

“Everyone works very hard to create a magazine that will make readers laugh” Tatler comes to the LSE

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Polis intern and LSE MSc Cristina Abellan-Matamoros reports on the final Polis Media Agenda Talk for 2014 with Sophia Money-Coutts, Features Editor, Tatler

“Everyone works very hard to create a magazine that will make readers laugh”

No, not the editor of Private Eye or The Onion, this is the mission statement for the ‘trade magazine for the British aristocracy’ Tatler, according to its features editor Sophia Money-Coutts (‘Yes, that IS my real name’).

Since graduating from LSE, Sophia has had a fruitful career in British newspapers and now magazines.

Her first job was at the Evening Standard, where she worked “for very, very cheap” but she quit to go work for The National in Abu Dhabi as a columnist. Upon her return to the UK, the Daily Mail hired Money-Coutts as a features writer, where she wrote stories about whether shampoo makes you fat and the downsides of beating cancer. In 2012, she switched over to Tatler with a position as the magazine’s features editor.

For anyone who has never picked up a Tatler, it’s Britain’s oldest British magazine and it focuses on the rich and famous. Its readership is the wealthiest of all Condé Nast publications. However Money-Coutts disagrees with the magazine’s main characterisation as being snotty.

“Everybody thinks it’s out-dated but our editor Kate works hard to make it accessible to everyone and not only to the wealthy,”

And Money-Coutts does have fun with the pieces she writes for Tatler like “Who’s Your Daddy” a piece about people who think they are the illegitimate sons and daughters of European royalty or The Etiquette of the Threesome – a piece about the fun and not so fun aspects of group sex:

“What people often say Kate has done is that she has injected humour and made the magazine less snotty.”

Money-Coutts made some interesting remarks about the level of humour accepted in other publications she had worked for in the past.

“The Mail for example is not known for its sense of humour, it tends to be quite angry.”

She says it actually took her quite some time to get out of that mind-set, and accept that she could incorporate jokes and sarcasm into her pieces at Tatler.

But Money-Coutts also writes serious pieces for the magazine. In fact, one of her favourite articles was an exposé on how the ‘party drug’ ketamine (a horse- tranquilizer) is taking over the social scene of rich kids. In the article, Money-Coutts reports that teenagers using ketamine in England’s most expensive high schools are rushed to hospitals needing to have their bladder removed.

When asked which boundaries she’s had to push in her career at Tatler, Money-Coutts says she cited that piece.

“The topic related to people who read Tatler and had an impact on them”

The BBC has recently concluded a three-part series of the glossy magazine. The project entitled *Posh People: Inside Tatler* looks at the work of Money-Coutts and her colleagues.

At first Money-Coutts was strongly against the project and was especially concerned that the series would overshadow the fun side of working at Tatler.

“Everyone works very hard to create a magazine that will make readers laugh,” she wrote. However, the series ended up increasing publicity for the magazine in social networks, culminating in a proposal on Twitter for Money-Coutts. She didn’t mention if she had accepted...

This article is by Polis intern, Cristina Abellan-Matamoros

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