

SHIRLEY CONRAN, OBE

Biographical Details

PERSONAL

Born London, England 21.09.32

Family Two sons – Sebastian Conran and Jasper Conran. (Former husband – Sir Terence Conran). Sebastian (born 1956) is an industrial designer. Jasper (born 1959) is a leading British fashion designer and also designs household products, such as China for Wedgewood.

Education St. Paul's Girls School, London; La Chatelaine, Switzerland; Portsmouth Art College (now part of Southampton University) – specialising in sculpture – followed by Chelsea Polytechnic, (now part of the Arts London University) specialising in painting.

Home Lives in London, and in a French farmhouse near Bordeaux.

Relaxation Yoga

Collects Ethnographic art and modern paintings.

1984 Voted Author of the Year by the Variety Club of Great Britain.

1990 Elected a Fellow of the R.S.A. (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce).

VOLUNTARY WORK

1971-2 Handled publicity campaigns for Equal Rights and Equal Pay Legislation for Women in Media (UK).

1974-75 Worked for LIFECLASS, a project for underprivileged, inner city teenagers.
Chair: Lady Medawar.

1977 Pioneering campaigner for nursery care for 3-5 year olds.

1983 Member of the Appeal Committee for St Paul's Girls School.

1984 Chair of the Health Festival dinner at the Savoy Hotel in aid of Birthright.

1990 Official Hostess to the Women's Caucus of the James Joyce Congress 1990 in Monaco.

1998-2000 Director of the Woman of the Year Lunch and Assembly.

1998 Patron of the Margaret Allen Nursery School Appeal, Hereford.

1998 Founded Mothers in Management.

1999 Organised the Mothers in Management WORK+LIFE CONFERENCE at the Savoy, September 1999.

2000 Judge of Ernst & Young's ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR Competition 2000.

2000-02 Government advisor at Ministerial level to the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE).

- 2001** Founder President of The Work-Life Balance Trust, formed for educational and research purposes.
- The Trust organised WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2001, at the Savoy Hotel, London, on 10th-14th September 2001.
- Was one of the British delegates to the First International Work-Life Balance Summit organised by the British government.
- Initiated THE GRADUATES GUIDE TO THE BEST WORK-LIFE BALANCE EMPLOYERS IN BRITAIN. (Committee: Professor Cary Cooper, Sue Levett; MD of W-LBC Ltd, Piers Dudgeon; Editor of the Virgin Alternative Guide to British Universities).
- 2002** Wrote THE GUIDE TO THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE SECTOR (published by The Work-Life Balance Trust).
- Over a million workers were able to participate in WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2002, organised by The Work-Life Balance Trust from Claridges Hotel in London, plus related events in Edinburgh, Manchester and Bristol.
- 2003** The Work-Life Balance Trust organised WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2003 at Claridges Hotel, London plus events in Belfast, Northern Ireland. **Over 3 million workers** were able to participate in their own workplace. The School Leavers Conference at Claridges, which involved representatives from over 100 schools, was organised by St. Paul's Girls' School.
- By September 2003 The Work-Life Balance Trust's original goal - a country-wide educational and promotional task - had been completed. The Trust had raised over half a million pounds to promote the concept of Work-Life Balance in Britain.
- Shirley Conran has suffered from ME since 1968. In October 2003 Shirley Conran became involved in the work of Action for ME, and a Patron of The Young ME Sufferers Trust.
- 2004** Shirley Conran was awarded the O.B.E. for services to equality.
- 2004 ongoing** Shirley started to develop a new concept for teaching maths. She founded MATHS ACTION an independent, not for profit organisation with no political affiliations, which aims to improve maths performance in Britain. (work ongoing).
- 2005** Chaired 'Women at Work' Conference, London.
- 2009** At the House of Lords, the charity Working Families honoured **30 Pioneers 1979 – 2009 who changed the British Workplace**. Shirley was one of them, honoured for her "tenacious campaigning".

JOURNALISM

- 1962** Home Editor DAILY MAIL (first professional writing job).
- 1964** First Women's Editor of THE OBSERVER COLOUR MAGAZINE. Wrote criticism, interviews and specialised in women's interests.
- 1964** Special contributor to WOMAN'S OWN (circulation six million).
- 1967** Fashion Editor THE OBSERVER – initiated new women's section HERS covering all women's interests.

- 1968** Women's Editor DAILY MAIL – launched weekly women's magazine FEMAIL.
- 1969-70** Rejoined THE OBSERVER as columnist and feature writer.
- 1970-71** Columnist for VANITY FAIR magazine.
- 1973** Columnist for OVER 21 magazine.
- Ongoing** Wrote travel articles (mainly for THE OBSERVER) on trekking in the Himalayas, Jamaica, Philippines, Malaysia, Australia and North America.

NON-FICTION

- 1974** SUPERWOMAN a book of household management. Published by Sidgwick and Jackson (No. 1 bestseller hardback) and Penguin (No. 1 bestseller in Britain, Canada, S Africa, Australia, New Zealand).
- 1975** SUPERWOMAN YEARBOOK (A Critical Path for Mothers) published by Sidgwick then Jackson (No. 4 bestseller, hardback publication only).
- 1979** Wrote FUTURES (How to Survive Life) with E. Sidney pub. Sidgwick and Jackson and Penguin (No. 5 bestseller hardback, No. 3 bestseller paperback).
- 1983** THE MAGIC GARDEN a beginner's guide to gardening, published by MacDonald (hardback publication only).
- 1984** THE MAGIC GARDEN on computer disc and tape (published by Acornsoft, for use with the BBC microcomputer).
- 1990** DOWN WITH SUPERWOMAN published in hardback by Sidgwick and Jackson. (No. 1 bestselling hardback in Ireland, No. 2 bestselling hardback in UK).

FICTION

- 1982** The Advance for LACE (first novel) Set a European record for a first novel published by Simon and Schuster (world rights) in Britain published by Sidgwick and Jackson and then Penguin. (An international bestseller, No 2 in USA. No. 1 fiction bestseller of the year in Britain in 1983. **5th bestselling paperback of the decade in UK 1980-90.** No. 1 in Canada, No. 1 in Australia, No. 1 in New Zealand and No. 1 in USA).
- 1984** LACE 2. No. 1 bestseller UK, No. 3 bestseller USA (NYT).
- 1987** SAVAGES (No. 1 bestseller UK, No. 1 bestseller Australia, No. 2 bestseller New Zealand, No. 5 bestseller Canada and Italy. No. 9 bestseller in USA – NYT).
- 1990** THE AMAZING UMBRELLA SHOP, a book for children, illustrated by Sebastian Conran with umbrellas designed by Jasper Conran, published by Sidgwick & Jackson. Proceeds of £50,000 gifted to "Birthright" (Research for healthy babies and mothers).
- 1992** CRIMSON (No. 4 bestseller UK, No. 9 USA (NYT). No. 1 Ireland, Australia, New Zealand. No. 1 bestseller, paperback UK).
- 1994** TIGER EYES, surprisingly, a best-seller in Russia and China.
- 1995** Paperback of TIGER EYES No. 23 in Top 25 Bestsellers of the Year 1995 List.
- 1998** THE REVENGE published by Macmillan, hardback and paperback.
- 1999** Paperback of THE REVENGE was a bestseller, reprinted on day of publication.

MOVIES

- 1984** 5-hour mini-series movie of LACE achieved 63% Neilson rating when transmitted in USA, and had the 6th biggest television audience in world history (**No. 1 mini-series of the year**). Producers: Preston Fisher and Gary Adelson for Lorimar, for ABC.
- 1985** Wrote treatment for LACE 2 filmed as a 6-hour mini-series. (Purchased by Lorimar).
- 1985** Wrote treatment of SAVAGES for 6-hour mini-series. (Purchased by Lorimar owned by Warner Brothers. This has never been filmed).

TELEVISION

- 1975** Trained as interviewer and commentator by Granada Television. Made sixty-minute autobiographical film, DANGER – WOMEN AT WORK; 16mm colour film (producer: Simon Campbell-Jones for BBC). In this film, British women discuss the difficulties of combining work with raising children.

Conran has appeared around the world on many design, discussion, critical and topical programmes as interviewee, interviewer or anchor person; she has also participated in many panel games and chat shows.

RADIO

Conran has appeared around the world in various programmes (including poetry readings) ranging from one-minute spots to two-hour phone-ins.

DESIGN

- 1956-62** Freelance furnishing textile designer (weaves and prints).
- 1956** Visualiser and Colour Consultant to Conran Design Group for exhibition, factory, transport and office projects plus domestic interiors.
- 1957-62** Design and Sales Director of Conran Fabric Ltd (manufacturers, wholesalers of furnishing fabrics). Specialised in contract work, working closely with architects to produce unique fabrics for ships, aircraft, hospitals, offices etc.
- 1958-62** Started Textile Design Studio, advised by and staffed from the Royal College of Art.
- 1961** Appointed judge on the Duke of Edinburgh's Design of the Year Award panel.
- 1961-69** Appointed to the Selection Committee of the Design Centre (eight years).
- 1962** Appointed to Advisory Board of the Goldsmith and Silversmith's Industry (seven years).
- 1962** Appointed Outside Examiner in Design to Bristol University (Dip AD).

EXHIBITIONS

- 1953** One-man exhibition of water colours and oil paintings at the Architectural Association, Bedford Square.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

- 1953-54** Press Officer to Asprey Suchy, jewellers.
- 1955-62** Publicity Advisor to Terence Conran and the Conran Group of Companies: (Conran Furniture, Conran Contracts and Conran Design Group).
Had organised and designed various exhibitions including:
- 1964** Daily Mail Show House: for IDEAL HOME EXHIBITION, London
- 1964** NEW DIMENSIONS IN LIVING exhibition: at Maples, London (with Lady Casson, Robert Heritage and Roger Warboys)
- 1965** HEALS/OBSERVER KITCHEN EXHIBITION, London (with architect John Prizeman, FRIBA) Broke record for number of visitors every day for entire six-week run.
- 1965** HEALS/OBSERVER LOOKING INTO LIVING EXHIBITION (with Pentagram).
- 1971** KITCHEN EXHIBITION for Westinghouse (with John Prizeman, FRIBA).
- 1975** SUPERWOMAN won 1st prize, Publishers Promotion Award for Sidgwick and Jackson (hardback).
- 1975-95** International book tours.

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