

## **Smythson of Bond Street: Classic, Stylish Organization**

I've always loved delicate, precise things. According to my mother, my favorite childhood toys--if you can call them that--were little boxes and knickknacks, including rubber bands and paper wrappers, that I carried around in my pockets.

For Christmas, I begged my parents for office supplies from the Container Store, and my monthly allowance was invariably spent at Sanrio, the home of *Hello Kitty*. Their trinkets lined my desk and rattled around in brightly colored pencil boxes. To this day, my dresser proudly displays porcelain Limoges boxes gifted to me by parents and grandparents.

Ironically, my passion for organization never externally manifested itself. My tidy intentions must have leapt into the mind of some other child, some type-A, spelling-bee champion who garnered an academic scholarship to Harvard.

I was just a closet slob. While running my University's Student Union, my advisor continuously praised my level of detail and organization. "How do you do it?" she'd ask. Too embarrassed to admit that all appointments and to-do lists were kept solely in my head, I pointed to an empty folder on my desk and awkwardly mumbled something about an organizer my Mom had given me for Christmas.

Living abroad, going to law school, and growing up generally did a number on my improvised process. I refused to relinquish multiple responsibilities--perpetual planning had become my force of stability--but began to suffer missed deadlines and appointments. Had I been struck with early onset Alzheimer's? Or was it simply time to accept that I needed a method for my madness?

I tried using my Outlook calendar and put appointments in my Blackberry. I toted around a to-do list and fantasized about hiring a personal assistant. And yet, despite all my good intentions, I simply accumulated more devices and lists than I could personally manage. Going back to the everything-less process started to seem pretty appealing, albeit flawed.

Several years ago, I had the pleasure of hosting a fellow Texan for a long London weekend. Caroline was studying art history in Paris and decided to take the Eurostar over for a quick visit. Like a true jet setter, she arrived with nothing more than an Herve Chapelier bag, filled to the brim with a laptop, classic accessories and attire sufficiently varied for a few spontaneous days.

Caroline was clearly an InStyle devotee; she had mastered the art of packing light, something I long aspired to do and have since accomplished. After catching up at my flat, we decided to do some shopping, and Caroline insisted on taking me to a store called Smythson of Bond Street. For all of my alleged London know-how, I'd never heard of the place, and grudgingly accompanied her to Mayfair when I really wanted to end the afternoon at the South Kensington Creperie.

Astonishingly, Nutella-filled dreams evaporated upon entering Smythson. White walls and well-lit shelves showcased the most immaculate colorful offerings: small diaries, purses, wallets and more.

Not since my trips to Sanrio had I felt such an intense need to purchase everything in the store. Unfortunately, leather products are significantly more expensive than colored pencils, so I had to tailor my urge to splurge. Caroline meanwhile pranced around the store like a kid in a candy store. After collecting a handful of passport cases, several wallets, and a few diaries, she made her way to the cashier. Too envious to witness the damage, I loitered near the back where I stumbled upon my new favorite thing: the Smythson Panama Diary.

You can picture your grandfather (and his) pulling the compact, well-made Panama Diary from his pocket to jot down a beautiful woman's telephone number. Princes Harry and William probably have their own monogrammed editions, or perhaps Smythson's cheeky "Snogs" diary cataloging years of success with international admirers.

Smythson was launched in 1887 on New Bond Street, promising "First class stationery, leather goods and cabinet work." About ten years later, Frank Smythson devised the original "Featherweight Diary"--the antecedent to today's Panama Diary--revolutionizing the way that we organize our lives with his lightweight, portable creation.

Although those aspects of the product are no longer unique, Smythson has maintained its special place in the industry with well-made products and special branding. Never before had I encountered a diary that includes information regarding, among others: cultural/sporting events, theaters and concert halls and vintage wine charts along with calendars, holidays and time zones. The result is near-perfection, particularly for someone as concerned with aesthetics as myself.

The rest of the world can rely, glossy-eyed, on kindles and blackberries. I'm content with my little bit of light blue paper.

\*Although many of Smythson's products are exorbitantly priced, the Panama Diary is remarkably reasonable. They start at 50 GBP.

\*For more information, visit:

<http://www.smythson.com/SmythsonSite/pages/home/default.asp>