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NOW

MY CULTURAL LIFE

NICOLE FARHI

An arbiter of taste tells us what they're reading, watching and more

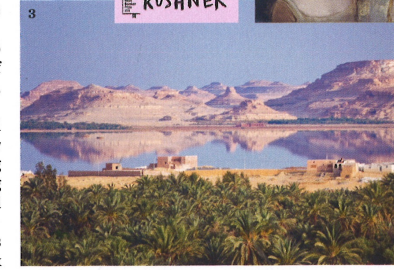
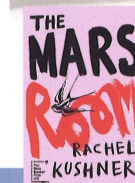
Known for the 1980s label for which she received an honorary CBE for contributions to British fashion, Farhi turned away from clothing in 2012 to pursue sculpting. Now she's celebrating her largest solo exhibition, 'Nicole Farhi: Folds', at London's Beaux Arts gallery until 2 March. It showcases her exploration of the human form, focusing on the soft curves of the female body. 'I wanted to show how expressive, beautiful and unexpected they can be,' she says. 'We need to look at ourselves anew.' (nicolefarhi sculpture.com; beauxartslondon.uk).

My favourite sound is the voice of soprano Maria Callas (4). For many years I worked to her soundtrack; it helped me concentrate. To anyone who wants to make their life in the arts, I recommend the documentary *Maria* by Callas. It shows the dedication you need to achieve a perfect line of clarity. **The record that makes me feel instantly happy** is anything by Charles Trenet. His voice is so jolly; he was my parents' favourite.

I'm currently listening to Martha Argerich's recording of the Tchaikovsky Trio for piano, violin and cello. It's thrilling.

The book that has influenced me most is *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rilke. I find everything he says about art and its meaning in people's lives to be wise and true. I can quote from it.

I've just read Rachel Kushner's *The Mars Room* (1). Her frank



portrayal of women caught up in the Californian penal system is completely heartbreaking. **The best film I've seen recently** is Pietrangeli's *Hungry for Love*. Four prostitutes start a restaurant in Italy as a cover for their real work. But their new venture is such a success

they discover they prefer it.

I love the quote by WH Auden: 'Routine, in an intelligent man, is a sign of ambition.' So true! I try to start work at the same time every day, and never miss a day. Always have.

My favourite gallery is the Rodin Museum (5) in Paris. It's important to any sculptor. And so is the city's Picasso Museum.

The last exhibition I went to see was 'Gainsborough's Family Portrait' (2) at the National Portrait Gallery, London. It was dazzling – much more informal and intimate than any other Gainsborough show.

The most recent play I've seen is by my husband David Hare. It's called *I'm Not Running*, about why the Labour Party never has a female leader. The cast is immaculate.

If I won the lottery I'd bid for Giacometti's sculpture *Woman With Her Throat Cut*. It was the first piece I saw, aged 15. It made me realise that sculpture has a power no other art has.

The next place I'm travelling to is Egypt. I'm most looking forward to the oasis at Siwa (3).

If I had a free day in London I'd like to turn Hampstead's Everyman back into a repertory cinema and watch old movies.



WORDS: AMY JACKSON; NICOLA: RAYN CHUBB; PICTURES: BILLY SCHREIBER; ALMA: GETTY IMAGES; SPOTSCOPED: ITO/ALBERT; MARY AND MARGARET GAINSBOROUGH: THE ARTISTS DAUGHTERS; TRACY: VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON