

Creative Business Mothers: Sophie Dahl

Description

You may remember our next inspirational mother from her â??Ë?controversialâ?? modeling days where she, Sophie Dahl, graced billboards and magazine covers with her size 14 figure. Granddaughter of the famous childrenâ??s author Roald Dahl, she flew the flag for curvy girls everywhere, celebrating her shape and changing the face of fashion. That was in 2000, but in 2007 she quit modeling and turned her talents to something a little less public-facing â?? food and writing. Fast-forward and she now has two bestselling novels, two cookbooks, a primetime TV cookery series, and a capsule fashion collection for British cashmere brand Brora. She also launched her own website last year â?? part blog, part online magazine â?? all while having two little girls along the way.

Sophie for Brora. Photo: Brora

Sophie describes her own childhood as â??Ë?less then perfectâ?? â?? her mother was an addict and she lived in 17 different homes, attending 10 different schools. Itâ??s not unusual then, that complete happiness these days to her is stability, and her new home life of consistency and domesticity is pure bliss. Itâ??s also no surprise that her post-modeling life saw her celebrating food. Her life was nomadic and to Sophie â??Ë?making supper felt like an announcement that I was home.â?? Her food and cookbooks draw heavily on her childhood, combining family anecdotes with comforting recipes from her own family as well as her husbandâ??s. Sophie wanted to shake being only known as a plus-sized model and found that part of the joy of writing her 2009 â??Ë?Voluptuous Delightsâ?? cookbook was saying to people that â??Ë?just because one has modeled doesnâ??t mean one doesnâ??t eat.â??



Sophie and one of her creations. Photo: BBC

It seems as though Sophie realized there was more to life than beauty and never looked back. She says that as she didnâ??t finish her A-levels there was always a part of her that wanted to be taken more seriously, but it was actually having children that liberated her as she started to care a lot less about those things. Her first daughter Lyla was born in 2011 and suddenly became the only reason to her life, so much more important than any â??Ë?petty, navel-gazing feelingsâ?? sheâ??d had before. Second daughter Margot followed in 2013 and solidified these feelings â?? Sophie takes issue with the fact that society is conditioned to tell little girls they look like princesses:

â??Ë?It should also be that sheâ??s incredibly clever, funny, kind and loyal and sheâ??s such a great friend. You have to continue to reinforce other attributes which are more important than beauty.â??

This sentiment has crossed over into her work and she now concentrates on celebrating a different kind of beauty: family, food, photography and art. Her latest venture is her own website, SophieDahl.com, a place full of her favourite things. Entitled At The Kitchen Table, the website is one of those websites you can lose yourself in â?? interviews with fashion designers, recipes, short stories and beautiful photography. Sophie says she just trusts her instinct when it comes to curating content and isnâ??t exclusive â?? itâ??s aimed at anyone who wanted to read it. She thought a website just about herself would be too â??Ë?drearilyâ?? self-centered and so asked people she admired to contribute, whether itâ??s her brother discussing anonymous photography or an interview with Camila Batmanghelidjh about her Kids Company.

Sophieâ??s Ricotta Cake. Photo: At the Kitchen Table

Her approach to the site is refreshing and rather than renewing it every day or every week she chooses to update it monthly. In an age of fast-moving information, Sophie recalls of her childhood days when she used to wait by the letterbox for the Bunty, finding pleasure â??Å?in knowing somethingâ??s coming and having to waitâ?•Â• â?? something which also may be linked back to her desire for stability.

The best thing about running her own website for Sophie, however, is being able to manage work and family life, working at night and working from home without having to leave her children. Sophie says that sheâ??s always found it hard to feel satisfied about work and describes herself as a â??Ë?horrible taskmasterâ??, but when it comes to her family life she is anything but unsatisfied:

â??Å?All my life I wanted to create my own happy family and I really, really think that my husband and I have done thatâ?¦ It keeps me feeling that Iâ??m still out in the world, my head above waterâ?¦ It makes me feel connected.â??

Sophie and husband Jamie. Photo: The Telegraph

She married musician Jamie Callum in 2010 and describes him as a totally brilliant, hands-on father, but of course as a musician heâ??s away quite a lot. Alongside him she credits her close friends who she can call up at any moment to â??Ë?commiserate about the teething and laugh about the tantrumsâ?? as theyâ??re all in it together: â??Å?Just when you think youâ??ve got one phase figured out with little kids, something else comes and bites you in the arse â?? People think itâ??s rose-tinted and they donâ??t tell the truth! Childbirth! So much of it! Itâ??s bloody tough.â?•Â• Sophie wouldnâ??t change it for anything however, saying that being in bed with her husband and children on a Saturday morning watching cartoons is her happiest place to be.

Despite seemingly always having a great body image, she seems totally happy in her own skin since becoming a mother. Sheâ??s started running since sheâ??s had children, becoming one of those â??Ë?annoying people who likes runningâ?? and finding the balance between being a freelancer writer at home in her pyjamas and maintaining some element of her former fashion glamour â?? â??you have to put lipstick on eventually, even when

itâ??s just you and the computer. Otherwise itâ??s not writing, itâ??s depression.â?•



Miss Dahlâ??s Voluptuous Delights. Photo: Amazon

Sophieâ??s children are now what drives her primarily now, but she also has a desire to try her best and learn as much as she can along the way. She has ambitions to master another language properly, make a really good patisserie and is already working on more novels and television shows. And then, possibly, more children â?? once sheâ??s emerged from â??Ë?the fug of early motherhoodâ??.

Sophie is just like the rest of us, endlessly searching for the best way to hold down a loving relationship while also raising happy children and succeeding professionally, and is no way under the illusion that thereâ??s a secret to doing it all effortlessly; â??Youâ??ve just got to get on with itâ?? she says. Sheâ??s found where real happiness lies: in friends, family, love and collaboration.

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julia-good