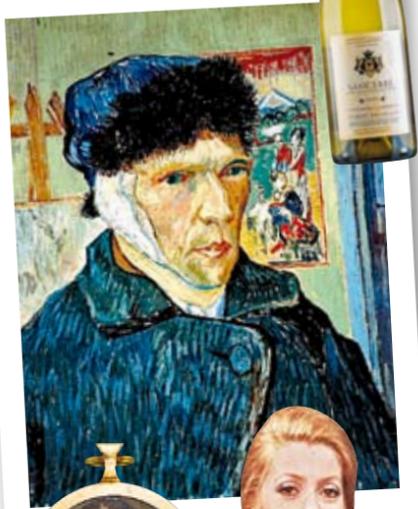


From top: Positano in Italy, a 1959 Mercedes 190SL, A Kind Of Loving by Stan Barstow, and a bottle of Sancerre wine



Above: Vincent van Gogh in a self-portrait, a miniature of Robert Burns and French actress Catherine Deneuve

The prized possession you value above all others... A French mahogany Art Deco desk I bought for £6,000 at an auction in Nice eight years ago. It's a timeless piece that's exquisitely made.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... That I didn't see enough of my parents. My mum Catherine died in 2010 at 84 and my dad, William, died last year at 86. For decades we had a geographic separation – me in London, them in Scotland. But we were also living in other worlds, so on a deeper level we never really connected.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd wake up in a beautiful hotel in Positano, Italy, with my girlfriend Siobhan. I'd hire a red 1959 Mercedes 190SL convertible and cruise north along the coast road to Rome. We'd wander around the city, then arrive at Juan-les-Pins on the Côte d'Azur, France, for lunch. I'd have a salade Niçoise and a chilled glass of Sancerre, then a dip in the sea and a doze on the beach. In the afternoon, I'd go for a walk in the stunning countryside of Fife in Scotland, which I know well from my childhood. We'd go to Tate Britain in the evening to look at works by the St Ives artists and Francis Bacon. I'd have dinner at The Wolseley on Piccadilly. Recently, they've let me sit at Lucian Freud's old table, which is quite an honour. I'd have whitebait, followed by a cheeseburger – without the bun. I'd end the day at my London flat watching a DVD and smoking a cigarette – or five!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Smoking. I've been smoking since I was 14. I'm on 30 a day now.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... A Kind Of Loving by Stan Barstow. It's about a lad trying to break free from his mining town in Yorkshire and has parallels with my own story of moving away from Scotland.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd listen in on a conversation between Andy Murray and his coach Ivan Lendl before a major final. I'm intrigued to know how he inspires Andy.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Waiters who say 'no problem'. I know it's not a problem – I'm paying!

The film you can watch time and time again... The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover by Peter Greenaway. Helen Mirren's great, but Michael Gambon's incredible performance steals it.



'I'm intrigued by evil. I've read several books about Fred West – I'm staggered someone can be that bad'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's best-selling artist Jack Vettriano

The person who has influenced you most... W Gordon Smith, the Scottish art critic, playwright and TV presenter. He encouraged me at the outset of my career when I was getting flak from other critics. He died in 1996.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd have a wild night with Vincent van Gogh around the time he was losing his mind, so I could try and understand what he was going through.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Follow your dreams.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm intrigued by violence and evil. I've read several books about Fred West because I'm staggered someone can be that bad.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A self-portrait by British artist Jenny Saville. I bought it for £300 in 1999 and sold it later for £50,000. It'd be worth £100,000 now.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep on painting.

The poem that touches your soul... A Man's A Man For A' That by Robert Burns. It says that after the achievements of any life a man is a man, just that.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a nightmare to live with! My girlfriend says it's the truth, but I like to think I'm considerate and pretty OK.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The day in 1989 when two of my paintings were accepted by the Royal Scottish Academy and sold immediately. I realised I might have a future in painting.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal Francis Bacon's Triptych, May-June 1973. I love its haunting darkness.

The song that means most to you... A Red, Red Rose by Burns. It tells you how deep true love can go.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The opening of my A Contrast Of Styles show in Edinburgh in 1991. All 25 paintings sold, and suddenly I had some money and a career.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my father. He was a miner and there was never a person prouder of what I'd achieved. No one could step inside his house without him showing them a picture by his lad! I'm still coming to terms with his death.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I'd love the French actress Catherine Deneuve to sit for me so I could paint her into a picture.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Always be kind.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd want a church service in Scotland with a reading of Burns' Ae Fond Kiss. I'd like my ashes to rest next to my parents at the crematorium in Kirkcaldy.

The way you want to be remembered... At least I tried!

The Plug... Jack Vettriano: A Retrospective, Kelvingrove Gallery, Glasgow until 23 Feb. www.jackvettriano.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Tom Hanks is at the mercy of Somali pirates as Captain Phillips – in cinemas Friday. Book for the Glyndebourne Tour, which is taking three new opera productions round the country. And Sir Paul McCartney's first solo album for six years, New, is out Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Bake Off 2012 winner John Whaite on this year's big final
- Grow scrumptious pears with Monty Don
- Jamie Oliver's delicious chocolate treats
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings