Cultural Shifts Oct 2026

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Image: Still from *In Other Worlds,* an immersive solo exhibition at the Barbican which Margaret worked on the publicity for.

Foreword

Are you paying attention?

As the seasons change, we've taken a breath to gather our thoughts for our biannual Cultural Shifts report, looking at what's shifting in culture and consumer behaviour, and what it means for how brands show up.

This autumn we're seeing a push back against the gloom of the news agenda, and a real need for joy and escapism. As clickable shorts get noisier and faster, people are resisting: celebrating stillness, embracing the passage of time as an expression of taste, and treating reading, and having something to say about it, as a signal of cultural capital. The best creative work is being made with love, craft and feeling.

That resistance is local too. Communities are coming together to own the places they love, brands are trading reach for credibility, and shopping is becoming entertainment again.

For brands, the opportunity isn't visibility. It's being close to culture and helping to build credible communities from the start.

These conversations shape our own work with brands and cultural institutions, across PR, creators and campaigns.

Happy reading!

Lucy Stanfield, Managing Director

MARGARET

Margaret is a global communications agency, creative studio and certified B Corp, specialising in arts and culture. Our mission is to craft meaningful, culturally relevant campaigns that stand for something. Working at the intersection of brands and cultural institutions, we gain unique insight into evolving global trends and consumer needs, enabling us to shape campaigns that truly resonate.

As ever, we'd love to hear what you think of this report: feel free to drop us a line at **hello@margaretlondon.com.**

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Trends

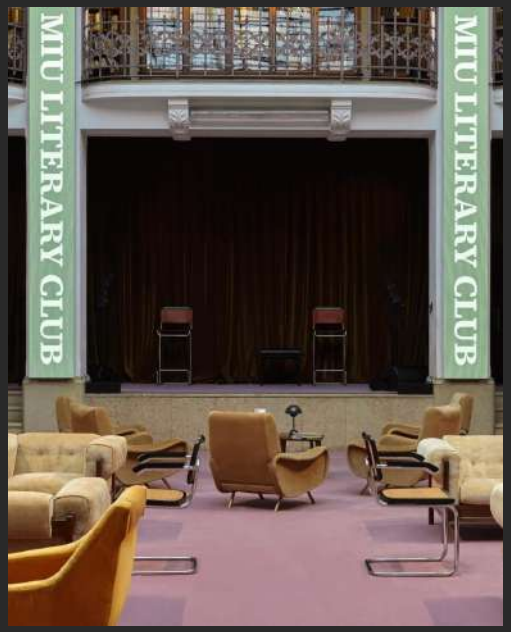
Cultural Shifts

Slow Is The New Status





Crowd-owned Culture



Reading as Cultural Currency



Shoppertainment



The Joy Imperative



Authority, Not Reach

Photo credit (L-R):

- Miu Miu's Literary Salon, via Wallpaper*
- KITE directed by Alexander Ingham Brooke for Merrell and You Must Create
- The Interrail Effect, via Ads of The World
- Tom Wood, Finding a Pair (colour film), 1990. © Tom Wood, courtesy RRB Photobooks
- Campaigners protesting against the closure of the Joiners Arms in 2015. Photo by Frantzesco Kangaris
- @thegurlsareangry for Levi's London, April 2026

Reading as Cultural Currency



MARGARET

Image: Miu Miu's Literary Salon, via Wallpaper*

Reading as Cultural Currency

In a world saturated by AI-generated content, having managed to read something written by an actual human, as well as having the time and then something to say about it is becoming a status signal.

After a decade of platforms optimising culture for speed, something's happening at the other end of the spectrum: time, reading, writing and ideas are turning into visible markers of cultural capital.

Long-form Substacks and audio essays point to an appetite for something more considered, while physical books, literary magazines, zines and live conversations offer what the feed can't - ideas that actually require attention, interpretation and a point of view.

This extends a previous Margaret trend 'Safe Expression': a shift towards reclaiming more trusted and intentional spaces and habits as a response to mass platforms that are becoming too commercialised.

But we're seeing this move beyond reading for reading's sake and becoming something of a measured cultural kudos - with brands and creators also recognising this, bringing books and literary meet ups into their own campaigns and initiatives.

Fashion and Literature

Designer **Talia Byre** built her SS26 collection, Real Estate, as a direct homage to Deborah Levy's 2021 memoir on domesticity, home and female creativity and produced a 150-copy zine with ten contributors, including musician Dev Hynes, alongside an interview with Levy herself (Tenderbooks, 2026).

"I was drawn to the idea that Deborah's work is her real estate and legacy, and we wanted to infuse that into our work. Our collections are documents of time, like short stories".

Talia Byre interviewed by Violet Conroy in Another Magazine.



Image: borrowed by Library Science, a book project by Kaia Gerber and Alyssa Reeder


Image: Talia Byre's Zine as featured in Another Magazine interview by Violet Conroy

Reading as Cultural Currency

Fashion Brands Becoming Bookish

Miu Miu has gone deeper into literature, with literature becoming a continued theme in its world.

Now in its fourth run since 2024, its **literary club** salon series has moved from Milan's Circolo Filologico Milanese to Shanghai, with its 2026 Milan Design Week edition, Politics of Desire, centred on Annie Ernaux and Ama Ata Aidoo alongside a public reading room (WWD; Wallpaper*, April 2026).

The interesting part isn't that a fashion house has a book club, it's that knowing the writers and having something to contribute has itself become social currency.

"**Jil Sander's Reference Library,** staged with Apartamento Magazine, was a talking point at Milan Design Week 2026. It featured 60 books chosen by creators and thinkers who'd been shaped by them, including Virginia Woolf's The Waves, selected by Durga Chew-Bose (Hypebeast; WWD, 2026).

Visitors booked hourly slots and were handed white gloves to read with, which they kept as a souvenir. Nothing was for sale, and the books stayed behind. They weren't decoration, they were the highly valued content."

For its spring 2027 show, Valentino turned Paris's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève into an **"antilibrary",** celebrating the value of unread books and asking guests such as Cynthia Erivo and Colman Domingo to bring an unread or new book that was then donated to public libraries.

