

Eyes Wide OPEN

“Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine my life would go this way. It’s certainly been a left curve,” laughs Patrick Cox, from his beautiful home just outside Santa Gertrudis. “I moved to Ibiza thinking I was going to open an animal sanctuary and write a book. I ended up suicidal and going to rehab.”

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If there was ever an advert for the redemptive power of psychedelics, it is Patrick Cox. The inventor of the Wannabe loafer, he was king of the 90s fashion scene - for a time every self respecting fashion girl (or boy) had a pair, or multiple pairs, of his famous shoes. "In those days if I was having a bad day I'd sit on Portobello Road, and once I'd counted 100 pairs go by I'd stand up and say 'You're loved'. It was the most basic form of validation ever."

With great success came great fame and great stress. When he lost control of his business, Cox was plunged into depression and despair, fled to Ibiza and set about finding the bottom. And then the long way up.

"London had become toxic to me. I wasn't going out to galleries and using the city anymore, I was just sitting at home angry at the world and myself." Shortly after moving, though, his beloved bulldog, Caesar, passed away. Cox took a further downturn, provoking an intervention from his friends Elizabeth Hurley and Elton John. Elton sent his private jet, and Cox went to rehab. It saved his life, but it didn't turn it around. That came with the toad.

Toad - or 5-MeO-DMT - is found in the poison of *Bufo alvarius*, a toad native to the Sonoran desert in Mexico. To extract it, the toads are "milked", and the poison is then dried, and when it is smoked in a pipe the heat burns off the poison. It is an intense psychedelic experience, "the Everest of psychedelics" as it has been called, but it is short - the high lasts just 15 minutes. "On toad you have these god moments," explains Cox. "Total ego dissolution, when you achieve oneness with everything. It reveals the god within." It was that moment, when Cox stepped through "the doors of perception" as Aldous Huxley called it, that the ex party boy, shoe designer and grief stricken dog owner, began to see more clearly.

"Psychedelics, and toad specifically, open a door. And you have a choice of walking through or freaking out and going the other way." Cox chose the other way. "Toad has helped all the problems in my life," he says beaming. "All my friends say, 'Whatever you did three years ago, I want that!'. I was very

angry at the world and myself, and psychedelics made me realise how wonderful my life is. I'm so far along my gratitude journey now, I would almost thank the Chinese business man who removed my business from me - I can't imagine the man I would have become if I'd stayed in fashion. I'm a much better person for it now. I'm at peace."

So much so that Cox has been able to return to the world that made him so miserable: but this time on his own terms. Working with a local embroiderer, he has quietly, slowly begun a new brand, Doors of Perception. He wanted to acknowledge Huxley's 1953 memoir, which was the first book to be published about psychedelics,



and details the 'sacramental vision' Huxley himself experienced. He describes his new brand as 'entheogenic' clothing, (entheogens is another name for psychedelics, and the one used by the academic movement trying to legalise them). The clothing, he says, is "consciousness raising" with each piece containing little hidden messages you might not find straight away. "You might be washing it after six months and you find a little message 'love yourself'. It's about being positive."

He began with a single sweatshirt. Sourcing the organic cotton garments from abroad, he

works with a local embroiderer on his own designs. The idea is elevation and craft, not speed and growth. "I found her in the hippie market, she was selling embroidered cushions and I could see she had taste and wonderful talent. She has some great machines as she also makes merchandise for clubs and restaurants on the island." However, the Doors of Perception pieces were a whole new ball game for her. "She stitches freehand and it's art. Some of the pieces have over 40 hours of embroidery work, that's 295,000 stitches per garment."

Most importantly for Cox, this is not a growth model. This is a business where he can drop in on his embroiderer in the morning, give her his new designs, then take his beloved dog Titus to the beach. Then he can drop back and check on progress in the afternoon. He is not flying to Italy every week, "not stuck in a factory crying on my own for weeks on end, and never dealing with a psychobitch American buyer ever again in my life!"

Being more in nature, tending his garden ("What do you do with 40 kilos of tomatoes?") and spending quality time with Titus is where he gets his happiness now. He's not counting the number of people wearing his sweatshirts on Salinas. Instead, he has taken on the mantle of facilitating toad, passed on by his own teacher. He is writing a book about his experiences, and making a documentary about toad and its healing powers. The brand is where he can joyfully exercise his creativity. "I don't have visions of Doors of Perception becoming all encompassing, I want it to be complementary to my lifestyle, or I'll very quickly find my new joy has become a burden.

Instead, I want people to buy a garment and get curious about mental health and psychedelics - I want to normalise the conversation around it. And that is the most rewarding thing. Back in the party days, I was always entertaining and a whirlwind, but to what end? Now it's just a beautiful feeling when someone opens their eyes and looks up at you and their whole life has changed."

Doors of Perception is on sale exclusively in Agora boutique