

nardi



It was Napoleon who described St Mark's Square as "the finest drawing room in Europe", a typically flamboyant statement. Were he to see it today, I can't help thinking Boney might take issue with the backpackers who pile into Venice dropping only detritus from their packed lunches rather than any serious money. Nevertheless, there are a few places around this most famous of Italian piazzas that do their best to maintain the standards that Napoleon presumably had in mind, and my favourite is the jeweller Nardi.

Nardi opened in 1926 and is still in the hands of the eponymous founding family. It is a beautiful shop, in the old-fashioned way. Venetian velvet covers the walls. The vitrines of brooches, necklaces and cuff links have a dignity about them that is enhanced by classical artworks including a canvas by Fontebasso. And as well as being conventionally beautiful, the parquet floor is made using the construction techniques of a yacht deck to cope with the city's periodic floods.

Nardi is old school and proud of it; it does things the way they've been done since the 1920s. Walking into this suite of calm, elegant rooms, it is still possible to catch a whiff of what Venice was like when it was a haunt of the jet set, when the term was still used without irony, and when Nardi was the rendezvous of every glamorous royal and movie star: Grace Kelly, Prince Rainier, Spanish monarchs and Lauren Bacall.

However, a special place in this exalted pantheon is reserved for Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, legendary lovers... and shoppers. Knowing Taylor's weakness for

exquisite jewellery, Dominick Dunne once took a car from Cortina d'Ampezzo just to buy her a ring of angelskin coral, while Burton purchased a Moretto brooch (which, had the term not been banalised beyond usefulness I'd have prefixed with the adjective "iconic"). These are still made, and a pink sapphire Paola Moretto brooch (below) costs €5,500.

Nardi is a repository of the unexpected. The charming Alberto Nardi (pictured above), a gemologist, travels to Colombia, Burma and beyond bringing back stones for his artisans, who work in a small workshop behind the square or on the mainland. The stones are then turned into one-off pieces – sometimes traditional, sometimes contemporary – marrying gems with materials such as titanium. I was particularly taken with a bold necklace that mixes links of gold and amber (€8,500).

I once bought some vintage Nardi cuff links at auction and on a recent visit to Venice was keen to see what was in stock. The Venetian theme is strong, with carnival mask links set with a variety of stones (from €3,000). Having looked in the window, I asked if there were more, whereupon a tray was brought out from under the counter with an array of fastenings, including some very bold abstract links of yellow gold, set with a large lump of turquoise. They had plainly remained unsold since the 1970s – but Nardi finally got rid of them that afternoon. I honestly don't know how Richard

Burton missed them, but I'm glad he did. **NICK FOULKES**
Nardi, Piazza San Marco 69, 30124 Venezia (+3904-1522 5733; www.nardi-venezia.com).



FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

running through the options

As Britain's fleetest of foot ramp up their training and fundraising plans for the London Marathon on Sunday April 25 – the biggest annual fundraising event in the world, having garnered over £450m for charities since 1981 – many among them will be exploring the online-sponsorship options.

JustGiving.com, founded in 2001, has been until now the favourite, having facilitated £86m in Marathon-associated giving. However, the privately owned site takes a five per cent commission. Alternative websites include the not-for-profit uk.virginmoneygiving.com which launched in October and is the Marathon's official fundraising site (Virgin is the event's sponsor through 2015); it takes a two per cent commission from each donation to cover operating costs, and any excess, says Virgin, will go directly towards fee reduction. Another site, Bmycharity.com, recently dispensed with the commission-based model and is offsetting costs through advertising, so the whole of each donation (minus fees charged by banks to process payments) makes its way to the designated charity.

Whichever website edges ahead in the popularity stakes, charities win; both Bmycharity and Virgin Money Giving report an 89 per cent Gift Aid uptake on their websites, compared with the 40 per cent that is typical on giving as a whole.

www.bmycharity.com; 0845-058 0549.

www.JustGiving.com; 0845-021 2110.

uk.virginmoneygiving.com; 0845-610 1046.

silver service

"I wanted to design something that perfectly captured the efforts of the Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation and was instantly recognisable, but also something of quality that people want to wear. In a moment of clarity, I developed the vertebrae idea; I wanted something stylised and timeless that incorporated them. The beads can be bought individually." **THEO FENNEL**

Limited edition silver Theo Fennell "vertebrae" bead bracelet with suede strap and three beads, £135 plus £6.95 p&p. Extra beads £45 each. From www.nichollsfoundation.org.uk; stockists 01933-664 437. All profits go to the Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation.

gastronomic giving

In the corporate world there's no such thing as a free lunch. But in philanthropy circles, while you won't get something for nothing, you can do much good by giving relatively little. The cost of a jar of jam, for example. Fairtrade food company Yozuna's exotic new condiment, from the fruit of the African baobab tree, aims at once to titillate British buyers' palates and stimulate international trade. "Baobabs are abundant, and the fruit they bear yields a surprisingly tangy jam, great on toast or teamed with melted camembert," says Malawi-born founder of Yozuna, Malcolm Riley. By serving up this novel import, Yozuna – working with Phytotrade Africa, a non-profit association that facilitates links between African suppliers and export buyers – positions itself as a component in the infrastructure that's improving the lives of the impoverished Malawians who gather in the fruit. Phytotrade cites 1.9m households throughout southern Africa as currently involved in the baobab supply chain; the UK's Natural Resources Institute estimates that number could climb to as many as 2.5m if trade is further stimulated overseas.

Yozuna Baobab Fruit Jam, £750 (227g), from www.yozuna.com and Selfridges, 400 Oxford St, London, W1 (0800-123 4000).

LINDSAY MACPHERSON AND SIBEL POUNDER