



By *Josephine Brouard*

“What is this preoccupation we have with accumulating stuff? Is it solely to impress others?”

Enough is enough

Do possessions make you happy? Ultimately, probably not. So why do so many of us still like to shop up a storm?



WHAT PERCENTAGE of your wardrobe do you reckon you wear? Do you put on the same five outfits until they're so tired you simply can't wash or iron them anymore? I reached that point this morning with a wine-coloured shirt I've been gleefully wearing since nabbing it for a handful of rupees in Sri Lanka back in 2005.

The thought of having to shop for new clothes makes me blanch: it boggles my mind that so many people consider shopping as “therapy” when I find it so onerous. Not to mention the fact that 80% of my wardrobe is still waiting to be worn more than once or twice!

In any case, the amount of “stuff” in our shopping centres screams excess to me on every level. There's more to buy than any human could ever sensibly want or need – and yet lots of people can't seem to get enough. Personally, I don't understand at all the compulsion to “shop till you drop”. The more I witness people buying things to add to the bric-a-brac that fills their homes, the more determined I am to rid myself of the unused debris that fills my wardrobes, shelves and cupboards. Minimalism has become my new black!

While holidaying overseas recently, I stayed with a very wealthy cousin whose lush lifestyle made me seriously review the adage “enough is as good as a feast”. Cousin Marc's house was so expansive I felt like I'd been temporarily airlifted into a Hollywood villa. My personal quarters

included a cinema screening room; a small gym; a sizeable bathroom and sauna; a Wi-Fi office; and a glamorous bedroom overlooking exquisitely manicured lawns and a tree-fringed pool.

As I trekked around the house, gawping at the number of reception rooms, guest toilets and overall glitz, I also noticed the large number of cupboards filled with fine crockery. When I lazily opened one to serve myself a bowl of muesli one morning, I was amused when it was pointed out that I should be using the “everyday” crockery stashed away in a cramped cupboard beneath the sink. All the other stuff? Purely for display!

What is this preoccupation we have with accumulating stuff? Is it solely to impress others?

I've been foolish in the past, convincing myself that having certain things would bring me bliss, completion or status. It didn't. When I turned 50, for example, I bought myself a gorgeous Italian sports car, complete with leather seats, “because I deserved it” – and I did float oh-so-fleetingly on the cusp of nirvana.

Some years and several dings later, I regularly bemoan my car's diabolical Italian suspension, the hefty monthly repayments, and the expensive annual service. Yes, it's tremendous fun to drive, but why didn't I just stick with my trusty old Toyota?

And don't get me started on the subject

of birthdays and Christmas. My friends and relatives must think me an awful Scrooge, but I refuse to add to the general bloat from which so many of us suffer. Just this past Christmas, it was reported that we Aussies were lumped with 19 million unwanted gifts.

Nineteen million! That's thousands of us queuing to exchange potpourris and pyjamas at department stores nationwide, while thousands more sell their unwanted items on eBay. Honestly! Can you blame me for opting to give loved ones gifts of chickens and goats to feed the starving instead?

The prevailing wisdom appears to be that possessions don't make you happy, but still people shop up a storm looking for a giddy quick fix. Me? I'm giving up on accumulating “stuff” for good – and feeling way lighter for it already.

Now if I could just lose some real weight in real life, I might be able to fit in to my “thinner” clothes, and never have to go boutique shopping again! ●

Josephine Brouard has a psychology degree and a fascination for human behaviour.