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# The Monocle Manifesto for a Gentler Life

Tyler Brûlé, Andrew Tuck, Joe Pickard, Josh Fehnert

A handbook for the new decade: a book that helps you think about how to slow down, reconnect and live a gentler life.

Illustrated throughout

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The book cover features a solid orange background. At the top center is a small circular logo containing a stylized 'M'. Below this, the title 'The Monocle Manifesto for a Gentler Life' is printed in a large, black, serif font.

## The Monocle Manifesto for a Gentler Life

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# Key Sales Points

Monocle has always been a champion of taking it slow. It has encouraged readers to dive into a lake and go for a run. To sleep well. To eat food whose makers are proud of its provenance. In a shouty, jabbing-finger moment in history, it has done its bit to argue for a new modern etiquette to be generous with our time, hospitality and forgiveness. Now its editors and correspondents have brought all of this together in *The Monocle Manifesto for a Gentler Life*, a book that urges us all to slow down, reconnect, make good things and see nice places. And it also knows when to wear a cheeky smile.

Chapters include:

- An illustrated guide to being nice, respecting your neighbour and controlling your social media rants.
- Profiles of the happiest nations – and the least lonely too.
- How to build a house that's good for you and your family.
- Essays from leading thinkers and great writers on what we can gain if we shift gear.

The people who found a gentler way

I.

Anna Vasta  
*Italy*

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Set squarely in the heel of Italy's boot, the small Puglian city of Bari boasts a sunny climate, sandy beaches and an easygoing pace of life. Compared to the pollution, traffic and hecticness of Milan, it sounded like heaven to Anna Vasta. So she decided to decamp from the northern metropolis and move across the country to open a small boutique, Pesci Volanti, where she sells vintage clothing and accessories from brands such as Balmain and Gucci to a well-dressed clientele. "There is a lot of old money here and ladies with wardrobes that would make anyone in Milan envious," says Catania-born Vasta.

On top of having a surprisingly dynamic economy, Bari is also remarkably easy on the eye: in the Madonnella district, for example, a grid-like layout of streets hides elegant palazzos dating back to the 1920s and 1930s. "I was looking for a place more on a human scale, where you could get around on foot easily, yet not overly provincial," she says. It also boasts top-notch food, with trips to the butcher, fishmonger and market cheaper than in bigger Italian cities. "Plus the quality is unmatched," she says. "It's seasonal produce sourced locally. You don't have to shop at a big impersonal supermarket."

2.

Anne-Virginie Schmidt  
*Canada*

Miels d'Anicet. Imin porro is solut quam costiae molore  
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Miels d'Anicet, an apiary that's home to 70 million bees and, arguably, Canada's best honey, is found 250km northwest of Montréal. It was founded in 2000 by Anicet Desrochers but in 2002, it received a boost in the form of a new owner: Desrochers' new partner, Anne-Virginie Schmidt. The pair fell in love when Schmidt was an accountant at auditing firm KPMG. "I wasn't happy," says Schmidt. "I was part of different businesses, learning different processes, but my hands weren't on the product." So she quit and moved north to learn beekeeping.

Today, Miels d'Anicet is buzzing. It is

Canada's largest Queen-bee breeder, supplies honey to top-class restaurants and has its own range of skincare products. Despite its remote location, the farm receives more than 20,000 visitors during the summer alone. "People from all over the province come to learn about our bees and the different kinds of honey we're making," says Schmidt, who handles marketing, finance and sales. While the demands of the job are significant, she is much happier than she was stuck in an office. "This is a perfect lifestyle for us," she explains. "For 20 years, we've had a happy life with nice projects and challenges – and there's

### 3- Shoot on film *Think before you click*

Cameras are fun: to load, to wind, to click, turn and handle. They also make you think. Analogue snaps are precious because they limit the taker to a set number of frames. If you're restricted to 36, 15 or even nine shots of your holiday (or wedding or offspring's nativity play) then you have to plan. You edit in your mind and need to recall what you've already documented. There is a pleasant pressure and emphasis on choosing *what* to record for posterity. This little consideration makes you take your time, think about composition and anticipate the results. Digital by contrast is continuous, live and never-ending. It's amazing to have a video and photo studio on your hip 24/7 but that "poke the screen 50 times" process lacks personality, procedure and care. Load a roll of medium-format Kodak Portra 160 into an old camera, shoot 15 shots of your favourite people and places, wind it back

and send it to the lab. Then wait. When you get the results there will be surprises (call it personality): an out-of-focus shot here, the edge of a thumb there. But there will also be a few perfect ones, of moments suddenly remembered and now not to be forgotten. A record of sunlight and time and colour. There's something alluring about how film captures life; it fits the picture in your mind of how something was. Oh, and it's fun.

