

A Word from the editor



SAMANTHA Brick's been at it again. But this time - and I hate to admit it - she has, through her comments, displayed a modicum of sense.

The blonde writer and journalist, who shot to fame - or should that be notoriety? - with her admission that nine out of 10 men at a dinner party would fancy her, and most women despised her for being attractive, has told Daily Mail readers that rather than telling white lies to spare a family member or acquaintance's feelings, she prefers to take the brutally honest approach - and is prepared to accept the reality that she will lose friends in the process.

"I told her the truth because, these days, I find it is the only way to stay true to myself and remain happy," she related, after confessing how she decided it was time to be frank with her friend and tell her that yes, her "commitment phobic boyfriend" was "no more likely to marry her than George Clooney."

Samantha was telling her story after learning that scientists based at the University of Notre Dame had discovered that maintaining an honesty policy can actually improve your physical and mental health.

They said they had found that people found it stressful to tell fibs, whilst people who spoke the truth felt more relaxed, and also formed better relationships with those they were being straight with.

Ms Brick said she welcomed the revelation with a shout of joy and went on to relate more stories of how she had been brutally upfront with people in her life - from her inadequate gym instructor, to a pal asking whether her bum really did look big. The result of all this 'honesty' was a more straightforward life for Samantha, and whilst some of the recipients of her unadulterated candour somewhat understandably cut their ties with her, equally there were others who admitted to a certain amount of admiration for her gutsiness.

I think I fall into the latter category; I sort of revere - and envy - people who have the courage to be completely straight up with others. I'm not talking about rude bluntness, or insensitive and unnecessary unkindness. Good manners is always a requirement, and there is a way of saying something.

I categorise myself as something of a people pleaser; it's a trait I don't like, so much so, resolving to banish it from my personality has secretly topped my New Year's Resolution list a couple of years in a row.

In some ways, though, I have got better, but there are still many moments when the truth is threatening to burst out of me like lava from a volcano, and my lips seem to quiver in an attempt to hold it back. Can you imagine, as Samantha says, the sense of relief you would experience if your policy was to answer questions honestly?

"No, I won't be able to attend your party because I will be busy - doing nothing."

"Yes, I missed your call. But not because I had no signal - I deliberately ignored it because I couldn't face another evening dissecting your 'complicated' lovelife."

"Actually I do mind that you've just let your 'fur baby' / toddler / pet rat clamber all over my new cream sofa."

Disclaimer - not one of these situations refers to my actual life, so if anyone I know (and love!) is reading this, please do not be offended!

But I'm sure there are many other ladies out there who can identify with these situations. The question is, can you adopt the Brick approach the next time you're backed into a corner?

Good luck - and let me know how it goes!

Laura

Designing homes is

EMMA DEIGHAN talks to Rachael Colton about how her passion for interior fashion led her achieve a childhood dream - one which has evolved to see her become the editor-in-chief of Ireland's first digital interior magazine

RACHAEL Colton's inspiration for becoming an interior designer is rather bizarre.

It wasn't a relative, or an active leading lady or man in her life that led her down the artistic route into interior design, but rather a leading actress. It was Sally Field as Miranda in Mrs Doubtfire to be precise.

"I can't remember exactly what age I was. I could've been nine or 10 when I was watching Mrs Doubtfire. The lady in that was an interior designer and I remember asking my mum what that job was, and from then I thought, 'that's what I want to do when I grow up,'" said Rachael, who hails from Omagh.

It may have been Miranda's character that forced the penny to drop for the mother of one, but there were other inspirations throughout her life that led her to develop an eye for home style and cultivate a genuine interest in the sector.

Her grandfather for example, was an avid antiques collector, while her mother's interest in fine art and regular family trips to museums and galleries undoubtedly contributed to her enthusiasm for interior design.

"My grandfather was always taking me into these old houses to look around and I would always ask him what all the different pieces of furniture were used for in the past, so I suppose that sparked the first interest," continued Rachael.

