

h&f BUSINESS

WOMEN IN BUSINESS >> A FOUR-PAGE SPECIAL GUIDE



LETTER OF THE DRAW: Victoria Marshallsay took a break after her twins were born but is now relaunching her children's paintings business

PICTURE BY LEIGH QUINNELL

Naming rights

► She started out by creating pictures for friends but now Victoria has a business running
► The firm is being relaunched after her children were born

KATE YOUDE

WHAT'S in a name? Well, for Victoria Marshallsay it could be anything from tractors to trains, butterflies to boats.

When the 35-year-old's friends started having babies about four years ago, she used her artistic talent to create personalised paintings of their children's names. As the bespoke pictures became popular, she started charging and is now relaunching her

Victoria's Paintings business two and a half years after having her own children, twins Leo and Georgia.

"I just thought it was a nice gift to do a painting of a child's name and turn the letters into things," said Victoria, who is married to Nick and works from the basement of the family home in Iffley Road, Brackenhurst Village.

"I haven't done two paintings the same."

She added: "It took me a couple of paintings to get back into the routine of it but I am loving it."

Victoria, who recently held a one-day exhibition at The Olive Tree restaurant in Perrers Road alongside three other local artists, chats with parents to ensure the pictures are tailored to their children's interests. Tractors and trains are common requests for boys, with flowers popular for girls.

"People are much more specific

when it comes to boys' paintings, weirdly, whereas with girls they say, 'Can you do me something feminine and pretty?'" said Victoria, who has left a career in publishing at Anova Books in Olympia to be a freelance editor, spend more time with her children and concentrate on her painting.



If people stop doing everything in a recession it's going to get worse

"I actually enjoy doing the boys' ones more because they are often more different. I am doing tractors and trains and animals, whereas girls are flowers, bugs and ladybirds."

As a parent of a boy and a girl, Victoria thinks this discrepancy is because boys often have more specific interests and their toys are easier to draw.

Her most unusual painting was for a half-Korean girl called Imogen, whose parents wanted her heritage reflected in the picture.

After researching online, the artist included a flower that features on the Korean national costume.

However, Victoria's favourite work to date is a nautical-themed 'Jack' incorporating an anchor, sailing boat, life ring and lighthouse.

Having originally started by painting a name plate for her niece, she now receives commissions from people across the country through

her website. Each name picture takes between 12 and 15 hours to produce, with prices starting at £80.

Victoria, who has no formal art training but has always taken art classes, is now trying to expand her business by also painting smaller pictures of items such as a butterfly or tractor to sell in toy shops.

She admitted trying to relaunch her business during a recession may be tricky.

But the artist, who is also hoping to publish an updated version of her book on London's bring-your-own restaurants, added: "I have a slight attitude that if people stop doing everything in a recession it's going to get worse. We need to have some positive energy."

CLICK ON
www.victoriapaintings.com

SPECIAL REPORT WOMEN IN BUSINESS



FAMILY BUSINESS: Nadim Ednan-Laperouse MBE and Tanya from Wow Toys, with their children Natasha and Alexander, and examples of the firm's work (inset above and below)

HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM BRING THE WOW! FACTOR

WOW Toys of Hammersmith has certainly lived up to its name with its latest results.

The company has recorded a recession-busting 30 per cent increase in like-for-like UK sales for the year, managed a £3.5million turnover and even created three more jobs at its new headquarters at Palace Wharf, Rainville Road.

Tanya Ednan-Laperouse is one half of the husband-and-wife team running Wow Toys.

She said the educational qualities of the toys helped to keep sales buoyant.

"When there's a recession on, parents don't want their children to be affected. They may cut back on holidays but not on toys that help with the development of their offspring," she said.

Tanya's husband Nadim attributes their success to selling goods through independent retailers as opposed to supermarket chains. He said independent shopkeepers interact better with customers and display goods in a superior way.

The company also benefits from being able to target children aged from just 18 months, because its products, unlike those of many of its competitors, do not use batteries, toxic paint or small parts likely to be swallowed by tots.

The toys, some powered by 'friction motors', are brightly-

coloured plastic characters and vehicles reflecting real life and imaginative themes. Helicopters, tractors and boats are made alongside dragons and fairies. Nurseries and play groups are a key market.

Nadim, 44, from Fulham, once designed Action Men. Now he creates all the Wow Toys range at Rainville Road.

He said he adopts a scientific approach to his audience, scrutinizing their psychological and physical make-up, adapting toys to suit each developmental phase.

"Children don't lie," he said. "The trick is to watch them and get a positive response as they age every six months."

"The genius in the toy is making something that truly works, that has a meaning throughout a child's development, to do that is truly amazing."

Wow Toys are designed for children up to five, with the smaller items retailing from £2.49 to £27.99.

The firm moved to its larger premises in January from the Coda Centre in Fulham Road and will soon employ 20 people. It has stockists across the UK, including three in Fulham, and trades globally through the internet.

In 2008 it was 'Overall Award Winner' at the Good Toy Awards, attended by representatives of 70 toy companies. **Alexander Clare**
● See www.wowtoys.com



Gain a wealth of experience

- ▶ Everyone is aiming for the best work-life balance, but it can be difficult to achieve
- ▶ WealthBabes helps women to succeed

CAROLINE BUTCHER

WHO said women can't have their cake and eat it too?

A Hammersmith-based business-woman is leading the sisterhood to the heady heights of success, fortune and the perfect work-family balance.

Amanda Steadman launched WealthBabes two years ago, offering local women training on how to start their own companies, as well as tips on internet marketing and savvy property investments.

The indefatigable entrepreneur said she had specially tailored her business seminars and one-on-one coaching with a feminine market in mind.

"I'm helping people to realise their own potential, and we particularly look at the areas of business, internet marketing and property and investments," she said.

"I help a lot of clients to buy property in the US because that's a good way to start getting a second income on the side. It also allows them to spend more time with their family, which is a big thing for women."

Amanda, 36, runs WealthBabes from an office just beside Lyric Square.

"We have clients all around the world, but 75 per cent of them are in Hammersmith or west London," she said. "I chose Hammersmith because it's reasonably priced, it's very accessible and I also love all the markets in the square – it's just a nice atmosphere around here."

The business offers clients individual 90-minute consultations for £150 and a number of regular seminars and a monthly Millionairess Club, offering business training, motivational tips and practical workshops.

Amanda employs five people at WealthBabes and regularly has between 50 and 120 clients on her books, ranging from struggling single mums to high-flying City executives.

"We have a few male clients, but I would say about 98 per cent of our clients are women," Amanda said.

"I think women generally like to have another woman to talk things over with them."

"We can go through what is most important to them, and I think if you're talking to another woman you can be



MATCHED UP: Amanda Steadman from WealthBabes

PICTURE BY LEIGH QUINNELL

more open about it and get to the truth more quickly.

"Then we can draw up a business plan about what they really want. It isn't just about numbers and success – women also want to build on their personal life and spend more time with their children or partner."

Amanda, who is engaged to property buyer and marketer Franck Robert and lives in Chiswick, said she had struck on the idea of running her own business in 2007 after spending several years working in recruitment and training corporate headhunters.

"I spent a lot of time going round the world and training people to run their own business, hire people and make money as fast as possible, and then I decided I wanted to try it for myself," she said. "I left a £68,000 job to start my own business and the prospect of not earning anything for at least the first few months was quite scary."

So two years on, in the midst of a recession, just how successful has the WealthBabes founder been in her own venture?

"I've got over a million pounds'

property portfolio now, I've got five staff and we have between 4,000 and 5,000 people on our database, receiving our regular newsletters," she said.

"I'm not a multi-millionaire yet, but I would like to think that in the next year to 18 months I will reach a point of financial freedom."

"If I stopped working now, I would probably still have enough income to live on bread and water and pay my bills, but to live the kind of lifestyle I enjoy it's going to take a bit longer."

And the entrepreneur believes the most important ingredient in success is incredibly simple: choose a job you really enjoy.

"It's so important for people to be doing something they're passionate about – but in London a lot of people really don't like their jobs," she said.

"Once people have identified what they enjoy and are good at, the rest normally falls into place. I really believe in doing something you love."

CLICK ON

www.wealthbabes.com

SPECIAL REPORT WOMEN IN BUSINESS

FROM GENERIC BLAND TO A FOOD PROMISED LAND

IT MAY have tables in a sun-drenched courtyard close to a major road, but Antonia's somehow feels a million miles away from the bustle of the nearby Hammersmith gyratory.

Outside, casually dressed customers sit sipping coffee, and the hypnotic aroma of Mediterranean cooking floats through the open doors.

Proprietor and founder Melissa Farrés-Caddick is one of the H&F entrepreneurs making a success story of their business despite the economic downturn.

The restaurant in Hammersmith Broadway shopping centre opened just over a year ago, and Melissa – whose middle name has graced the business with its moniker – attributes the good start to two factors: quality and uniqueness.

"I wanted to escape generic convention. Everything here is fresh. We even bake our



own bread and pizza bases," she said.

The 'restaurateur gene' clearly runs in the family – her father was the owner of the famous and much-missed Oliver's in Olympia. She has also, from the outset, been aided by her mother in the kitchen.

DID IT HER WAY: Melissa Farrés-Caddick was so tired of bland, generic sandwiches for lunch she started her own food business

PICTURE BY LEIGH QUINNELL

Melissa, who has worked in Hammersmith for the last six years, hit on the concept for Antonia's after she realised that the lion's share of conversation at the office revolved around one subject: what to have for lunch.

"The trouble with Hammersmith is there

isn't much option apart from sandwiches. Those places feel so pre-packaged, and it's pretty difficult to tell them apart," she said.

Antonia's Mediterranean theme derives from Melissa's Spanish heritage but, as she admits, it 'covers a pretty wide umbrella of cuisine... there's something for everyone'.

Particularly popular is the highly original concept of design your own pasta.

"People can decide whatever they want in their pasta," she said. "If it looks too revolting, I might warn them against it, though."

So far, things have gone well at Antonia's. Despite not being conspicuously located, it has attracted a fiercely loyal clientele.

Private parties have proved popular, with the restaurant's spacious courtyard allowing people to spill out without fear of getting in the way. Despite offers, Melissa has, for now, vetoed the idea of expansion, fearing the effect of a corporate identity would destroy the spirit of the business.

As an afterthought, Melissa explains the formula behind her success: "There's something different on offer every day. The concept works, and that's the main thing."

Digby Warde-Aldam

● Call 020 8563 1218 or see www.loveantonias.com

My trike design for carrying kids is three and easy

► Mum who was disappointed at bike designs on offer now produces her own
► Trikidoo can carry up to three children

■ CAROLINE BUTCHER

A BROOK Green mum is proving three wheels are better than two when it comes to safe cycling fun for all the family.

Clare Kemp-Welch launched her company, Trikidoo, in June last year and has since sold about 70 adult-size tricycles – with plenty of space to carry three children as well as mum or dad.

The mother-of-three said she was inspired to design the popular trike for her own family after failing to find anything quite right on the market.

"When I had my second child I looked at the options available but most just had a box in front, and I didn't like the idea of poking the kids out in front of traffic," she said.

"I found most of the options very, very expensive, or ugly, or both. I had a child seat put on the back of my bike but when you only have two wheels it's so wobbly and scary – and children are heavier than you think.

"So I designed something for myself. And then I began getting stopped in the street

with people asking me, 'where did you get that?' So I decided to do it as a business."

Clare, 39, who lives with her husband Pete and daughters Coco, six, Kitty, four, and Isis, two, in Brook Green, worked as a professional writer for Conde Nast before starting up Trikidoo.

She has also published two novels with Bloomsbury – *I And Claudius*, which documents her travels around America with her elderly chocolate-brown Burmese

£1,800 including add-ons.

"It's obviously still expensive, but it's reasonable for what you're getting and many bike shops are telling me it's under-priced," she said.

The Trikidoo can accommodate a total weight of about 170kg, including an adult, up to three children and luggage. A double child seat at the back of the trike can hold two children aged up to seven, and an add-on 'Bobike' seat, which is fixed between the adult and the handlebars, can hold a child up to the age of three.