Reading Going Out of Fashion.. and into other sectors

One of the Margaret team's favourite recent initiatives has been **Aesop's Queer Library** which returned to the UK for Pride 2026. This showcases and gives away books by LGBTQIA+ authors and allies, and sees them working with Penguin Random House and local independent bookshops, with the Aesop Foundation donating to Switchboard and trans+ charity Not a Phase.

In Soho, the store hands its shelves over to books instead of product; in Spitalfields and Brighton, dedicated Reading Rooms turn choosing a book into the experience itself (Wallpaper*; Attitude, 2026).

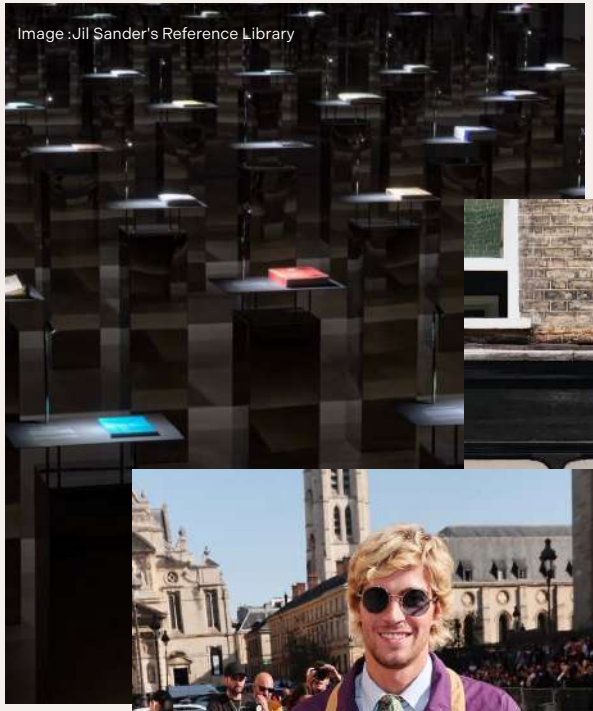

Image :Jil Sander's Reference Library



Image: Aesop's Queer Library


Image: Lorenzo Zurzolo by Getty Images from Valentino

Reading as Cultural Currency



Image: Jordan Stephens for Dr. Martens, *With Bouncing Soles,* AW 2026. Courtesy of Dr. Martens, via Attitude.

Dua Lipa's Service95 has grown from lifestyle platform into what it calls a "cultural concierge." It opened **The Manifesto Library**, a library with only banned books in Porto this June 2026, existing "as a living cultural space for reading, debate and public reflection." As **Banned Books Week** reminds us, some writers have written for their lives, so brands should contribute to reading culture, not just borrow its cool.

Jack Edwards, who has 1.4 million followers on Instagram, has made his **Inklings book club** a favourite of Hollywood press junkets, chatting books with stars and gifting each a title relating to their film or character. His latest collaboration is Netflix's East of Eden, starring Florence Pugh and created by Zoe Kazan, whose grandfather Elia Kazan directed the 1955 film. For studios, books have become a way to give a release cultural depth.

And in the art world, **Es Devlin's** Other Worlds retrospective at London's Design Museum ends inside Infinite Library, a rotating structure of 2,000 books within a circular mirror (on view until 4 April 2027).

Books as a shared social experience

SEEN Library, NYC, founded by **Jordan Risa Santos**, turns books into a shared social experience through pop-ups: participants bring books that matter to them, creating a peer-led system of storytelling and discovery rather than a fixed institution. It's arguably the purest expression of this shift: nothing to sell, no brand trying to look clever, just people passing on what they know as a shared cultural currency.

Dr. Martens is tapping into the same impulse with its Bouncing Souls campaign, bringing books, poetry and conversation into its London flagship. Another sign that reading is becoming less about what you consume alone and more about what it says, and who it connects you to.

Reading as Cultural Currency Brand Ideas

A note: As literature lovers, we're thrilled to see reading at the heart of the zeitgeist. But reading is more than a trend: it changes lives. The brands that stand out will be those that genuinely support reading culture, rather than simply borrowing its cool.

Give people something worth knowing. Use literature and ideas to open a bigger conversation, give underrepresented voices a platform, hold back on product messaging.

Build cultural worlds, not references. A book shouldn't appear in a campaign just to make the brand look clever. Invite the author, commission the writer, publish the reading list, host the conversation.

Give audiences something to keep. A physical publication, a reading list, a recorded conversation, all of these outlast a piece of content designed to be scrolled past and forgotten.

Let the brand have a point of view. Brands don't need to become publishers, but they can become better editors: knowing what matters, why it matters, and what they actually have to add.



Image: The Booker Prize 2026 judges: Raymond Antrobus, Patricia Lockwood, Rebecca Liu, Jarvis Cocker; and Mary Beard
© Neo Gilder for Booker Prize Foundation, via The Booker Prizers.

"Speaking at the Booker Prize shortlist announcement, Mary Beard argued that reading is more essential to humanity now than ever. It shapes who we are and how we think about the world, and if we relegate it to the wellbeing section of our lives, we underestimate its power to change how we see things."

Mary Beard, Booker Prize Shortlist

Crowd-owned Culture



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Image: Sheffield's Gut Level which secured community ownership in Nov 2025

Crowd-owned Culture

"London's cultural future lies in community-owned venues."
Trippin, July 2026

"This is part prediction, part hope - a return to people becoming 'locals' or 'regulars' to support their local pubs" **Hannah Crosbie, Broadsheet at our 'Future of Drinks' Margaret Morning Feb 2026.**

We're seeing a trend that's going beyond Hannah's prediction/hope as per her closing words at our Margaret Morning earlier this year. Communities aren't just frequenting or campaigning, to save the spaces they love anymore; they're coming together and pooling resources to own them outright.

As traditional landlord models continue to fail due to rising costs a new one is emerging, with the people who create and use culture stepping in to control it. It started as a rescue response but we're seeing it become more widespread and showing up across nightlife, sport and hospitality alike.

As we all know grassroots music venues have been closing for over a decade, squeezed by rents, energy costs, licensing and post-pandemic finances and a 2025 report found 175 UK towns and cities have now lost regular touring shows altogether (Music Venue Trust, Annual Report 2025, published 21 January 2026). Retail's had it even worse; there were 17,349 UK store closures in 2025 (Centre for Retail Research year end report from Jan 2026).

In response, communities are stepping in through collective ownership, CICs and hyper-local investment. Crowdfunding and community shares are becoming a more possible route, not the last resort.

In an article in the Times July 2026, Plunkett UK puts the number of closed-down businesses bought by community groups up 67% over the decade (869 trading at the end of 2025, up from 521 in 2015 - spanning 467 shops, 215 pubs, 30 farms, 25 cafés and even 36 woodlands.

In Catford, **Sister Midnight** has adopted a Community Benefit Society model, letting anyone buy shares and become a co-owner with voting rights. They negotiated a ten-year rent-free lease on a derelict building from Lewisham Council and have raised over £450,000 from 15,000 people to turn it into a new live music venue and cultural hub which is set to open this Autumn. (Trippin, 2026)



Image: Brookdale Working Men's Club

Whilst up in Bristol, a Community Interest Company led by Margaret friend and client Dave Harvey has brought back St George's Bowls & Social Club.

"The response from the community has been crazy! We have had 11,000 people sign up for membership, we have been fully booked for bowls for pretty much the whole summer and it shows no signs of slowing down. We've seen a real mix of age groups and in general it really just feels like people are looking for a place to hang out and come together. "

Dave Harvey, Co-Founder

Crowd-owned Culture

None of this is entirely new. It has quiet roots in the cooperative pub movement, the football supporters' trust movement, and the Localism Act 2011, which gave local groups first right to buy 'Assets of Community Value.' The Ivy House in Nunhead became the UK's first community owned pub this way, back in 2013.

What's changed is the pace, the visibility, and the sheer range of spaces now going through it. Music Venue Properties, dubbed the 'National Trust for Music Venues', now buys grassroots venues outright to protect them for good, and in July 2026 Brighton's Pipeline became its tenth, backed by investors including Fatboy Slim and Prime Minister Andy Burnham. (NME, July 2026).

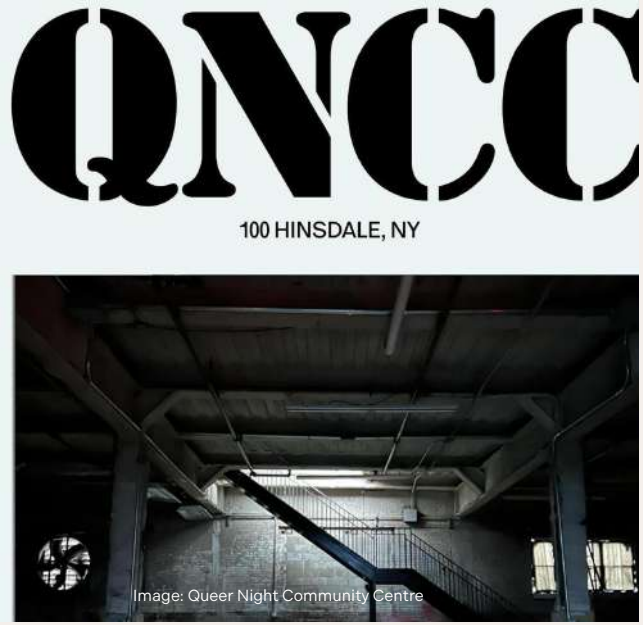


Image: Queer Night Community Centre



Image: Campaigners protesting against the closure of the Joiners Arms in 2015. Photo by Frantzesco Kangaris

In Hackney, The Joiners Heart opened this August, a decade after campaigners lost the original Joiners Arms, and is owned by more than 2,000 community shareholders.

Across the Atlantic, New York's Queer Nightlife Community Center takes the idea further, re-framing nightlife as infrastructure rather than entertainment: less a venue, more a support system for the people who sustain culture (Resident Advisor, 25 September 2025).

Crowd-owned Culture

How brands are showing up

Brands are starting to realise their role here isn't to own the culture. It's to understand who does, listen to what they actually need, and work out how to help without getting in the way.

Nike has long been great at knowing how to show up for its community and its **2026 X2 football programme** shows what that looks like at scale - seven federations, seven creative collaborators and seven local youth-sport organisations, with community groups built into the programme itself rather than bolted on. Each partnership is rooted in the culture and identity of its location, and Nike's committed to it **long-term.**

Hinge's One More Hour fund does this differently - it doesn't co-own anything, it just funds what already exists. Since 2024 it's awarded $2.3m to over 100 groups across the US and UK, with a further $1.5m committed globally for 2026, covering the unglamorous stuff - space, programming, equipment - that keeps community-led groups running, including groups in London, New York, LA and Paris (Hinge Newsroom, 17 June 2026).

How brands earn a role

The opportunity here isn't visibility it's about being close to and connected to culture at the point it's actually created.

As ownership shifts from landlords to communities, media can still buy attention, but it can't buy access anymore. That has to be earned through participation. Brands used to buy their way into spaces through commercial deals; now they have to be invited in by the people actually using and shaping them.



Image: Hinge, One More Hour campaign, 2023. Photography by Josefina Santos. Courtesy of Hinge.

Crowd-owned Culture
Brand Ideas

Choose your role, and be honest about which one you're playing. Nike treats seven organisations as long-term partners; Hinge just keeps existing spaces running. Both work.

Earn access before you need it. Media can buy attention; access to community-owned spaces has to be earned through participation. Show up before the crowdfund succeeds, not after.

Go local and specific, not just visible. Cultural authority here sits with hyper-local, often unglamorous spaces, not the household names brands default to. The less obvious the space, the more real the relationship tends to be.

Invest on the timeline the model actually needs. Community ownership takes years - ten-year leases, multi-season partnerships, not campaign cycles.

