

City in Numbers

52

The number of political prisoners currently being freed by the Cuban Government after increased international pressure

52,000

The number of Roman coins found by a Somerset farmer buried in a field – worth an estimated £250,000 in total

\$52m

The amount Picasso's portrait of Angel Fernandez de Soto painting sold for at Sotheby's

5,200

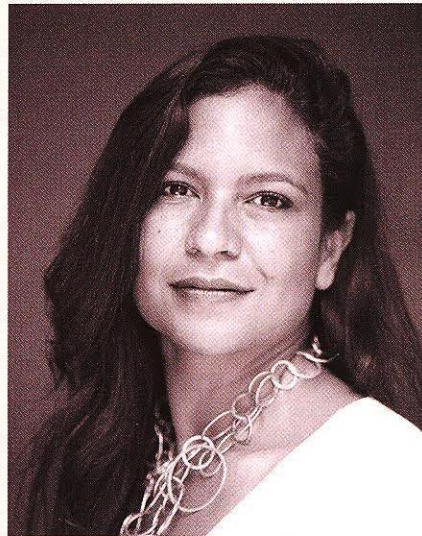
The number of burglaries that occurred last year in London through unlocked front doors across the capital

52

The number of days it took comedian Eddie Izzard to run 43 marathons, covering 1,100 miles across the UK



ESCAPE ARTIST



Gwendolyn Carrié was a VP and a director at Merrill Lynch. She is now a luxury shoe designer whose signature range is made with fish-skin leather.

BY THE TIME I left the Square Mile, I was in charge of retail and luxury goods at Merrill Lynch. It was very exciting – a time of tremendous growth with my team of six bringing in £40m of revenue.

My decision to go into banking was hugely influenced by my dad who was determined that I wasn't going to become a starving artist. So rather than going to design school, I ended up at Princeton and then the City. But it was 13 years of doing different shades of the same job and unless you're very driven by money it's hard to keep going when you're no longer growing as a person.

So when the chance came to become CEO of dresssmart.com I took it. The dotcom bubble burst nine months later; we sold the company and I bowed out.

Around this time I found out that I was pregnant with twins. I was on bed rest for nine weeks, during which time I decided that there was another side to life. I've always had a passion for shoes, and it needs a lot of management and know-how, which intrigued me.

I started taking night classes to learn about pattern-making and shoe-making. I got in touch with contacts and interned for a top Turkish brand, designing for

free and having my samples produced in return. I became a factory worker – I cut, stitched, montaged and spent time with each of the sub-compartment suppliers.

Now all of my shoes are made in Turkey; it's very hard to get the same quality elsewhere. They are used to making mass-market shoes there so as a luxury shoe designer, I'm a bit of a pioneer. I work with the best suppliers; the brand is very proud of what we achieve, which is really rewarding.

I also find it much more real than the Square Mile. The Mile is a very special place, but we tend to breathe rarefied air. I now go from dealing with fish factories for my signature leather to attending fashion week, so it's a much more varied existence. But it's also difficult. There are no more all-nighters, but compared with my old job the hours and salary are awful; I cannot lie! The best thing is that it's under my control though.

We decided to grow in a controlled manner: it was important for us to know that this could work. Now that we've done our pilot it's time to spread over a wider scale. We are looking into our first US store in Florida, but if the oil spill affects tourism we may not go forward with it. If I looked out a few years from now, I'd love to be part of a bigger group, helping to put young British designers on the map. ■ –Lizzie Rivera gwendolyncarrie.com

City in Words

CFDs (abbrev.): No one actually knows what CFDs are or what they do. Some speculators have suggested that the acronym could stand for 'Cash For Documents'. Basically, what happens is, the bank issues a document – usually in Excel; it says something about mortgages for poor people; and the bank exchanges it for cash. Easy money. What could possibly go wrong?