The eye-catching three-wheeler, which comes in a choice of either navy blue or pink, has also attracted celebrity owners, including actress Helena Bonham-Carter and TV presenter Mariella Frostrup.

Clare said it was all part of a cycling renaissance around London.

"Bikes are brilliant: you get exercise, fresh air and it's good for the environment, and that has to be a factor now," she said.

"The Trikidoo is also fun and children love it. I cannot imagine that my six-year-old will want to get off it when she turns seven. And for the mother it's really good for losing that baby weight – I have thighs of steel now!"

● Call Clare on 07795 436674.

“

I found most options very expensive or ugly, or both

cat, and *Of Cats and Kings*, on her travels around Burma.

"I had no design or engineering experience whatsoever before Trikidoo, but I kept getting prototypes sent across from Taiwan and I worked closely with bike shops in Notting Hill and Fulham," she said.

Clare began the research and design for the Trikidoo in 2006 and now sells the finished model for £825, which she says is very competitive against similar child-carriers on the market which can range from £1,300 to



STRIKING TRIKING: Clare Kemp-Welch demonstrates her Trikidoo with the help of her daughters Coco, Kitty and Isis
PICTURE BY JUSTIN THOMAS



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SPECIAL REPORT **WOMEN IN BUSINESS**

BIG DRAW: Charlotte Rowe and Laura Williams can offer interior and garden design skills



Spin doc who digs the dirt in your garden

► Landscape designer moved from world of politics to a far more down-to-earth but very satisfying outdoor career path

CAROLINE BUTCHER

POLITICS can be a dirty business.

But for lifelong Brook Green resident Charlotte Rowe, who used to be a communications director for former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, her new career could mean a lot of mud in a literal sense.

The talented gardener, who lives in Masbro Road, has retrained in landscape design.

She has now opened a shop in the former site of Adorn London, Blythe Road, sharing the space with interior designer Laura Williams – one half of the previous Adorn team.

Charlotte, 54, said the new combination of garden design and Laura's business, Echo Interiors, allowed homeowners to completely transform their properties, inside and out.

"Laura does a lot of interiors work within the borough and people do sometimes ask whether she knows anyone who does garden design," she said.

"We can offer an integrated service now, which is fantastic."

Charlotte left the world of politics and public relations behind in 2001 to study residential landscape and garden architecture at Oxford Brookes University.

She has since launched her hugely successful business, Charlotte Rowe Garden Design, building a portfolio of impressive gardens in London, America, Italy and other parts of the UK.

Her distinctive urban designs around London often resemble the room of a house, combining furniture, open fires and atmospheric lighting to optimise the space.

"In London, if people have got a small five by 10-metre garden I look at it almost as an extension of the house. It normally leads off the family room and I've got to maximise its use," she said.

"Lighting is also really important in London gardens. For six months of the year people get

home from work after dark but by having good-quality, subtle lighting it transforms the black hole that they usually have outside their windows.

"It's almost like turning on the lights of a stage."

Charlotte has already completed several H&F projects, including a roof garden at the 37 Degrees gym near Olympia station and a collection of residential gardens in Fulham and Brook Green.

"I've worked a lot in Chiswick and in Hammersmith & Fulham I've probably done about 10 jobs," she said. "I've only done four jobs in Brook Green so far but I imagine I'll do slightly more now I'm here."



The best moment is when a client sees the finished garden and loves it – that's a really good feeling

Charlotte employs one full-time and one part-time designer, as well as collaborating with an architect and Shepherds Bush lighting design firm, Light IQ.

There's no doubting that the garden whiz loves her work and doesn't regret her radical career change for a minute.

"My garden designs are quite plant-heavy but also quite architectural, and I love choosing the colours and materials," she said.

"The best moment is when a client sees the finished garden and loves it – that's a really good feeling."

• Echo Interiors and Charlotte Rowe Garden Design are at 118 Blythe Road, Brook Green. For more information on gardens, call Charlotte on 020 7602 0660 or visit www.charlotterowe.com. For interiors, call Laura on 020 7371 1603 or visit www.echointeriors.co.uk

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