ARLINGTON

THE JOURNAL

LATE NIGHT WITH PILAR ORDOVAS

The gallerist and artist Sophie de Stempel joined us for Champagne, Lemon Sole, and an update on the art world

Pilar Ordovas, the mastermind of Ordovas, is one of London's most renowned experts in 20th-century and contemporary art. Ordovas founded her gallery after 13 years at Christie's and two years as the director of Gagosian Gallery in London. Each year, she stages three exhibitions in her gallery at 25 Savile Row. (She also has outpost locations around the world.) An Arlington regular, she joined us for a Late Night dinner with her friend Sophie de Stempel, a painter and longtime collaborator with Lucian Freud.

Pilar, is the Late Night dinner a habit or aberration for you?
I am Spanish, so I would say that back home, we consider your late night sort of earlyish!

What did your evening entail before you joined us for dinner?
I had a teacher meeting at my daughter's school and gave a private tour of our current exhibition, *Red,* to a lovely group at my gallery.

What makes a Late Night enjoyable, versus a chore?
The perfect end to a hectic day — sitting with a good friend, great food, and a lovely atmosphere. That's the thing about a real treat: it only counts when you choose it. We had such a good time the night ran well past midnight.

What are the qualities endemic to a Late Night companion?
To me being with someone you are very comfortable with and with whom you have much to talk about. For me, late nights are for good friends and/or lovers.

What inspired you to invite Sophie?
Sophie is a dear friend — one of those people with whom there is always so much to talk about and share. Over the years we have enjoyed many wonderful evenings together, centred around food and art, and often with our husbands too. We treasure every chance to catch up. She has Spanish blood on her mother's side, which perhaps explains why, like me, she has no objection whatsoever to a late dinner.

What did you eat and drink, and why?
We started with dressed crab and then I had the lemon sole — fish dishes I adore but rarely make at home, which made them all the more special. We both had champagne, naturally. I am not much of a dessert person, so I finished with an espresso macchiato — and there it was, that familiar feeling of being transported back to Spain. For me, coffee — even a late one after dinner — is the ultimate end to an evening out.

If you could Late-Night with absolutely anyone on the planet—no offense to your companion—who would it be?
My husband, Simon Astaire. I never tire of his stories (does he have some!) and he makes me laugh like no one else. Now that we have a five-year-old, dinners for two happen a little less often, which makes them all the more precious. He is, above all, my greatest friend and the love of my life.

What is your favourite time of year for Late Nights?
Summer is when dinner shifts outside, and for me, that changes everything. Having grown up in Spain, it is perhaps what I miss most: the heat, the long evenings, and the particular ease of eating outdoors for much of the year. We are lucky to find echoes of that in California in the summer, and even at our home near Oxford, when the season is kind, a table outside feels like our only choice.

The best day of the week for a late night is....?
Thursdays.

Will you share your favourite memory of Arlington or Le Caprice (in the Jeremy King era)?
Over the years there have been so many; perhaps the most memorable being those one cannot speak of. But equally precious are the family memories: Le Caprice was a great favourite of my stepfather, and whenever he came to London with my mother to visit me, dinner there was almost a ritual.

What are Late-Nights like in Madrid?
Like no others! I particularly remember some memorable evenings in which flamenco was played, and we danced. Dinners would go on until the following day…

PILAR'S DOSSIER
Birthplace: Madrid.
Neighbourhoods: Mayfair and Chelsea.
Cocktail: Mojito.
Workout: I am currently running marathons in aid of the Royal Marsden in my father's memory, so strength, yoga and lots of running!
Bookshop: Hatchards and Daunt Books.
Current projects: My exhibition *Red*, which goes on until 24th April at Ordovas, and the Berlin Marathon.
Any recommendations for us? Besides visiting me at Ordovas there are must-see exhibitions in London at the moment: *Lucian Freud, Drawing into Painting* at the National Portrait Gallery, *Tracey Emin: A Second Life*, at Tate Modern, *Rose Wylie* at the Royal Academy, and I am very much looking forward to *Cecily Brown* at the Serpentine later this month and *Zurbaran* in May at the National Gallery. Film-wise, I loved *Hamnet* and *One Battle After Another*. As for television, I am really enjoying *Love Story,* but don't tell anyone!