Ask what's needed before deciding what to give. The people running these spaces already know what they're short of and what help they need. Resource that directly rather than turning up with a pre-built, tokenistic idea of what help should look like.

"Working with communities doesn't have to be time consuming; it's all about staying truly connected to the people you're serving in your brand, business or campaign. It's not only a nicer way to show up in culture, it's literally more efficient to maintain that direct line of communication with your audiences. How else could we at our independent climbing gym have known that karaoke, potlucks and mahjong nights would in fact keep us achieving more sold-out events? I'll tell you; it's not "hard data" or AI... "

Josh Akapo, Head of Marketing at Rise Climbing

Joy Imperative



Image: J Crew Camp Crew 2026 campaign

Joy Imperative

"Life is more fun here." J Crew Camp Crew campaign, August 2026

This year, people are choosing short-termism and a bit of joie de vivre over long-term self-improvement, and who can blame them. It comes as a direct response to continued bad news and a gloomy looking future (a collective existential crisis perhaps?)

Strategic Joy: the shift

WGSN calls it "Strategic Joy": one of the emotional shifts in its Future Consumer 2027: Emotions report (WGSN, 2025), which argues consumers are done waiting to feel good and are actively designing happiness into daily life.

They've even identified a whole new important consumer segment for 2027 'the Gleamers' a group that redefines the concept of milestones by focusing on personal achievements and everyday joys rather than traditional benchmarks.

Kantar's Marketing Trends 2026 report calls a related shift "Treatonomics" (Kantar, November 2025): small pleasures, taken often, as a mini-rebellion against restraint and biotracking. With 36% of consumers say they'd go into short-term debt to spend on things they enjoy. It's not about earning your treat; it's about not asking permission for it.

But there's a less rosy reading too. Is this hunger for micro moments of happiness a healthy antidote to screen fatigue, or a symptom of it, with technology conditioning us to chase quick hits of joy rather than the slower kind that takes time and patience to earn? The most interesting work in this space bring joy, made with time, craft and patience.

For brands, that means providing consumers with these 'treats' and delight, creating moments of joy and escapism that break through the daily grind.

Play as craft

YMC (You Must Create) has quietly dressed creatives and London subcultures since the 1990s. For this project, film director Alexander Ingham Brooke and art director Yachub Webb explored the legacy of kite flying in KITE!, a short film to announce the Merrell and You Must Create collaboration.

Shot on 16mm film with a Bolex camera from the 60s and an Arriflex 416 , the film lingers on kites simply flying in the wind, a homage to the late Peter Powell, the legendary 1970s maker of the Peter Powell Stunter kite.

[VIDEO]

Rather than focusing directly on the product they give viewers just a few minutes of beautiful escapism built entirely around movement and play.





Images: *KITE* directed by Alexander Ingham Brooke for Merrell and You Must Create.

Joy Imperative

Laila Gohar's fruit and vegetable merry-go-round installation for Arket at Milan Design Week 2026 offered a different kind of treat, playful rather than edible, but built on the same idea to delight rather than inform.

"The work centres on a re-imagined fairground ride, with its figures replaced by oversized fruit and vegetables – bringing together a shared interest in food, playfulness and everyday beauty, shaped through Gohar's theatrical language," Arket said.



Image: Laila Gohar for ARKET, ARKET Carousel, 2026. Via Dezeen.



Image: Still from Walkers, *Your Little Slice of Joy*, 2026, directed by Andrew Gaynord, Mindseye. Via Creative Salon.

Permission to indulge

Household brand Walkers crisps launched "Your Little Slice of Joy", an advertising campaign that encourages people to be "joyfully selfish" and prioritize small moments of happiness, even briefly, despite everyday pressures, featuring everyday situations where a bag of crisps provides a quick escape.

Joy Imperative

Time to embrace your inner child

We're seeing a search for play in travel too. In its Summer Travels trends report 2026 Airbnb highlighted the emergence of "playcations" as a defining shift in how people travel. Instead of checking famous landmarks off a bucket list, travelers are prioritising carefree time away.

The report specifically tracked how adults are increasingly swapping luxury hotel bookings for communal cabins, canoeing, and campfires to embrace what it calls "kidult" travel. US based Camp No Counsellors has a waitlist for 2027 and over 250,000 followers on Instagram.

How brands are showing up

J.Crew launched its Camp Crew capsule collection (including a tee-shirt reading "Life is more fun here", a two-day tastemaker getaway in the Adirondacks, and in-store pop-ups with camp bunting, props and stickers (Vogue, June 2026).

As J.Crew stated in the official press launch for the capsule, the collection was designed to celebrate "the rituals, relationships, and spontaneity that define summer at its best."

Small acts of play

That same appetite for childhood ritual and life gamification is showing up on the high street. Frozen yoghurt cafe Yo-Chi recently opened its first UK store in Notting Hill, with queues of more than five hours on opening day (Hospitality & Catering News, August 2026).

The concept is built around a DIY topping station, with customers piling their frozen yoghurt with more than 30 toppings and paying by weight. The two-storey, 2,000 square foot space has a DJ booth and the brand's signature disco ball, with the founders describing it as designed to be "the new club."



Image: J. Crew Camp Crew 2026

The Joy Imperative
Brand Ideas

Build a place people want to be in.
Not a campaign, a room. When optimism outside is scarce, give people somewhere that feels better to go to (also plays into the trend for a need for IRL meet ups in the face of an increasingly digital and lonely world).

Let optimism be the point of view.
Don't ignore the mood outside, create a response to it. Humour, play and a bit of nonsense are a legitimate response to a world that feels heavy and some may say joyless.

Make work that doesn't sell, it just feels.
Not every piece of content needs a call to action. Some of the strongest work in this space, KITE! included, barely features the product at all, just a few minutes of pure escapism. Give people something to feel, not something to buy.

"We wanted to celebrate British craft, DIY culture and the joy of flying a kite: its abstract beauty and freedom.

