The FROM THE EDITORS AND BUREAUX OF MONOCLE MAGAZINE

FORECAST

A VIEW BEYOND THE HORIZON

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2017 budget has been increased to €115m. The lion's share of this 20 per cent boost, which comes from the EU general budget, will be used to double the headcount in the counter-terrorism team. "We learnt a lot from the Paris and Brussels attacks; they really were a turning point for us, showing that Europol has come of age," says Wainwright, adding that his team was quick to give the French and Belgian police forces support, as well as valuable leads. "However, we clearly need to co-ordinate even more closely and that gives us an even greater responsibility."

The idea of Europe-wide police co-operation can be traced to the beginnings of European unity, though it was in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that the first reference to Europol was made. Despite being relatively new it conducts about 18,000 cross-border investigations a year, disrupting criminal and terrorist networks in the process.

Asked if all EU member states are pulling their weight, Wainwright shrugs his shoulders. "Our work relies heavily on trust and it can be a struggle to convince all the law enforcement agencies of the need to co-operate," he says. With the EU in the process of losing a member, the bloc's ability to work together – let alone the individual agencies within it – might not inspire confidence.

But Wainwright believes that a co-operation agreement could be extended to a post-Brexit UK. He's heartened by prime minister Theresa May's professed commitment to security. "Several of the threats we face are transnational and so things are changing – but that pace of change needs to increase." — TBW

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Aeroplane food

National carrier Japan Airlines delivers a mile-high burger to the folks in row 36 and is taking tastebuds to new heights.

Making tasty airplane food isn't easy, particularly in Economy Class where budgets are tight. And there is one meal that is always the least appetising: the one served just before the plane lands. "You might get a pancake, omelette or rice gruel," says Hironori Tsunashima, a director in Japan Airlines' cabin-service group. "The problem is that it has to be quick – but nobody thought to ask why it always tasted bad."

That was the case at JAL only a few years ago, before the company decided to do something drastic about its Economy Class meals. Tsunashima is in charge of the company's food lab. Thanks to his efforts, JAL's rice gruel has long since been replaced by an all-star line-up of comfort food, including Yoshinoya beef bowls, soup from Soup Stock and rice burgers from Mos Burger.

In an industry where profits hinge on attracting the highest-paying customers to the front of the plane, it's rare to find an airline that's putting so much effort into upgrading its services for the masses. JAL's meals taste as if they came from restaurants in Japan. The reality is that nearly everything is prepared at Narita Airport by JAL Royal Catering (JRC), a joint venture with the company that made sandwiches and tea for JAL's first domestic flight after the Second World War. Meals are frozen overnight and reheated in the aircrafts' ovens.

The airline now comes up with new menus every quarter but there is an art to replicating the flavour of a beef bowl or burger for the harsh environment of an airplane. In the pressurised cabin your taste buds are less sensitive; the dry air also hinders your sense of smell, making food seem bland. Most airlines tackle the problem by drowning the meal in seasoning. "People think airplane food is unhealthy because there's so much salt," says Tsunashima. "We don't do that. Instead we concentrate the umami flavours using Japanese soup stock from kelp and dried fish."

When Tsunashima shows us around JRC's kitchen, cooks are roasting sesame seeds, grilling scabbard fish and assembling bento-box meals. They have cards with photographs of what every dish should look like and precise measurements of ingredients down to a tenth of a gram. Over three months JAL will make 200,000 meals; nailing every detail and staying within budget is vital.

Each new collaboration can end up with a year of tinkering and tasting; both sides stand to benefit but there's a lot at stake. It took JAL 10 months to get Shiseido Parlour – a waiters-in-bow-ties Tokyo institution that specialises in Japanese-style western food, or *yoshoku* – to approve a meal of hamburger steak, quiche and potato salad. "For the potato salad we have to cut the onions in the same direction that Shiseido Parlour's chefs do," says Tsunashima.

As he speaks a bacon quiche is being assembled nearby for the next day's flight to Honolulu. The worker places alternating slices of bacon and cheese – each the size of a stick of gum – in a pan; too many or too few and the egg mixture that's poured in later won't flow in between each slice. With so many details to look after it's easy to lose sight of the goal. "There are many people from different backgrounds flying in Economy Class," says Tsunashima. "We can't do anything too fancy or have food that's too unfamiliar. It's about making something that as many people as possible will enjoy eating – and giving them something to look forward to during the flight." — KH

AIR吉野家
AIR YOSHINOYA
YOSHINOYA

'There are many people from different backgrounds flying in Economy Class. It's about making something that as many people as possible will enjoy eating'

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Architecture

The property boom has given architects the opportunity to put some much-missed craft back into grand designs.

2016 was the year the McMansion bit the dust. This suburban monster of a home embodied the wasteful wealth of the late 20th century in the West. Derided on hit US architecture blog *McMansion Hell*, these "ugly houses that became ubiquitous before the bubble burst" came triple-garaged (at least), cheaply succoed and massively gabled.

Thankfully the cost-cutting construction methods used to maximise these homes' ostentation was their undoing. Estate agents across the US increasingly report McMansion values in decline. Like a flashy car, the buildings tend to diminish in value the minute their owners open the door. It might be a win for good taste but why were these monstrosities built in the first place? Why do the rich choose to live in such poor houses?

Blenheim Palace is regarded as an English baroque masterpiece – and is one of the world's most celebrated stately homes – but it shares similarities with the McMansion. It was commissioned to embody opulence on a sumptuous scale and in many of its design details, function follows form. A kitchen located some 400 metres from the grand dining hall, for example, never boded well for the house's occupants. Yet today the site is a magnet for design buffs and with good reason: its architect John Vanbrugh was a pioneer. Vanbrugh designed for the time, using cutting-edge technology and the very best materials to make it happen. "The great stately homes were very daring and very controversial commissions," says renowned British architect John Pawson.

Despite the size of the 180-or-so-room show-off dwellings of the 17th and 18th centuries, Pawson says they were built by architects thinking in the moment. It wasn't legacy architecture; these "were buildings for the time, to serve a function and to be enjoyed".

While the motivation for grand-home commissioning doesn't seem to have changed much, our lifestyles have and Pawson, a man celebrated for his paring back of ornament, does today's "stately" home well. His minimalist holiday dwelling Life House was luxuriously built with 80,000 Danish bricks in Wales and rents for €3,700 a week. For Pawson the notion of occupying a very beautiful home away from the city, even if it's just for the weekend, still holds significance for the wealthy.

Fellow UK architect Roz Barr says there are two types of architecture clients operating in today's top-end residential market: "Those who treat building a home like walking into a car showroom and buying on face value, and those who see the art in architecture, like they see the art in the tailoring of a Savile Row suit."

While money can't buy good taste, architects today are working hard to rid our streets of the rich's rubbish. The city is where today's mega-commissions are taking place and housing developments such as Kingwood on Hans Place (where the properly wealthy buy in London) are helping to define the difference between what is awfully grand and what is grandly awful. Designed by British architect Henry Squire, its architecture recognises history but is still very much rooted in the now. While the McMansion was a scary pastiche of styles, here rose-red bricks have been lavishly deployed, and intricate carvings made using new waterjet-cutting technology reference the vernacular of the surrounding Victorian buildings.

"In the great buildings of history, art and architecture were so intrinsically linked," says Squire. "Great battle scenes were painted on walls and gargoyles – made to resemble the wife who the stone mason just had an argument with – were tucked high up in buildings. These are the little touches of real craft and humour stripped away by the machine age."

Squire has harnessed the influx of foreign cash into London's property market to promote sensitive decoration and high-quality materials in grand homes. And, while tastes differ, there's no denying the universal joy in decoding details of a well-constructed building.

"I think what is coming back now, whether it is in affordable housing or the very opulent houses for the wealthy, is craft," he says. "We are seeing stories, we are seeing textures, layers, ornamentation and a bit more art for art's sake – or beauty for beauty's sake." — NSG

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Menus

John Mitchinson, the co-founder of publisher Unbound, on the importance of a palpable presence at the dining table.

Menus. So ubiquitous, so much a part of our lives, so functional and useful that we barely notice them. But we should. They are exemplary artefacts: records of taste, fashion and geography, mementos of our most important moments that, in a digital age, remain defiantly analogue. When you sit in a restaurant with spring sunshine crisscrossing the white linen as the waiter pours your wine, the last thing you want to be handed is an iPad. You want paper: clear, elegant and full of gustatory promise.

That is what inspired Nicholas Lander, restaurant critic of the *Financial Times* and collector of menus from all over the world, to gather his favourites together in *On the Menu*, a gorgeously illustrated catalogue-cum-history. In it he set himself the task of establishing beyond reasonable doubt that "the menu is the single piece of paper that gives the world the most pleasure". To date, he claims, nobody has successfully challenged his theory.

Lander is right: menus matter. As well as offering an unmatched record of human pleasure, the history of the menu is practically the history of the enlightenment itself. They began in France in the late 18th century, when a restaurant wasn't a place at all but a bowl of "restorative" soup served in an establishment known as *bouillon*. In 1765, a *bouillonner* called Boulanger made culinary history by serving sheep's feet with a dish of eggy white sauce on the side. He was immediately taken to court by the corporation of *traiteurs* (cooks), who accused him – *zut alors!* – of serving a *ragout* (meat cooked in a sauce), which was their exclusive right. Up to this point the culinary trades were strictly delineated. Only a *rôtisseur* could serve you roast meat; a *patisseur*, pies and cakes; a *vinaigrier*, dressings, and so on. The people running taverns and auberges had to collect money on behalf of all these different guilds. Boulanger made the first breach

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