

It's a jungle out there

**Design columnist
Cyril Zammit thinks it's
about time we reconnected
with Mother Nature**



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABDULLAH TOUK

For months, we stayed at home considering it to be our last frontier. For months, we consumed what we liked and had it delivered in a cold and contactless manner. We used apps with algorithms and user preferences; A.I. designed our new tailored self, surrounded by items, music and 'stuff' that built a comfortable cocoon. But we detached ourselves and lowered a true perception of reality in objects, locations and even more people, real people. The pictures we look at are all retouched, enhanced and filtered.

This said, once we started reconnecting with the outside we were able to consider building our 'new, new normal' at work and at home. The trends are clear. It will be hard to return full time in an office and there is a strong demand to companies to provide a more flexible and contemporary employee experience. It must include a mix of work from home and at the office, real and virtual meetings and the most important aspect is the redefinition of working hours... leaning towards a task list and efficiency more than punching in and out of a building.

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Most of us were born lucky to live in a peaceful society, and have rarely had to face shortage of anything. But the crisis we went through needs to teach us to be more responsible in order to make better, more sustainable choices.

We can no longer pretend that our actions have no consequences for our environment. It is nice to have nutrition facts on labels, but to me we should really check the ethical ones. Palm oil; wood or soja from the Amazon forest; extensive fishing; child labour... This is as important as the carb intake for your body. Best practices can also include some consideration to the delivery drivers who come to your door just for one cup of coffee.

Before Covid, I was on a plane almost every week. Being grounded has been a cure for me, considering that the stress spent in a waiting lounge, at the luggage belt and in traffic jams to airports and constantly sweating during turbulence were suddenly gone. Of course, we know how bad the airline industry suffered, with a million jobs lost and revenue in 2020 regressing back to levels from 27 years ago. At least the lesson we can learn is to travel responsibly.

To end this column on a positive note, there is good news around us. A simple rule that can enhance your daily routine. Let's take back control of our lives and seek the unexpected, trust the beauty of randomness (and not only the one on YouTube).

The University of Michigan recently published a study stating that spending 20 minutes in a park, or even in your backyard, drastically reduces your stress levels. It makes sense. Being in a park or an open space without plastic and metal around you (including your smart phone), will make you focusing on other aspects of life.

I recently watched a five-episode series about the paths of wisdom and one of them is walking. Alone and without any music, walking is a way to meditate and recentre our thoughts.

We are the designers of our own lives but we are responsible for the ones around us too. So it is time to respect our parents, Mother Nature and never forget that we also have a Father Time too. ☺

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