possibility - we've converted an old cow house in west Cork, and my son is living there. We all love to cook, but we can be rather choleric while doing it, so we built a five-metre-long kitchen counter!

Does food make you nostalgic?

Mmm. Mrs Keady in Gortacurra used to make



CLODAGH worked as a dress designer in Dublin and an interior and architectural designer in Spain before moving to New York in the early 1980s. She has designed residential, spa and hospitality projects, and was recently named one of the world's top ten designers by "Robb Report". She is on the board of directors of The Thorn Tree Project and is married to French-American photographer Daniel Aubry. Her adult sons and their families live in Ireland.

pot-oven rhubarb cake, apple cake and brown bread. I've produced a pretty good facsimile of that rhubarb cake!

What's your favourite thing to do in New York?

This week gallerying, next week laughter yoga. After that, who knows ...

Describe your bedroom?

An enormous bed with white linen, an enormous white tub, a Noguchi paper lamp, two end tables, two reading lights, a small Mayan sculpture, a religious vessel from a New Zealand priest. I could do without everything but the bed, the tub and the reading lights.

Do you use pen and pencil or software to plan a project?

A black pen. Words - they're so flexible, so open to interpretation. If I write "romantic" there are 500 things that could spring to mind. If I draw an image, that's what stays in your brain.

Does anything or anyone intimidate you?

When I'm starting a brand new, difficult project, imposter syndrome gives me a hard rap on the shoulder.

What was the toughest period of your life?

Losing one of my sons when he was 23. But I'm at peace with it; I feel he's with me all the time. I believe in reincarnation.

Are you a Buddhist?

I apply Buddhist teachings to my life but I haven't done any serious training.

You read a lot - do books equal clutter?

Books do scream for attention, but when I've read a book, I pass it on and now I have a Kindle.

You've even designed dog bowls - do you think it's possible to share a calm, clean, beautiful living space with pets?

Absolutely - but then one thing I did take from my father is the ability to train dogs!

Does your imaginative gaze drift to gardens and outdoor spaces?

I love landscaping. I'm no digger but I always add to a contract that I'll consult on the gardens. You have to ask, "What will you see through that window?"

Is there something you cannot bear to see in people's houses?

Pillows everywhere. Upchuck. You've no right to be decorative unless you're art. Don't pretend to be enhancing people's lives if you're a little satin pillow with a quote and roses. ANTONIA HART

Samantha Browne, created for THE GLOSS by **Annie West**



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