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Are you more common than you think?

Do we look down on people with big TVs? The BBC's Justin Webb (who has one) thinks so. What else are we snobby about now?

Hilary Rose



Snobbery is rampant — and not just about flat-screen TVs
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Every right-thinking woman knows that the BBC's Justin Webb is both clever and dishy. What we did not know until this week is that he is an arbiter of taste. Or, to be more accurate, his wife is. Because Webb had to wait until she was out of the country on business before indulging in a secret fantasy (calm down at the back, not that sort).

He wanted a flat-screen TV, so he bought a 65in behemoth and hung it on the wall. This is the sort of ludicrously over-sized TV that all right-thinking people, and presumably Mrs Webb, can recognise instantly for what it is: common. TVs, he has argued, are the last bastion of snobbery. How wrong he is. Snobbery is rampant, not just about TVs. For some people, there is no aspect of decoration or lifestyle too small that they cannot be snobbish about it. Sometimes, they have a point.

Your neighbours, no doubt, are alive to the academic debate that rages around the role of scatter cushions in the 21st century and the social pariah status you will surely court if you feed your child crisps in public. It is true that the insistence that feeding them only organic raisins or rice cakes is thought to have originated in the playgrounds of Islington, but all true snobbishness has to originate somewhere. The point is that, as something to be snobbish about, crisps v rice cakes has now gone national.

It seems unlikely that you still have a buddha from Homebase in the garden; if so, hide it, pronto. But did you know that, to the inveterate snob, scented candles must be Diptyque or Cire Trudon? Having your TV on constantly, whether anyone is watching it or not, is common. Fake-wicker garden chairs, mirrored furniture, modular sofas? No, no, no. Anything that is over-complicated, over-designed or over-sized, be they TVs or BBQs, is intrinsically vulgar.

Overfinch Range Rovers are utterly beyond the pale. (Tamara Ecclestone has a white Range Rover with TAMARA written across the front, which, as well as being vulgar, rather defeats the object of all the money she spends on security.) The rest of us must forgo pot plants, unless they're orchids, and trailing plants inside the house. If you still have a spider fern, kill it, quick. If it's lurking behind one of those disturbingly American professional family photographs, kill yourself.

Finally, is your car sprayed a strange matt black? Do you think shiny is for the little, poor people? Think again.

Hilary Rose

Peter York: The new naff

The 65-inch television

I completely understand the snobbery against big TVs — and I completely understand

that it's going, going, gone. I've got a friend who is anything but common who has the most enormous screen. I have secretly resolved that I'm going to get one. Of course, there's one problem but not whether it's couth or uncouth, but where can I put it so it doesn't form an enormous blockage?

Scandi style

Too many polite reproductions of mid-century modern design things of the Scandi kind. They are lovely but you can have too much of that stuff so don't overdo it. Except for Eames chairs — they are so incredibly wonderful and were immensely popular in their time. They were meant for the masses.

Interior immaculasia

You don't want to fall either side of the divide I call "interior immaculasia". When a house is perfect-perfect, clean-clean, crisp-crisp, you worry about the inner life of the owners. You also don't want the contrived opposite: exposed brick walls and bashed floors.

Footballer chic

I'm not tempted to own a McMansion, just like I'd never arrive for a party wearing a shiny black suit and a shiny black shirt, with a shiny black tie.

Peter York is the co-author of *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook*

What not to have (on show) at home

Bathrooms

Surface-mounted sinks and mosaic tiles used to be the tasteful choice, now it's about more characterful, artisanal styles. Fake marble tiles are dreadful — they should be real marble or plain porcelain. Fake wood floors are a bit naff as well.

Paint

Please, no more Elephant's Breath. It was fine when it was confined to halls but crossed the line when it was used everywhere. Blues are the smart choice now. Go for the Paint and Paper Library's Squid Ink and Between Dog & Wolf shades.

Shagreen (dead or fake dead stingray)

There's been shagreen wallpaper, shagreen console tables, shagreen desk tidies. It was

seen as an opulent accessory but once developers start using it, that's the death knell because they make things generic. It's one small step from generic to vulgar.

Kitchens

Nobody should want a high-gloss anything or that dark stripy wood, like a zebra. And subway tiles? No.

TVs

Fifty inches is quite big enough. Bigger than that is ridiculous. Curved TVs, which are interactive or something, are unbelievably obnoxious.

Sophie Rogerson is director of the interior design property consultancy RFR

Anna Murphy: Fashion crimes

Gypsy hoop earrings

If they wouldn't look out of place in *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, they are definitively non-U. Appleby Horse Fair is inverse Coachella.

Head-to-toe nylon

Perversely it is all about the nylon-tastic tracksuit this season. But the classy approach is to wear one half only and do something obviously upscale on the other: eg hoodie with a floaty skirt. Only the model Edie Campbell can pull off both without looking like a Ken Loach character.

Cheap shoes

Bargain-basement trainers are fine (though see above) but plasticky shoes — especially for men — are not. There is a Twitter feed dedicated to men's footwear (and denim) related crimes called [@jeansandsheux](#).

Frosted lipstick

Anything Melanie Griffith had to eschew to class-pass in *Working Girl* is still C2 and below.

Overly long nails

See above.

Too much fake tan

Although this could also mean you are in *Made in Chelsea*, and therefore the Nancy Mitford de nos jours.

What not to have on your bookshelf

There is a whole genre of books that no self-respecting person ought to have on their shelves. You could call them “books for people who don’t read books”. If you see any of the following on a neighbour’s shelf, feel free to condescend from a great height.

Any novel by Alan Titchmarsh . . .

. . . or Fern Britton. Do you remember Doris Lessing’s sofa-based morning telly chatshow? Or William Golding’s presenting stint on *Pebble Mill at One*? No, me neither. They stuck to what they’re good at. Graham Greene said writers needed a “splinter of ice” in their heart to be dispassionate enough to turn tragedy into art. Alan Titchmarsh talks to harmless plantlife for a living; ditto Fern Britton, who talked to Phillip Schofield for a living. That’s what they’re good at. Too nice to be novelists.

***Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer/*The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins**

It’s possible that the romantic shenanigans of teenage vampires can tell an adult something about the human condition, though I suspect *Middlemarch* may have a smidgen more psychological insight. The *Twilight* of the *Hunger Games* is meant for tweenage girls. If you’re not wearing braces and a training bra, you ought to have grown out of this stuff.

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FOLLOWING YOUR DREAM

The
ALCHEMIST

25th
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

PAULO COELHO

***The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho**

Self-empowering, self-actualising nonsense on stilts. Soul-bothering guff. A Ryvita has more depth and nourishment.

***Mr Nice* by Howard Marks**

It's a sign of a stunted mind to find the memoir of an international cannabis smuggler in any way daring. Little wonder it's the sort of book that you find at hostels favoured by backpackers. It's left it there for a reason.

Dan Brown/Jeffrey Archer/Andy McNab/ EL James

Self-explanatory. If there were Nuremberg Trials for crimes against the English language, they'd all be in the dock.

Robbie Millen