#### **Our camera of choice:**

The Contax G2 is a 35mm rangefinder camera that has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity since its demise in 2005. This is partly due to prominent fashion photographers, such as Juergen Teller, championing it but mostly because of its exceptionally sharp Carl Zeiss lenses, build quality and iconic design.



### 4- An office with conversation *It's half the work*

The great digital revolution promised we might work from loungers in Rio – caipirinha in hand – with the saltwater tickling our toes. While we wait for that to actually happen, pallid and preoccupied, we should talk about the offices that we do work in. Ping-pong tables, slides and basketball hoops are great for student common rooms, or perhaps the recreational areas of young-offender institutes, but maybe less so in workplaces, right? So many offices are alienating, too-hot glassy towers. Those tall windows that architects said would sell the idea of the company's "transparency" act more like a sinister panopticon from which staff can be surveyed at all times. Hot-desking? A money-saver employed by companies that can't even supply a decent desk to call your own, which has also been shown to add to people's sense of loneliness. Instead, invest in natural materials, ensure that there's daylight, fresh air and spaces where people can meet in privacy and discuss delicate details. Also, build places where people can eat together – not at their desks either, there's nothing worse than quinoa in the laptop keyboard.



### 5- Eat locally *A treat at the end of the street*

When, exactly, did booking a restaurant table cross the invisible boundary from treat to chore? Roughly the time that online booking platforms saved all the spaces for people who then regularly failed to show up. The result? You, me and anyone else foolhardy enough not to have booked weeks ago are left out in the cold, queueing. Here's a gentle fix for 2020 that we're backing with relish: find a restaurant close to home with enough covers for faithful walk-ins. Take just one friend. Then: don't blab about it to anyone. It feels good to have a secret that's not subjected to "likes", isn't it? Enjoy a conspiratorial communion with one person. Pa&Co in Stockholm, Ciao Bella in London or 10 William Street in Sydney; these places are built for the ages – and all ages. A visit to your neighbourhood restaurant is preferable to a taxi into town to join the noisy crowds. Anyway, that fancy new opening probably won't be there come next month, or even missed when it's gone. Pignon (*pictured*) in Kamiyama-cho, Tokyo, a short hop from Omotesando and Shibuya and a couple of blocks from Yoyogi Park, never misses the mark.

#### **A visit to your neighbourhood restaurant is preferable to a taxi into town to join the noisy crowds**



9.  
**Yamba & Angourie**  
*Australia*

A small community on the Northern Coast of New South Wales where the butchers know the bakers and fishermen by their first names.

Yamba and Angourie, on the northern coast of New South Wales, have been on Aussies' radars for some time but it is only in recent years that the neighbouring coastal outposts have come into their own.

Yamba has been pegged as a new – albeit smaller and humbler – Byron Bay by some but we're not keen on such comparisons. It has the same charm minus the hordes of backpackers and the (sometimes tiring) hippie-dippy vibe. With a population of 6,000, it is the kind of place where the bakers, farmers and surfers are all on first-name terms. Fishermen sell their catch from their boats, while a flurry of acclaimed restaurants – many founded by returning locals – have sprung up. The result is a destination whose draw is as much about the food and café culture as it is the beaches, surf and wildlife.

And there's plenty of that. Neighbouring Angourie is celebrated for its idyllic surroundings: there are no less than six beaches to be found a short stroll from the centre of town. In winter, walks along the nearby Yuraygir National Park coastline are perfect for whale watching. Kangaroos hop down the main drag at dusk and sea eagles soar overhead.

With a population of a few hundred, Angourie is tiny, but people make the pilgrimage both for the Green and Blue pools – former quarries that are now perfect for swimming – and, of course, the surf. Surrounded by a national park, Angourie remains charming partly due to the fact that it can't grow any larger. But Yamba is changing for the better – it's no longer just a seasonal tourist

**Address book**

- 1.** **STAY:** Private rentals: These are your best bet. For views over Yamba's stunning Convent Beach, try for an apartment on Ocean Street.
- 2.** **EAT:** Karrikin: The most inventive restaurant in Yamba uses Aussie ingredients, such as kangaroo and finger lime, to put a twist on classic dishes.
- 3.** **DRINK:** Paradiso: Grab a cocktail and some dumplings in this buzzy bar that was founded in a former surf shop from the 1930s.
- 4.** **SHOP:** Rooster and Rabbit: Owned by former Moulin Rouge dancer Merindah Byrne Prêtet, this shop mainly sells clothes from European designers.
- 5.** **DO:** The Green and Blue Pools, Angourie: Freshwater pools. Residents have been known to leap off the surrounding rocks.



These months aren't the same for all of us. These pages might have been written in the cold clear snap of a northern European winter but they'll be read with sandy feet in beach houses and under ceiling fans in warmer climes too. Lucky old both of us. The idea's the same wherever you sit, though: gently does it. Short days encourage reflection but long, warm ones can be lived at a similar pace so this month we'd like to take stock a little. We've spent weekends looking for the places where the crowds thin and the paths narrow. We've walked the scenic route to work or taken the old notebook and easel out to some pleasant pasture, despite the chill (we don't really have an easel but we're thinking of getting one). We've looked at the things we really like, the things we truly need, those moments from which we properly derive pleasure. We have looked toward constancy, consistency, solidity, fidelity and things that stand the test of time. A call to arms isn't so soft, though, is it? So we're calling our findings a Gentle Manifesto.

From the pleasure of building an archive to the notion of investing in a pair of shoes that, sure, require a little TLC to stay tickety-boo – our ideas point toward the slow burn of real satisfaction. That pair of JM Weston's, stout yet puppy-soft, will last long enough to be able to tell some stories about *you*, while your

quarterly stroll to the cobbler keeps a business running – and a conversation too. Likewise, we're not suggesting that you hurl your smartphone in the river and become an anchorite but buying a film camera means that every shot requires a little preparation, set-up and thought. Instagram? It's a microwave dinner for the eyes.

Talking of which, food obviously stars in our list: cultivation is its own reward. Whether it's playing with a first packet of seeds so you can pick parsley, basil and thyme from the kitchen windowsill or a full-blown attempt at *The Good Life*, setting a leafy agenda is just heartening for the palate, the pocket and the soul. When you eat out, there are few greater pleasures than finding that perfect restaurant nearby; a homely treat at the end of your street is worth a host of grand dining rooms.

So we'd encourage an eye on the other side of the platform on the morning commute; or drive the other way once in a while. Take time, take stock, take a deep breath and, we hope, mop up some soft guiding light from our manifesto. We hope you enjoy it. Gently does it.



1.  
Have a little sole  
*Tend to, don't tip, your shoes*

Here's an idea to get you off on the right foot: invest in a pair of shoes that can be resoled, ideally from John Lobb, Ludwig Reiter or Pracap. Sound too simple to be much of a fix? That's where you're wrong. The people who thunder on about the wasteful world in which we live are sometimes the same souls who buy cheaply and often. You know the type: they don't use plastic bags at supermarkets but happily offset that puny penance by having drawers full of free tote bags at home. At MONOCLÉ we prefer the idea of paying fairly for the craft that goes into things and caring about the provenance of materials used: after all, buying things that last is a branch of sustainability. We don't all need to live in houses made of solar panels nor crucially people who use plastic straws; we need to have a conversation about the meaningful changes we can make. And who's to say that valuing the things we have and keeping them in good nick isn't the first step? The Gabriele Grmelner atelier (*picciardi*) in Venice's San Polo is a gatekeeper for the craft of being a courteous *condomnier*.



2.  
Build an archive  
*Maybe lay off Instagram*

Building an archive is a lovely, long-winded, never-ending affair. You can't just rum-raid your favourite bookseller and ask for the latest 100 titles and expect it to *mean* anything as a collection. Each title added is done so with reference to, and in memory of, the last book bought. Collections can be made and expanded by subject, genre, author or artist (or however you like). It's a personal process; no two archives are the same. It's a reflection of your taste and mindset, both of which can change. Consider a good archive as a map of your interests that charts time spent and spaces travelled. And because it's personal it also offers a better point of reference than an online-search algorithm. Google Leonardo da Vinci and you'll see the "Mona Lisa"; buy the book and you'll see the drawings, colour tests, oil daubs and sanguine renders of light and shade. A far richer offering. Also, an archive is private, only accessible to those you deem worthy – the opposite to the millions of scrolling Instagramers. Start collecting slowly then don't stop. Here are a few tips to help fill those shelves and furnish your home handsomely.

1. Always visit the gallery or museum bookshop after seeing an exhibition. There will be a different selection of books than bigger stores, such as artist monographs with short print runs, which can appreciate in value.
2. Choose carefully and don't be afraid to spend. An expensive book is less damaging to your wallet than another pair of sneakers. It will also last a lot longer.
3. Shop often. Always look for new additions; you never know what you'll miss and buying out-of-print titles can be expensive.

TEXTILES

# Teixidors Spain

Founded as a social enterprise and to provide purposeful work and help for people with disabilities, the Catalan brand Teixidors has a worthwhile cause stitched into each of its rugs, throws and cushion cases. It was former social worker Marta Ribas and her husband Juan Ruiz, a textile engineer, who hatched the plan. They discovered that weaving was often used as therapy for people with learning disabilities and decided that some decent design could combine the service with a demand for well-made homeware.

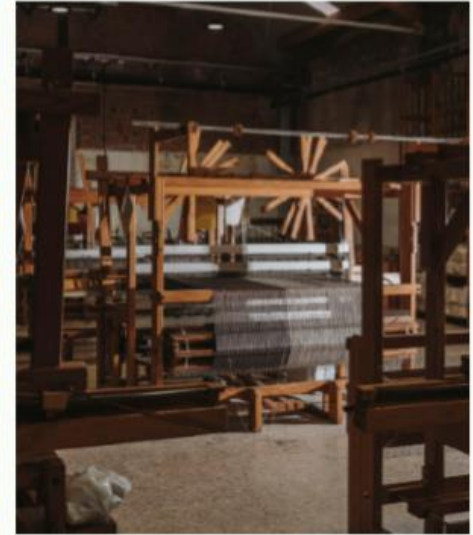
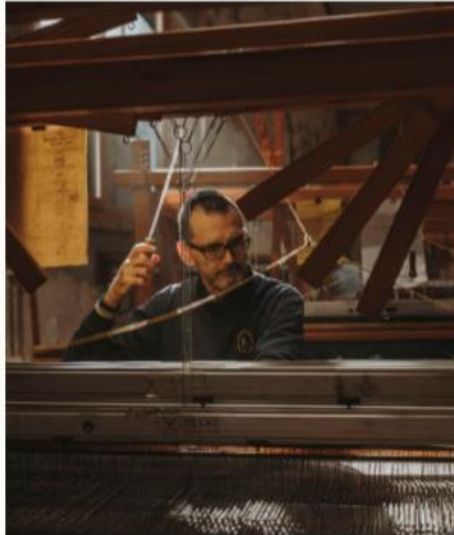
The Spanish town of Terrassa, 30km north of Barcelona, was once a buzzing hub of the Catalan textile industry but today Teixidors is the only place where the clanking of machinery still echoes on the bare concrete walls. The brand has revived an ancient tradition using only natural materials – wool, linen, cashmere, merino and even yak wool – and today it enjoys a loyal following for its textiles.

Manufacturing here is a drawn-out and meticulous process. Each task, from the sourcing of the materials to the washing of the fabric, is done in house and not because that's the easiest or most efficient way. Instead, there's a sense that it's the right thing to do – a thread that runs through many of the businesses of MONOCLE's favourite makers.

[teixidors.com](http://teixidors.com)

**Comment**

It's inspiring to see a social mission woven into the warp and weft of this business model. By refusing to compromise on quality and craftsmanship, Teixidors can charge more and make better products.



Clockwise from top:

