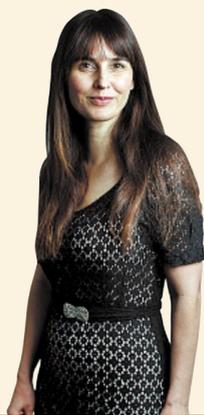


Does your smile win any votes?



Kathleen Baird-Murray

Beauty

What's wrong with everyone's teeth?" whispers my friend, somewhere between "Jerusalem" and St Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (we're in a *Midsomer Murders*-style church, at a quintessentially English wedding). "Some of these people have big black vertical lines between each tooth!"

The friend has flown in from New York and, let's face it, there's nothing quite like a long stint in America to give one a little dental perspective. In Britain, we have grown accustomed to, some might say proud of, the criss-crossing, the red-wine stains, the gaps and overlapping of our teeth — they're almost a symbol of national pride. Many of our neighbours feel similarly about theirs.

But as elections loom across Europe, and politicians gurn and grin for our attention, a pristine set of gnashers is giving candidates the edge. It can't be a coincidence that the key contenders for the French presidency, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen both boast enviably straight pearly-whites (Macron even has a rather sexy gap between his two front teeth). Perhaps now is the time to adopt a slightly more American approach to dental hygiene, and a smile that smacks of credibility and statesmanship.

No US politician would consider campaigning without a dazzling smile to match. "Highly educated and successful people in the public eye in

the US are almost always required to have a good smile," says cosmetic dentist Marc Lowenberg, of Lowenberg, Lituchy and Kantor in New York. "I can't think of a single American politician that has an off-putting smile."

In the UK, it's hard to think of a politician's smile that isn't off-putting. "Both Jeremy Corbyn's and Theresa May's teeth have darkened with age and become more crooked, two characteristics that are not appealing," offers Lowenberg. Corbyn, in his opinion, could do with a little teeth-whitening. As for May, "She is well-groomed and well-dressed, but her smile would benefit from being made broader to camouflage its dark, hollow sides. I'd recommend age-appropriate veneers on her teeth; not necessarily Americanising her, but making her smile more commensurate with the rest of her appearance. A woman of her stature should have a disarming smile."

But British dentists wouldn't rush to do a total remodel. Nozha Khader, a specialist orthodontist who has several leading UK politicians as patients, says: "Theresa May's teeth do overlap a little, but they give her a little charm, just like Kate Moss — it suits her personality." Khader sees a lot of old English families at her practice, Bryer Wallace, in Sloane Street, and until very recently, most were resistant to cosmetic dental work. "Money may be no object, but sending their children to an orthodontist just wasn't a concern

unless they had an international background. Even now, a lot of my patients won't think about having their teeth realigned unless they're moving to the US to work for an American firm and suddenly see the need to have a neat smile — it demonstrates that they are looking after themselves."

Lately, however, new technologies have seen a far greater uptake among older clients looking to fix their grin. "I find I'm treating a lot of patients who are in their sixties," says Khader. And it's not just for vanity's sake that a brace is sometimes needed. "When your teeth are crooked you can develop dental issues. It's harder to keep them clean if they overlap, and you can get gum disease."

Both Khader and cosmetic dentist Rhona Eskander are currently treating several politicians with Invisalign braces, a popular brand of transparent orthodontics that sit over the teeth, cost from £3,000, and need to be worn for between six and 18 months. "They're very discreet, you're not walking around with train tracks, and you can take off the braces when you're talking to people," says Khader.

Even those who find a trip to the hygienist too great a show of vanity can do much at home. Eskander recommends brushing your teeth before breakfast rather than after it — "People don't realise that if you have orange juice or other acidic food at breakfast, and then brush afterwards, you're just pushing the acidity further



Emmanuel Macron boasts enviably straight pearly-whites (he even has a rather sexy gap between his two front teeth)

into your teeth and removing the enamel, whereas if you brush before breakfast, you're giving your teeth the boost of the fluoride, which protects them." She also recommends Regenerate Enamel Science Advanced Toothpaste (£10), which claims to be able to reverse the early erosion process and restore tooth enamel.

"The first step is to have good oral hygiene," agrees Lowenberg. "A simple way to improve and whiten your smile is by brushing with a homemade paste of hydrogen peroxide liquid and baking soda, mixed until the liquid and powder have the same consistency as toothpaste. It's more effective at killing bacteria and cleaning stains than store-bought toothpaste that contains hydrogen peroxide because the oxygen molecules are more fresh and effective when the peroxide comes right out of the bottle."

If you do opt for professional whitening, "the rule of thumb is to go for one to four shades lighter, and expect results to last for up to six months". For a more permanent solution, Lowenberg recommends porcelain veneers as the "Rolls-Royce" of cosmetic dentistry, which can change the colour, shape and crookedness and last for up to 20 years. They come at a price — from \$2,000 per tooth — but when it comes to dazzling the electorate, they should secure a few votes.

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The Made in USA movement is alive and well in Richmond, Virginia, where Anthony Lupesco and his team of 10 are busy cutting denim at their workshop. Paper patterns are laid over rolls of freshly dyed indigo; each pair of jeans is sewn by hand from start to finish.

Shockoe Atelier, which was established by Lupesco and his father Pierre in 2012, is one of numerous brands — often menswear labels with a focus on rugged utilitarian workwear — now proudly manufacturing in the US. It is part of a movement to buck the trend in recent years that has seen a 90 per cent decline in apparel manufacturing in the US — and a fall in jobs from 940,000 in 1990 to 136,000 in 2015.

Today, the US imports far more apparel than it exports (\$117bn against \$22bn in 2016), and Donald Trump's campaign slogan to "hire American, buy American" has politicised US manufacturing. But many of these labels have been on the Made in USA bandwagon for years. Traditional labels such as Schott, Filson and Danner have long owned US-based facilities, while younger labels such as American Trench are using the expertise of existing factories to create new lines.

Trump's politicisation of the Made in USA movement should have been beneficial for these brands. But many are wary of associating with his nativist agenda. New Balance, the trainer company founded in Boston in 1906 by a British man, William J Riley, suffered a publicity backlash in November when an executive suggested that were Trump to redress the Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, it might move things "in the right direction". The brand was swiftly boycotted by outraged Democrats, and has had to contend with a stream of negative press ever since.

"What's the perception of American-made under a Trump administration?" asks Sasha Koehn, co-founder of Buck Mason, a new brand making simple, utilitarian garments in downtown LA, when asked whether Trump has damaged the Made in USA brand. "Is it diluted? Does it feel different?" He doesn't really know. "There's just so much to consider here. We don't feel bullish, we feel as vulnerable as anyone out there right now."

For Koehn, as for many other brands, Made in USA represents quality. And while he insists that job creation is "imperative", for them, it's more about convenience than a political statement. "We make here as this is where we live," he says. Co-founder Erik Allen Schnakenberg agrees: "Our customers come to us for modern classics



Above: Buck Mason's "The Open Road" mobile shop. Below: Pierre and Anthony Lupesco of Shockoe Atelier — Joe Jarvis

that stand the test of time. Where it's made is the cherry on top."

Schnakenberg and Koehn started Buck Mason in 2013, after investing \$5,000 of their own money, which, they point out, would have covered only the cost of a trip to China had they decided to manufacture there. Today, they work with 12 factories in the local area.

There are significant benefits to being close to your supplier: when the Wall Street Journal named Buck Mason's \$28 T-shirt the best in America soon after the brand's launch, \$100,000 of the T-shirts sold in 24 hours and the label promptly ran out of inventory. "So we went to the guy making them and said, 'What do we do?' Within two weeks we had 5,000 units and fulfilled those orders," says Koehn. They now turn over tens of thousands of dollars every week. The brand does much of its business



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online, but it has two retail stores in Los Angeles, and a touring shop-bus. "The Open Road", a converted 1997 GMC white school bus painted with slogans such as "Made in America" and "Born in the USA". It offers them 120 sq ft of mobile shop space and inside, old Willie Nelson records play on a turntable. "It's unpretentious and casual," says Schnakenberg of Buck Mason's brand of folksy, on-the-road Americana. "It feels like California — but elevated. We wanted to take the brand sensibility to the consumer."

For Jacob Hurwitz, Made in USA is about job creation. "If we can't make it in America, we're not going to make it," he says. Hurwitz co-founded American Trench in 2009 after buying an Aquascutum raincoat in London's Burlington Arcade. "We were talking about manufacturing and the loss of jobs and oppor-

tunity, and it came up — who makes raincoats like this in the US?" The answer? No one. "So, my business partner David and I said, 'Damn it, we're going to make a raincoat.'"

After finding a factory in New Jersey willing to make the coats (which retail for \$835), the label launched on Kickstarter in 2013 and has since branched out into other categories: socks (\$11.50) come from North Carolina, hats (\$29.50) are woven in Texas, and sweaters (\$185) are spun in Massachusetts. "It's about doing the best for the people around us," says Hurwitz.

Shinola was founded upon similar principles. "The first thing we created was a job," says Jacques Panis, president of the Detroit-based watch and leather goods company, launched in 2013. "After four years, it's still the thing we're most proud of." The company, which

has three workshops in the city, makes all its products on site and has invested heavily in its US manufacturing base: its factory is a vast, bright space, where every technician is given a window seat, and a playlist that includes everything from 1960s beats to Beyoncé echoes throughout. Shinola currently employs 600 people and turned over \$60m in revenue in 2014.

The factory hosts tours to showcase its ethos. "When customers see the product being made, they are much more connected to it," says Jen Guarino, vice-president of manufacturing. Shinola is also in partnership with leather tanneries throughout the US, including Roma Industries in Florida, to provide a stream of work that enables the tanneries to invest in machinery and staff.

"Without a doubt, the Shinola partnership has saved our business," says Roma's president Paul Horowitz. "Before Shinola make any technical refinements, they call me up to make sure it won't affect how many people I need to produce it."

Brand collaborations are mutually beneficial. Heritage houses can take advantage of the street cred of teaming up with younger brands, while newer designers can borrow the prestige — and expertise — of working with an established label. American Trench has already partnered with Shockoe and the streetwear brand Corridor; Buck Mason released a series of hats with Stetson; and the motorcycle brand Schott has collaborated with skate label Supreme.

The brands, which all manufacture in the US, share similar sensibilities: all are focused on functionality. "It's our responsibility to ensure the Made in USA label stands for quality," Jason Schott, the company's chief operating officer, says of the brand philosophy established by his great-grandfather, a second-generation immigrant from Russia who founded Schott in 1913. They make 50,000 jackets annually from a base in New Jersey.

Made in USA has now become so prestigious that international retailers such as Mr Porter and Asos have collaborated with LA brands for exclusive collections, bringing American-made items to their global consumers. "But it has to be more than a slogan or a marketing tactic," says Shockoe's Lupesco, whose Italian parents moved to the US in the 1970s. "Otherwise, we will never invest in the infrastructure to make it last."

The commitment of these American brands has given Made in USA a bright future, regardless of political affiliation. More importantly, the labels have a commercial viability that reaches well beyond a four-year term.

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