Merrell and YMC just let us run with it there were hardly any amends to the final directors cut and we all poured so much love craft and patience into the films.

In many ways, I see the film as a small personal triumph against AI technology, which has created so much doubt across creative fields. What we have here is just sunlight, ideas and feeling."

Alexander Ingham Brooke
Director and Cinematographer for KITE! A Film for YMC x Merrell

Authority, Not Reach



Image: Levi's London X England 2026 campaign

Authority, Not Reach

Brands are trading reach for credibility , moving from influencers with audiences to people with real cultural authority.

From day one of Margaret (almost 20 years now!) we've worked with "People of Influence" over "Influencers" so we're thrilled to see brands signing up to work with our creative network of editors, artists, designers, chefs, gardeners, musicians and other figures whose credibility already exists through their contribution to culture, through what they've achieved and not just their voice.

Brands are starting to rethink how they structure these relationships, embedding people of influence into their teams from the start to help shape the offering not just communicate it.

Importantly they are listening to their cultural knowledge and expertise as true collaborators, not just a token add on.

The shift is really about creating a more culturally credible form of influence. Not "this person has an audience," but "this person already has standing in the specific world we're trying to be taken seriously in."
Glossy 2026

In May 2026, Laura Mercier launched a paid collective of women with genuine ties to the brand: author and former InStyle editor-in-chief Laura Brown, makeup artist Georgie Eisdell, interior designer Brigette Romanek and beauty editor Amy Chang. They were brought in as consultants on product and positioning, rather than simply as faces for a campaign. CEO Ginny Wright described the brief as finding "Women with some type of organic connection to Laura Mercier" (Glossy, 2026). It's working: earned media value was up roughly 143% year-on-year in the first half of 2026, hitting around $70m by July, 40% of it from TikTok.



Images: *The Laura Mercier Collective*, 2026 via Glossy.

Authority, Not Reach

From council to community

For its 50th year, Whistles relaunched with a new "Designed for an Open Mind" positioning, casting 50 of its own customers, from scientists to teachers aged 19 to 72, found through cryptic fly posters across London rather than using models or influencers. Crucially, the 50 women will keep collaborating on future projects, turning real customers into an ongoing collective that helps shape the brand.

For Levi's, Margaret has worked with micro-creators to bring their own ideas to life on Levi's London's social channels, recruited for cultural and creative relevance, and helping us shape our campaign not just respond to it. The brand has increased three fold over the last year.



Image: @thegurlsareangry for Levi's London, April 2026 .



Image: Scarlett co-host of @lesbiansupperclub for Levi's London, July 2026.





Image: Ashley Verse "A Seat At The Table - Black Creativity in Conversation at Aethos November 2025.

Margaret in practice

Margaret's own work in hospitality has embedded our creative network into hotels and members' clubs to kick-start communities from scratch and help shape the offering as well as create an inclusive, welcoming space.

"For Aethos in East London's Founding Membership, we didn't brief local creatives to promote the space, we brought them in from the start: shaping the community, contributing to programming, and hosting their own gatherings. We've done the same at Crafted in East Sussex, proving this approach works just as well outside major cities as within them."

Jose Arufe Barker , Senior Communications Director, Margaret

Authority, Not Reach

Institutions are doing this too

Japan House London's Advocate Programme (2026/27) follows the same format: its first cohort of ten UK-based creators is spending 12 months telling stories about Japanese culture and design, in exchange for access, priority exhibition entry, private view invitations and shop discounts, not a fee (Japan House London, 2026).

Why now?

Paid influencer content fatigue is real, and audiences can spot it a mile off. People want genuine involvement and recommendations. The more obviously transactional an endorsement looks, the less it moves anyone.

And AI is accelerating all of it.

As AI-generated content, reviews and even 'are they real people?' get harder to distinguish, cheap trust signals such as follower counts, five-star ratings stop meaning much. What's left standing is reputation built in a genuine way over time.

As public feeds fill with content that may or may not be human, more of the internet's real conversation is moving into group chats, private servers and small paid communities, where trust comes from actually knowing who's talking, not a platform's signals. Brands can't buy their way into those rooms. Only real people with real standing get invited.



Image: Japan House London, *Advocate Programme* 2026/27, 2026. Courtesy of Japan House London.

Authority, Not Reach

Brand Ideas

Build a collective, to shape your campaigns. Ongoing paid collective of people with real earned cultural authority, chosen for their relevance to your proposition and audience, who help shape product and positioning from the start, not just a late 'add on' to promote what's already decided.

Brief for ideas, not content. The difference between credible and disposable work is authorship. Bring people in for their perspective, not just their execution. The strongest work should feel like it could exist without the brand.

Go local and niche. Cultural authority is often built at a local level. Local creatives and communities can carry more weight than household names, particularly in scenes that are underrepresented but culturally active.

Give people a real stake in programming. Membership, programming input, ongoing involvement , not just an invite to the launch.

'The Advocate Programme allows us to build relationships that grow over time, rather than one-off collaborations. As our ten Advocates come from a range of backgrounds and areas of expertise, each brings a different perspective as they discover Japan House London's programme of exhibitions and events throughout the year.'

Cindy Yung, Social Media and Digital Content Manager at Japan House.

Slow Is The New Status



MARGARET

Image: Still from *Super Nature* documentary directed by Ed Sayer which Margaret worked on the publicity for.

Slow Is The New Status

Resisting speed, celebrating stillness and embracing the passage of time are becoming an expression of taste.

In 2019, The Future Laboratory called it "Conscious Deceleration" — slowness as something you did quietly, for yourself, behind closed doors (The Future Laboratory, "Conscious Deceleration," Health & Wellness Futures Report, 2019). Seven years on, and in line with the speed everything else is moving - the feed, the news, the group chat - the reclaiming of time and how deliberately you spend it is becoming something worn with pride.

The Joys of Slow travel

Rail travel is booming across Europe, with passenger journeys going up 3% year-on-year, and the London–Amsterdam route alone by 18.3% (Eurostar, 2025 Annual Results). Companies like Interrail have always sold the journey, not just the destination, and flight-free operators like Byway Travel have built a whole business on the idea that arriving fast isn't the point but rather the multi-stop routes, the night trains, the scenic detours. The length of the trip is the *luxury* now, not the inconvenience.

