



# Love LETTERS

The *Journal* chats to card designer Laura Chevalier about her new home in Barnes, Valentine's Day and her creative inspiration

Where does the name Celandia come from?

It's taken from my favourite childhood book, *Enchantica*, which my dad used to read to me. It featured Celandia, a winged summer fairy who inspired all with her charm, lightness of being and visual presence – and so the Celandia brand was conceived.

You have a love of sending and receiving post; what's one of your earliest memories of this?

When I was younger and living in Hong Kong, my mum used to help me to pen postcards to my grandma in England. There's just something so magical about writing a message for a loved one from far, far away, and I have kept all those letters to treasure forever.

Where do you find your inspiration?

It may sound a cliché but everywhere. I was born in Hong Kong then moved to London when I was 18 to study at the Chelsea College of Arts, so travel plays a big part in my designs. My family live all over the world, from my brother in Australia to my sister in Canada.

My latest range, Palmier, is inspired by beaches and palm trees, while the kids' Safari Collection is based on all things Africa-related, including my love of elephants that began when I worked in Botswana. Even my baby shower was themed around them!

Beautiful objects also play an important part – my auntie lives in Saint-Tropez for half of the year and recently bought our daughter Olivia an old toy box



from a brocante fair, which features a dancing clown. It's so unusual and I know that I'll use a photo of it on my designs in the future.

You've recently moved to Barnes - how have you found that?

Barnes is just beautiful and we're very happy to be here. It feels like we've moved much further out of the hustle and bustle – I've looked up at the sky more in the last month than I have done in the past year!

Has the area begun to inspire you yet?

Every day, funnily enough. From our long walks along the river watching the colours change in the sky, to having the fire crackling throughout Christmas, to the ducks and geese at the pond, I find inspiration all around me. I'm feeling an urge to create a seasonal stationery set with inspiring pictures from the area.





**What would you say are your signature design touches?**

I adore the vintage look, but recently I've gone for a more contemporary edge by embracing new trends. Having said that, I'll always love using wine and coffee stains, wax marks and torn edges to create unique, timeless, well-travelled keepsakes.

**What is it that makes your cards stand out from the crowd?**

It's all about the story behind the stationery. I want people to see my designs and find something that resonates with them. All my work is printed on luxury paper produced in England – the look and feel are just as important as the design. The cards can either be left blank or made bespoke to the client and I try to deliver orders by hand if I can, although I have stockists in the Scottish Highlands so it's not always possible.

**What, in your opinion, makes a great Valentine's card?**

Something that makes you smile and think of that one person who has your heart. You know when you've found the right card when you can picture that person receiving it. That pure emotion is what it's all about; cards that make you feel cherished and loved.

**Should they be anonymous?**

A secret admirer should always sign anonymously. My cards tend to be a bit of a giveaway for my husband now, though!

**Is there a particular design that you've created in the past that sticks out in your mind?**

I designed a full wedding stationery set, including wedding thank-yous. I took a photograph of the couple near their home, aged it, created a London-style stamp mark and put a monogram of their initials on it. It was so sweet, they even sent me one of the cards to say thank you for making them. You can't get much better than that! ■

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