



# THE BIG SLOW DOWN

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING AS OLD AS TIME AND THAT'S TIME ITSELF - OUR CONSTANTLY TICKING, EVER DIMINISHING, MOST VALUABLE COMMODITY. IN A WORLD THAT CONSTANTLY PUSHES US TO GO AT BREAKNECK PACE, A NEW MOVEMENT IS HELPING US TO REDISCOVER THE VALUE OF SLOWNESS

---

written by GEMMA LATHAM

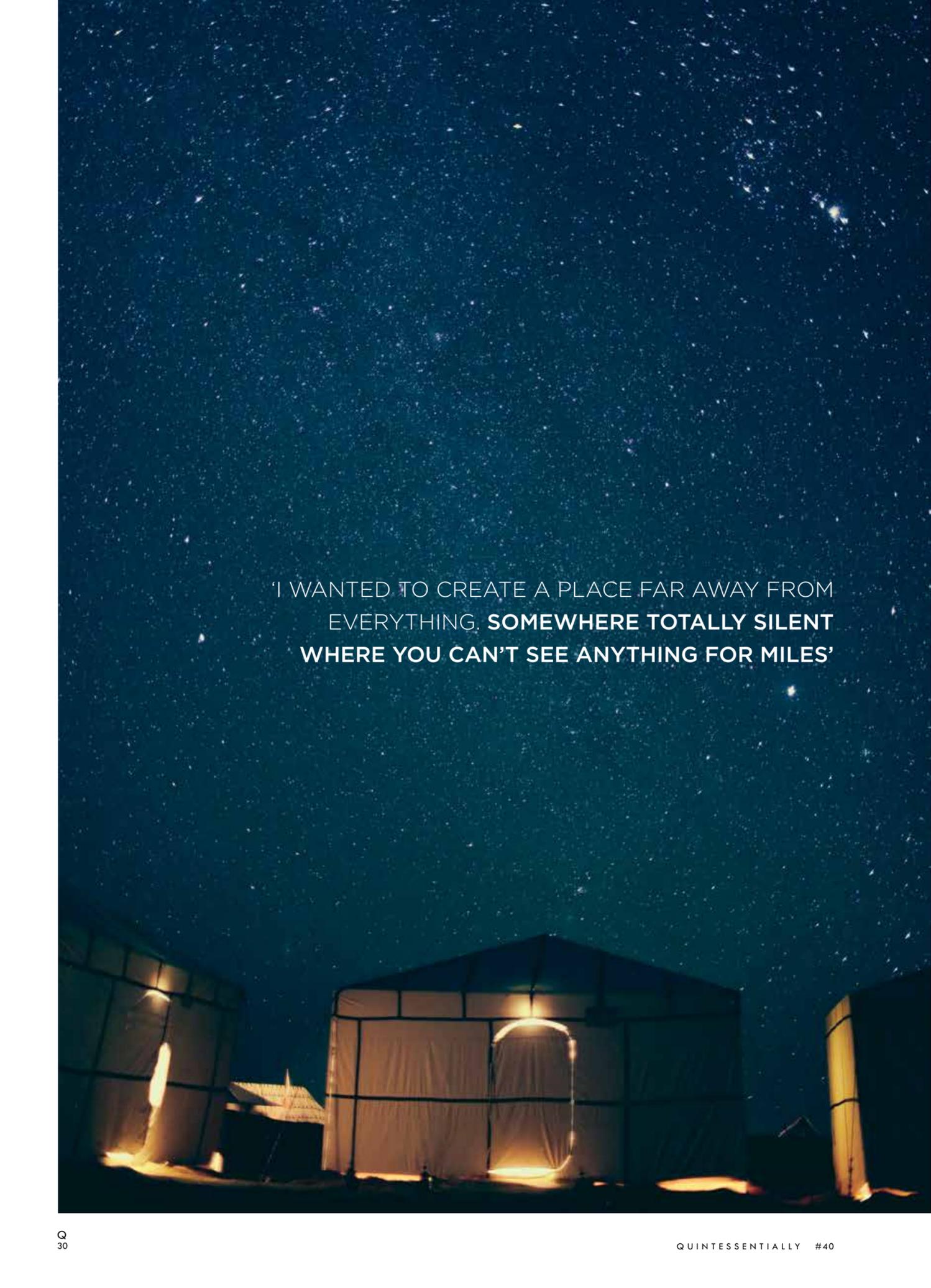
You know things have reached fever pitch when the hottest new trend is all about opting-out, switching-off and disappearing off-radar. Sometimes innovation isn't about doing something that's never been done before, but about reinventing something that has always existed.

Before the Internet and email, before smartphones and apps, before information and entertainment were available to us around-the-clock, things had to happen at a slower pace. The age of communication has brought with it incredible conveniences – at a price. Stress, anxiety and burnout are phrases we are hearing more and more from our friends, families and colleagues. They are symptoms of exhaustion, a result of trying to keep up with this accelerated existence. But, such is our survival instinct, we are now seeking ways to re-establish equilibrium.

The popularity of meditation app Headspace shows huge numbers of people are seeking to inject moments of calm into their busy lives. With over seven million users in 190 countries, Headspace promotes the benefits of daily meditation, promising results such as reduced anxiety, better focus and peace of mind. All this from as little as 10 minutes a day. You can also opt-in to 'mindful moments' that pop up on your phone throughout the day.

But what happens when even the positive messages stress us out? That's when it's time for a more radical intervention. Like restarting the computer when we realise one more second of the spinning rainbow wheel is threatening to send us over the edge. When panic sets in, it's time for a full reboot.

"People don't want to check their phones all the time – it's just they feel they may miss something if they don't. It's a fear-driven motivation which causes stress," explains Caroline Jones, founder of the Restival festival. "Technology wasn't designed to isolate us, but it does. I was on the Tube one day, feeling overloaded with the constant pressures of my daily life.



'I WANTED TO CREATE A PLACE FAR AWAY FROM EVERYTHING. SOMEWHERE TOTALLY SILENT WHERE YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING FOR MILES'

**PREVIOUS PAGE, OPPOSITE AND ABOVE:** Lifestyle blogger Kiki Kolenbet enjoys a tranquil moment at Restival in Morocco; Restival guests sleep in tents under the stars; The Sahara Desert at sunrise. Images by Kiki Kolenbet

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Participants in São Paulo, Brazil, experience the Abramović Method

**BELOW RIGHT:** The Slow Watch 24-hour dial allows you to see the whole day in one go



We were underground, so there was no signal, but people were still checking their phones. No one looked up, smiled or made eye contact. It was as if people were asleep to what was actually going on around them. I wanted to say, 'Wake up, we're missing it!' Restival came from that."

Based on disconnecting from the urban, digital world, Restival is about reconnecting with people, nature and oneself. "I wanted to create a place where you can meet other people from diverse cultures, far away from everything – no advertising, roads or aeroplane trails. No noise. Somewhere totally silent where you can't see anything for miles, pure earth that hasn't been touched by an electricity cable or a road," describes Jones.

The five- to six-day retreats are held in off-the-grid locations, devised in collaboration with indigenous tribes ranging from the Navajo in Arizona, Berber nomads in the Sahara Desert, or the Sami people in Swedish Lapland. Festival-goers engage in ancient practices centred around slow-paced, mindful living. Activities include philosophy workshops, meditation, yoga, crafts, cooking, storytelling, world music and campfire dancing, with plenty of time to both reflect and interact. "People come away with a deep sense of connection, to themselves, one another and the earth," says Jones. "They are also much more aware of how often they use their phones afterwards and take more care of themselves with wellness practices and nutrition. Numerous connections have been formed at Restival. I love that so much."

If you don't have time to take a week off, fear not. Biodynamic psychotherapist Fiona Arrigo addresses this conundrum with her Five-Hour Mind Cleanse. Tackling the need to take time out within today's time constraints, the programme promises to deliver the results of a week-long spa retreat in one session. Arrigo guides clients through talking therapies, breathing techniques and spiritual awareness, with a focus on the importance of our personal journey in relation to the



wider world. While most psychotherapy sessions last for only 50 minutes, a five-hour session provides enough time for clients to really dig down into themselves and re-identify their priorities. "Ultimately, it's about you choosing a different way to be," Arrigo explains. "Gaining an understanding that your life is important, that you matter, learning how your biorhythms and biochemistry works, deciding how much joy and happiness you want to have in your life and then making a stand for that. Designing a life that works around that, rather than a life that works around demand."