It would seem these external influences were only fuelling Rachael's in-built talent. She says that from a very young age she was always moving furniture around at her family home to create new looks so it was no surprise that her educational path took an artistic turn.

Having studied A-Level art at Omagh Academy, Rachael researched degree programmes that would allow her to flourish in the interior design world.

"I looked at university courses in design first and found that they were all very architecture-based so I turned my attention to textiles because it was a lot more artistic and provided modules in interior design," she explained.

She went on to complete her degree in textile design specialising in handwoven fabrics at Leeds University. With a plan in motion that would direct her into the handwoven fabric world here, Rachael was disappointed to discover that the industry had virtually closed down when she completed her degree.

"I thought I could stay in Ireland, move to England or go to the Far East but to make myself more employable I decided to do a post grad in business management at the University of Ulster and that led me to a job at a fine art gallery, for which I did PR and marketing."

"That role was great because it kept me in the



Roco editor-in-chief Rachael Colton

design world, albeit in a slightly different area," continued Rachael.

As part of her role for Gormleys Fine Art,

Rachael would advise customers on how to hang artwork, an aspect of the job that literally opened doors to some of the most beautiful homes in Ireland, homes that she now showcases in her recent venture, Roco Magazine. Roco Magazine is a first for Ireland. It's the first ever online digital publication that focuses solely on interior fashion and opens up Irish homes to a global market, inviting international interior style fanatics to get a taste of how we live.

A quarterly publication created in Northern Ireland, Roco, which is named after Rachael's late father, is a free magazine without the 'glossy'. It has a turnpage technology that gives the feel of a magazine but without the hard copy while the content matter spans real life living to designer interviews, and best of all 'aspirational concepts and style

on a budget'. "I wanted to create a magazine that champions Irish design and gives the readers something aspirational but also something

that is accessible," added Rachael, who is the magazine's editor-in-chief.

"When I had the idea of the magazine, I began thinking, we're in the middle of a recession and people don't necessarily have £3-4 to spend on glossy magazines which is why I went down the digital route," she added.

"What was important to me was that the magazine was aspirational but also that it had something that everyone could produce themselves especially in the current global market. I'm more interested in saying you can be clever with money. I mean, as part of making up the magazine, I saw some beautiful homes that had expensive pieces in them and sitting next to them was something from IKEA. People have been smart with their money and have produced some beautiful areas in their home and anyone can do that."

Another aspect of motivation for launching the magazine was Rachael's desire to put Irish homes in the worldwide frame and offer international readers a taste of how we live.

"There are magazines like this in Australia and America online for everyone to see but there's nothing coming from Ireland and I wanted to show the world what our homes are like. A lot of other online publications in America are quite often regurgitated blogs so it's something fresh for them to see."

Already, her bid to showcase Irish style worldwide has paid off with 40 per cent of



Roco's launch issue cover

What's NEW

Clutch it

NO winter party is complete without a touch of art deco gorgeousness. Choose this beauty from the Twiggy for M&S women collection, priced just £29.50. Available as an online exclusive from October. See www.marksandspencer.com for more details.



s where the heart is

WI

A home photo shoot from Roco's current issue



One of Roco's inspirational photoshoots



Ikat patterns featured on the Littlewoods.com crockery above are working their way into homes here says Rachael



BARBARA HOLMES

ANNIE J. writes to me as follows:
 "I have been a member of Glarryford WI for 40 years. I was always interested in crafts and when our Institute started a craft class other members and myself joined in with enthusiasm.
 "We took part in all competitions and the members have won all the trophies in the syllabus and also team entry trophies. We have three full circles for completing the 24 crafts in the syllabus and I was the third person in Northern Ireland to complete the 24 crafts needed to be awarded the full circle.
 "Also in Glarryford WI we have 23 gold pins and 15 silver pins. Rene J. and I have been teaching craft in Killymurrisk Church Hall for over 20 years. I served on the WI Homecraft sub-committee for six years and it was very interesting indeed to see all the different kinds of craft work that came in for judging. Glarryford WI was started in 1956 with 130 members and though numbers have gone down over the 56 years, we still have over 70 members which include two of our foundation members.
 "Helen D, chairperson of the Homecraft sub-committee, tells me that there are 27 crafts to choose from and a ribbon is awarded for each craft, and when three ribbons have been gained the member receives a Silver Spinning Wheel, and after another nine ribbons a Gold Spinning Wheel is awarded. When a further 12 ribbons are gained, a full circle Gold Spinning Wheel is awarded (24 crafts). It sounds simple on paper but it takes years of hard work and commitment to gain the 24 craft ribbons.
 In order to help members we organise one day schools at Headquarters, offering tuition on crafts from the syllabus and a craft residential weekend each year where we have work, fun, laughter and friendship."

readers within two weeks of the publication going live accessing Roco from America. So what is a typical Irish interior? What ideas and themes are the Americans and Rachael's other global readers taking from Roco? "There isn't a signature style here so to speak but we definitely have a sense of warmth, family and history to our homes," explained Rachael.
 "A lot of people whose homes we shot for the launch issue had this real mix of new and old and hand-me-downs; that kind of history is there and I think perhaps that's what is part of our style."
 A mix of old and new is a style familiar to Rachael. She describes her own home as 'collective' with white walls creating a blank canvas on which she creates a juxtaposition using age-old pieces and modern furnishings. In fact, Rachael's home style is very representative of current trends in Northern Ireland which is no surprise given she is an interior style guru.
 "White living is very much on trend. I have found that people are keeping their walls

neutral and introducing pops of colour through their furnishings to give their interior longevity," she observed.
 "I've also found that there's a lot more furniture being reclaimed and done up in homes around Northern Ireland and there are a lot more companies specialising in that. People are also updating pieces in their homes by, say adding new knobs to doors. They are being clever." International trends that are slowly catching on here include stag heads, revealed Rachael, while prints are favouring a form of 'tie-dye'. "It's referred to as Ikat and it is slowly trickling in here," continued Rachael. "Tie dye is already very popular in America and you'll find it on everything from fabrics to wallpaper and even mugs."
 And if stagheads and tie dye wallpaper don't agree with your own personal taste, Rachael has some tips for those keen to redecorate, even on a budget.
 "I tell my clients that redecorating is a five step process. I would suggest that you sit down, decide what your look is, what your budget is, draw a plan and de-cluster.

"People need to look at the things they have in their homes. Do they use it? Or will they use it or is it something they can give away or update?" advises Rachael.
 "Draw a floor plan of your home and think how you're using it. Even moving things around is a cheap way to transform a space while painting an old dresser can change a look.
 "If I had the budget I'd redecorate every year but like most people I do it every three to four years. My problem is, when I visit a home to feature in Roco, I want to redecorate but I'm practical and I do keep note of the ideas that I see in other people's homes for when I do plan my next project and I'd advise everyone to do the same. Planning is key," added Rachael.
 Roco mag's launch issue is available to read online now free of charge at www.rocomag.com with the Autumn edition due out next month.
 "We want to make a magazine that is indigenous to Ireland and gives readers what they want so we'd really love it if readers could look at the mag and let us know what they think. We're open to suggestions and will do what we can to make it enjoyable."

Adorable innocence



KATE Moss has launched her new perfume, Lilabelle Truly Adorable which she says has been inspired by her daughter Lila Grace, inspired by her girlish innocence. The British supermodel, who joined other beauties on stage at last week's Olympic Games Closing Ceremony,

said: "It captures the pure beauty and playful sense of fun of youth. Old-fashion floral prints have always been a part of my summer wardrobe and were a true inspiration for both the fragrance and design." Available now in all good chemists and perfume stockists.

Perfect pearls



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