



The book of life

Six Soho House members share the titles that inspired their careers, ignited their ambitions or transformed their view of the world

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Looking for inspiration to help you fulfil the 'reading more' portion of your New Year's resolution list? You might want to bookmark the selection that some of our well-read members from the fashion, entertainment, design and food industries name-dropped when we asked for the book that has inspired them most in their career. Responses crossed genres, travelling from magical realism to titillating behind-the-scenes Hollywood memoirs, without a self-help or *For Dummies* tome in sight. So however you feel about your career, read on and take note – your next light-bulb moment could be just a page turn away.

THE PASSION BY JEANETTE WINTERSON

Nominated by Laura Bailey, contributing editor of British Vogue

'The writer who has perhaps most marked my adult life is Jeanette Winterson, through *The Passion* in particular. It's not that it inspired a work epiphany, taught me anything practical or furthered my ambition in any way, but it did strengthen my faith in magical thinking, chance and the language of escape. It stayed with me like a recurring dream, dazzling and pre-destined. There's something special about reading the right book at the right time – Sam Shepard on the NYC subway, Zola in Paris – I read *The Passion* at that precious intersection between innocence and experience, and it's now a book I now pass on to my teenage goddaughters.'

ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE BY ROBERT M PIRSIG

Nominated by Charlie Luxton, architectural designer and TV presenter

'I read Robert M Pirsig's *Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance* when I was 19. It's a real Marmite book – it's a bit worthy, a bit preachy – but at the core is a conversation about quality that had a very profound

impact on me. Quality is a really hard thing to define – as soon as you try and break it into conspicuous pieces, you lose its very essence. It's a very mundane idea I suppose, and I have to say I was probably stoned when I read it; I remember having very long, intense discussions with my brother about it. But sometimes the conversations you have when you're out of it resonate the most, and it really has stuck with me. It's driven a lot of what I aspire to in my work and given a sense of importance to what I do.'

SHOOTING TO KILL BY CHRISTINE VACHON

Nominated by Camilla Blackett, screenwriter

'Christine Vachon produced most of my favourite American films – *Boys Don't Cry*, *Kids*, *Happiness* and *Series 7: The Contenders*. Her frank and informative book about independent filmmaking, *Shooting To Kill*, opened my eyes to another way of making movies and her absolute commitment to championing auteurs such as Todd Haynes, Kimberly Peirce, Todd Solondz and Mary Harron. Whenever I get a bit sad about meeting with execs who only talk in tent poles, I meet one who loves this book – reminding me that there are still people in the industry who believe in making awesome things that can be icky, uncomfortable and occasionally beautiful.'

THE ART OF SIMPLE FOOD/ THE FRENCH LAUNDRY COOKBOOK/ ESSENTIAL CUISINE

Nominated by Enrique Olvera, chef-owner of restaurants Atla, Cosme and Pujol

'In terms of my career, there are three cookbooks that I consider the most influential: *The Art Of Simple Food* by Alice Waters, *The French Laundry Cookbook* by Thomas Keller, and *Essential Cuisine* by Michel Bras. Through their own personal philosophy and unique perspective, each of these chefs – Alice through wholesome, sustainable home cooking; Michel through the respect of the artistic nature of ingredients; and Thomas through the elevation of simple, local produce into sublime dishes – show us that

simplicity is the true essence of good food. That idea has become inseparable from my own creative process.'

ADVENTURES IN THE SCREEN TRADE BY WILLIAM GOLDMAN

Nominated by Dave Karger, TV host and commentator

'As a teenager I discovered *All The President's Men* screenwriter William Goldman's wildly entertaining memoir *Adventures In The Screen Trade*, which inspired my interest in the movie business. It was filled with insightful tips on how to write a great script and juicy behind-the-scenes stories about Hollywood's most colourful characters. It made me realise the movie business was a world I wanted to live in. More recently, Mark Harris – coincidentally my first boss when I used to work at 'Entertainment Weekly' – wrote a meticulous book about the five Best Picture nominees from 1968 called *Pictures At A Revolution*, which was equally fascinating.'

MORE FOOL ME BY STEPHEN FRY

Nominated by Kelly Hoppen MBE, interior designer

'We all know Stephen Fry as the charming, witty, erudite individual that he is, and his memoir *More Fool Me* is just that. But it was also an eye-opener to read about his struggles with addiction, and a real lesson in challenging perceptions. To see this self-assured, funny man on stage or TV, you would never have guessed what he was going through behind the glare of the camera. Having experienced the world of celebrity parties he depicts first-hand, I can see how easy it is to be sucked into the lifestyle, but it's so important to remember what truly matters. Reading this made me so thankful for the support I've had throughout my career, and my wonderful network of family and friends.' ■

Look out for Enrique Olvera's One Night Only event at Little Beach House Malibu on 7 January.