"Train travel offers something that faster forms of transport often remove: time to observe, think, meet people and experience the distance between one place and another. Rather than treating travel time purely as something to minimise, that time can become part of the experience and part of what makes the journey meaningful.

At Interrail, this thinking sits behind The Interrail Effect: the idea that what happens between A and B can be as valuable as the destination itself."

Özlem Birkalan, Chief Brand & Commercial Officer, Interrail B.V.



Image: *The Interrail Effect,* 2026 . Campaign imagery, courtesy of Interrail

Slow Is The New Status

Slowness in the Creative Process

A return to slowness and a more considered, controlled approach is also playing out in how creative projects are being made, produced, and released.

Margaret collaborator **Super Nature,** is a great example of this. The stunning new documentary was shot on vintage super 8 across more than 25 countries using over 80 analogue cameras, and put together from footage from a multitude of local collaborators rather than via a conventional fast, centralised shoot.

With sustainability very much at the heart of this approach, it also received a slow, unconventional release with director Ed Sayers cycling and bike-packing the length of the UK for a regional screening tour, turning distribution itself into a considered, physical journey rather than a single day-and-date drop.

Projects hero'ing slowness and real time also include the final edition of the pioneering Seven Up documentary series, now 70 Up, which airs this autumn.

Richard Linklater (Boyhood) is revisiting the idea with a 20 year, real time shoot of **Merrily We Roll Along** starring Paul Mescal and Beanie Feldstein. Filmed in nine sections, three of which are complete, it will show its characters aging on screen in real time, and wraps in 2040.



Image: The stars of *70 Up* documentary series/ ITV, via BBC



Image: Still from *Super Nature*, 2025 documentary, a recent Margaret client, directed by Ed Sayer

Slow Is the New Status

Brand Ideas

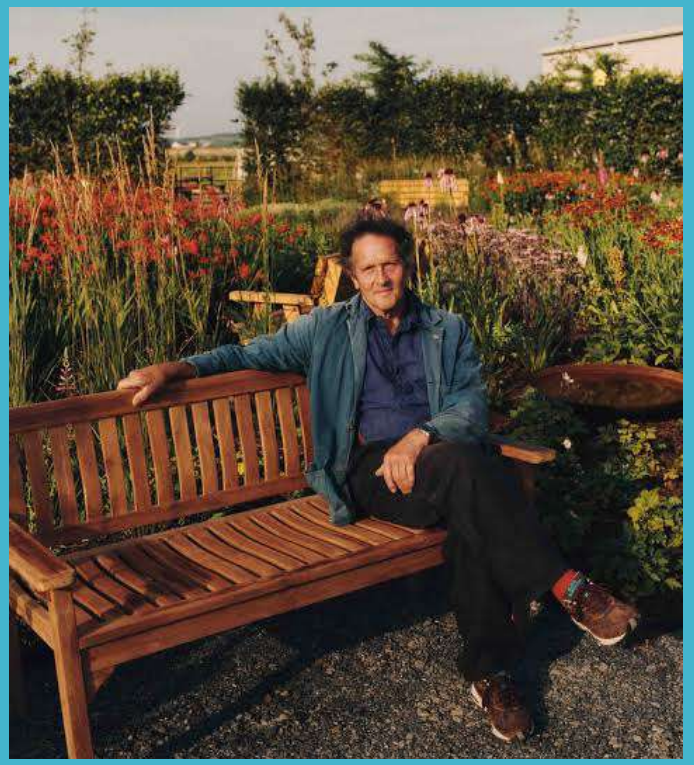
Brands can create value by making time, effort and intentionality part of the experience itself.

Sell time richness, not time saved.
Travel brands can build longer, slower itineraries and routes; hospitality can make extended stays and late checkouts the default rather than the upsell; retail can create environments where discovery, browsing and human connection become part of the experience.

Design for longer-term impact, not one-off moments.
New Balance's Flimby Garden, a nature-inspired collaboration with jewellery designer Bleue Burnham for the factory's 300 workers, is a brilliant example of an idea made with thought, time and care for the team. That same thinking would work wonderfully for a consumer audience too, giving people a space to slow down, de-stress and reflect.

Commission short films to sit alongside product focused adverts .
Working with and supporting the creative community of designers, directors and editors especially those from underrepresented groups.

Make effort part of the value.
In a world where convenience is the default, experiences that ask for participation can feel more meaningful. The opportunity is not to create unnecessary friction, but to make the effort involved part of the reward. Earnt is an example of this shift: access is built around participation rather than passive consumption, turning involvement itself into part of the experience.



"Someone could sit where I'm sitting now and eat their sandwiches, or grieve or celebrate, whatever it is that's going on in their life, surrounded by a garden... is a very humane thing."

Monty Don

Shoppertainment



Image: Tiana Chan hosts a Loppa party on a Hackney rooftop © Photographed for the FT by Adama Jalloh.

Shoppertainment

As everything about shopping has been getting quieter and more automated, with self-checkout, one-click, an algorithm guessing what you want before you've asked, perhaps it makes perfect sense that live shopping is having its moment.

As high street stores struggle and we move further and further online, we're seeing a huge growth in live shopping, real people selling real things to a live audience. Not quite the Ridley Road market experience or a sorry seeming late night shopping channel but its modern day descendant, sometimes hosted by a big name and sometimes just aided by a camera phone.

As Kay Barron, the former Net-a-Porter fashion director who just launched a video-commerce agency built entirely around this idea, puts it:

"You need to entertain first and sell second. Ideally, they happen at the same time."

Catwalk to Cart

We're seeing this most clearly in the fashion industry. In September, London Fashion Week's closing act was eBay's Endless Runway - eBay livestreaming a catwalk of pre-loved pieces from Daisy Edgar-Jones, Adwoa Aboah and Charles Jeffrey that viewers can buy the second they see it.

"Fashion depends on both creative excellence and responsible innovation, eBay Endless Runway brings those ideas together, celebrating creativity while championing a more circular future. ***What's particularly exciting about it is how it turns that concept into something tangible and immediate – audiences aren't just watching a show, they're able to shop it in real time."***
Laura Weir, CEO British Fashion Council quoted in Vogue Britain, Sept 26

We saw this idea adopted by eBay for the first time in the UK in 2024, when Katherine Ryan auctioned her own wardrobe live together with friend of Margaret, Amy Bannerman, eBay's former Pre Loved Style Director. Over at Net-a-Porter, Kay Barron had been pioneering its success, finding herself "dragged in front of a camera during lockdown" and generating £1m in one 15-minute session she "hated every second of."

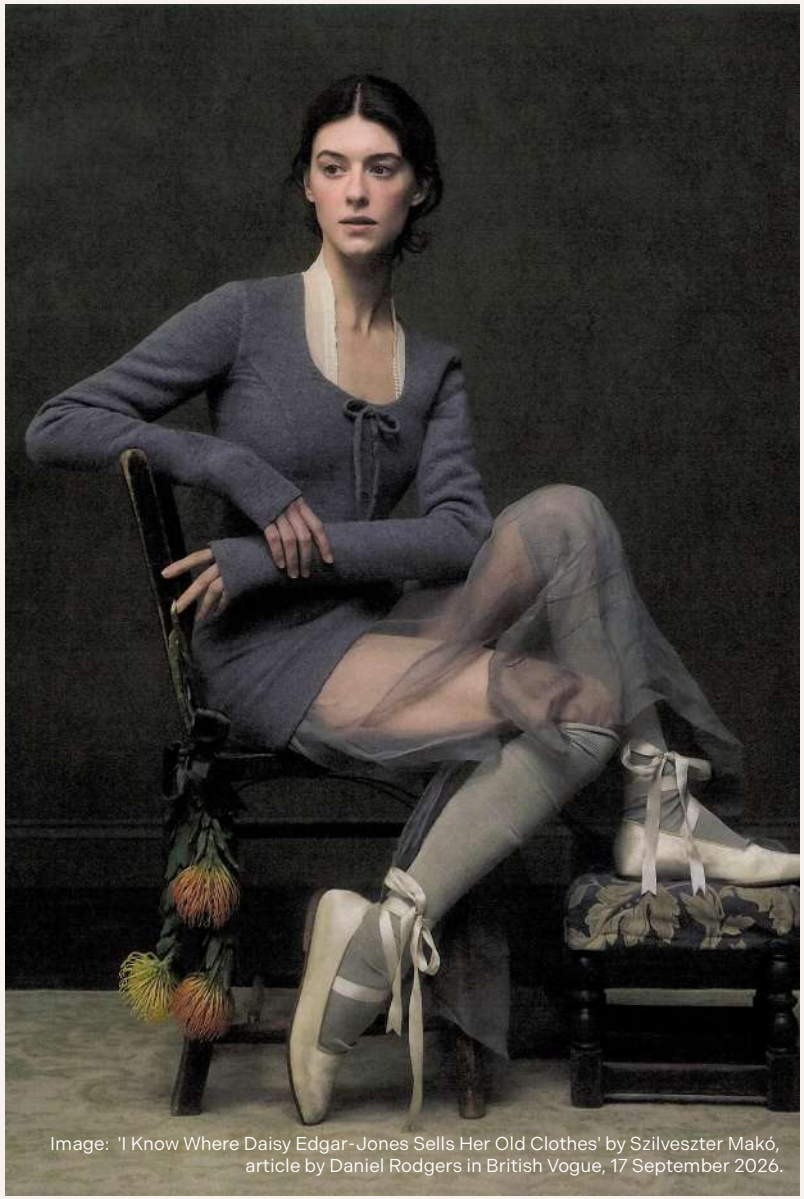


Image: 'I Know Where Daisy Edgar-Jones Sells Her Old Clothes' by Szilveszter Makó, article by Daniel Rodgers in British Vogue, 17 September 2026.

Shoppertainment

Beyond the Rails

Though its arguably most visible and growing within the fashion world, this trend is by no means confined to fashion. Sephora launches its "Drop Shop" on TikTok Shop on 19 September (a series revealing mystery brands via celebrity-hosted Lives, shoppable in real time). Whatnot, the platform that made this mainstream in the US, started as a home for Pokémon card traders (its co-founder grew his first business on eBay in the fourth grade) and now moves 20 items a second across everything from rare coins to fresh seafood.



Image: Getty Images. Art: Neia Dizon/Fashionista.

While Oxfam's first eBay Live event sold out entirely, pulling 3,200 viewers to a pre-loved charity sale (Retail Gazette, 10 August 2026)

And closer to home, Wolverhampton's Malik Butchers have been held up as a live shopping success story by the BBC news and beyond. The Malik brothers having claimed to have gone from £2-3k a week to roughly £10k/week thanks to being able to break from their limited footfall store to selling their halal meat live on TikTok

"We are a success story for how a small business can get wider reach through TikTok Shop and has allowed us to expand our business in terms of the amount of people we are employing and the amount of money we are making." co-owner Manny Malik quoted above and pictured below with his brother Adnaan in the iPaper, Sept 3rd 2026.



M&S has also enjoyed strong results from TikTok Shop live streams with links to featured items, with one recent feed attracting 260,000 viewers and generating sales of about one item every 30 seconds. (The Guardian, 24 Dec 2025)

Shoppertainment



Image: @raven__smith, Instagram, Sep 2026.

Another UK family live shopping success story is L'ERA jewellery. Founded in August 2023 by mother-and-sister duo Lara Sofia-Mar and Angèle Sofia, the brand defies TikTok's 'impulse purchase' reputation with individual pieces selling for nearer £700.

They livestream four times a week (up to six at Christmas and Black Friday), each session ending in a giveaway with many repeat customers getting hooked after winning their first piece.

"The real driver of sales has been TikTok Live. Live streams allow customers to see the pieces in detail, ask questions in real-time, and build confidence before purchasing. It's the repeated exposure and interaction that leads to conversion, rather than a single short-form video for our business".

Angèle Sofia in Retail Gazette, March 2026

And It's Just Getting Started

The scale is real but still early. UK TikTok Shop has passed 300,000 sellers (up 200% year-on-year), running 6,000+ live broadcasts a day, with live sales up 55%. 57% of Gen Z and millennial shoppers say they actively enjoy watching. US live commerce hit $14.6bn in 2025, up nearly 50%, converting at 9-30% against 2-3% for standard ecommerce.

And that's not it, live commerce is still only around 5% of US ecommerce, versus roughly 60% in China.

Shoppertainment

Brand Ideas

Brands don't need a celebrity wardrobe to borrow the mechanics.

Start small and be human - Whatnot won by obsessing over a small, loyal audience before scaling, not by going broad on day one.

Use any of your credible creator relationships- Lean on an existing platform's creator network rather than building from scratch (Sephora and Drop Shop's whole logic).

Think of it as entertainment - the brands winning here are hitting conversion by making people want to watch, not just want to buy. See our 'Joy Imperative trend.

Can you make it more of an experience? The beauty of live shopping is that it doesn't need high production, and as the Malik Butchers example shows, it can work for almost anyone. But knowing from our other trend reports that people crave getting together in an increasingly lonely world, could you turn it into an IRL event, in front of a live audience too? Second hand selling is already heading this way: **Loppa**, a new app inspired by Sweden's loppmarknad yard sales, lets anyone host a pop up sale for £12, turning selling preloved clothes into a social occasion rather than haggling on Vinted.



Image: Tom Wood, Finding a Pair (colour film), 1990. © Tom Wood, courtesy RRB Photobooks.

We'd love to hear from you

Here ends our latest research on shifts in the cultural zeitgeist. If you've enjoyed reading this and are interested in talking to us about creating a culturally authentic communications campaign for your brand, get in touch at hello@margaretlondon.com.

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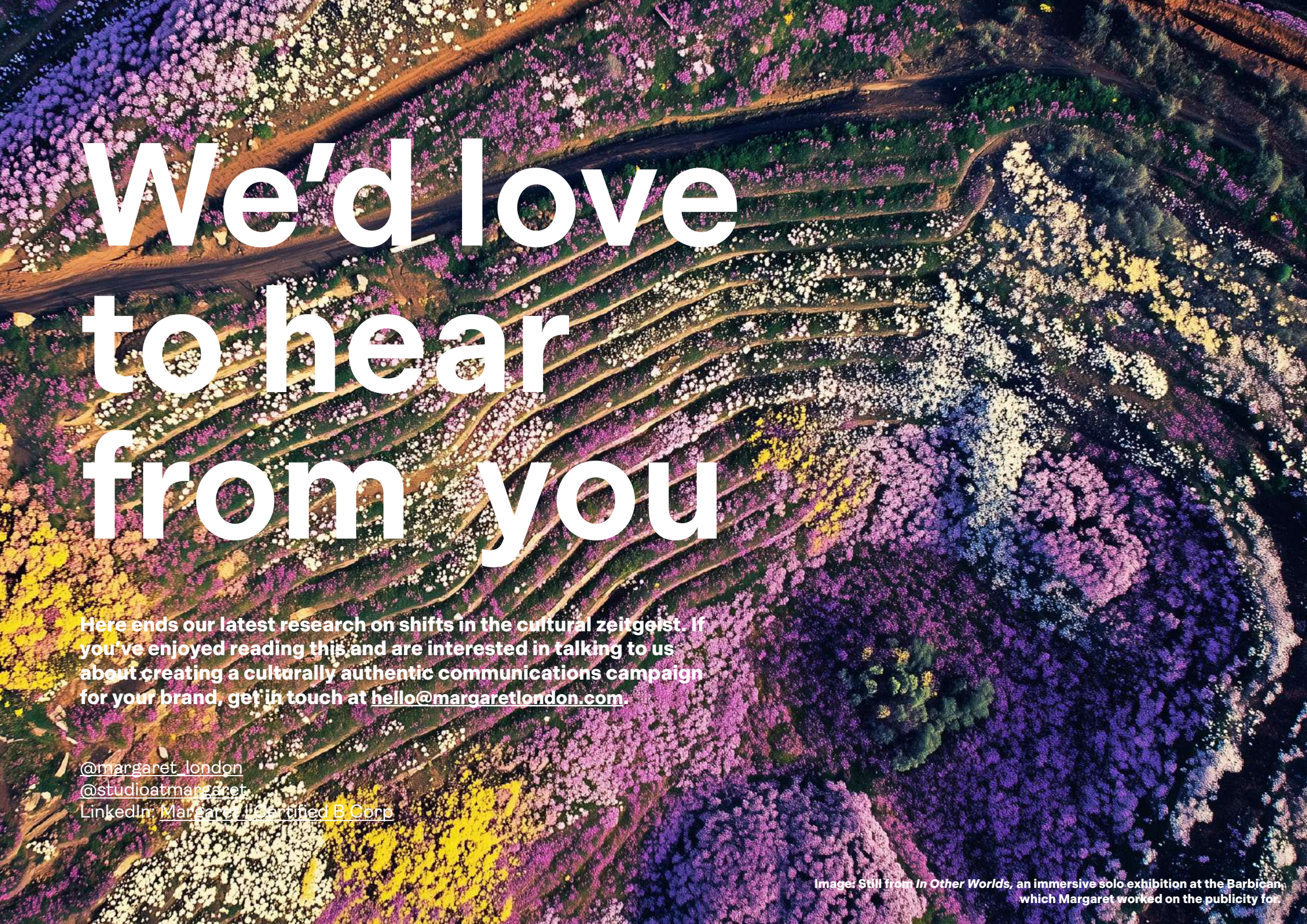


Image: Still from *In Other Worlds*, an immersive solo exhibition at the Barbican, which Margaret worked on the publicity for.