

q books:

Stella-Prize long-listed author Sonya Voumard's *Skin in the Game* is original, incisive and hugely entertaining. The daughter of a European refugee mother and a journalist father, Voumard recounts with aplomb her passionate but questioning relationship with journalism and the nature of the interview. There's a disastrous 1980 university encounter with Helen Garner which forms the seed for her fascination with the dynamics of the interview and culminates in her connecting again with Garner more than three decades later to work out what went so wrong. There are the insights of a career played out against the changing nature of journalism including the author's time as a Canberra correspondent. And there are revealing and tender portraits of Kings Cross, of growing up in suburban Melbourne, her father's love of journalism, and a family journey to the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre where her mother's Australian life began.

Throughout it all Voumard is a sharpshooter, never afraid to hold a mirror up to her own life and practices as a journalist, to dig deep into the ethics of journalism and the use of power, and to sensitively explore the intertwined nature of life and work and personal relationships. The writing is at turns sharp, funny, direct, strong and affectionate.

'I've immense admiration for how Sonya Voumard so deftly wields a writer's scalpel, both on her subjects and herself. Together, these dispatches provide a fascinating insider's account of Australian journalism and a forensic look into the myriad pitfalls involved in telling people's stories.' Benjamin Law, author of *The Family Law and Gaysia*

Sonya Voumard is a Sydney-based journalist and author whose work has been widely published in major Australian newspapers, magazines and literary journals. She has lectured part-time in creative non-fiction and journalism at UTS. Her first novel, *Political Animals* (2008) was inspired by her time as a political correspondent for the *Age* in Canberra. Her critically acclaimed book *The Media and the Massacre: Port Arthur 1996-2016* (2016) was longlisted for the prestigious Stella Prize in 2017.

SKIN IN THE GAME

THE PLEASURE AND
PAIN OF TELLING
TRUE STORIES
SONYA VOUMARD

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**'DEFTLY WIELDS A WRITER'S SCALPEL.
BOTH ON HER SUBJECTS AND HERSELF ...
FASCINATING' BENJAMIN LAW**

Why Social Media is keeping you broke.

It seems we are surrounded by visions of success and lifestyle in our modern world. With Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Snapchat taking the world by storm we have seen the rise of twenty somethings sprawled out on a yacht on Sydney Harbour, get into huge debt to head over to Circuit in Barcelona, and let's not forget the never-ending discussions about smashed avocado! With the filtered and edited pictures of course come the seemingly endless hash tags that go with it that are designed to show off the amazing lifestyle they are apparently living. #wishyouwerehere #noworktoday #sorrynotsorry

We all know someone who likes to flaunt their incredible "insta-lifestyle" for a bunch of likes a bit too much. It's human nature for people to want their friends and family to be involved in the fun things they do. Not all this showing off is designed to stroke their ego, or to make you feel bad about your life. However, it seems to have become part of modern society that people will post only the good stuff online these days. All too often, these people are working a job they are not passionate about, and are using their hard earned after tax dollars to flaunt a lifestyle that isn't a true representation of their actual lifestyle. In fact, what they show us is often far from it. What is more worrying than this is that it's not sustainable.

I grew up in suburban Perth, and most of my mates were straight. I also didn't have any mentors in my life to help me build wealth. I left school when I was 16 – because I hated it. Back in 1996, being gay in high school not only wasn't very cool, it was downright dangerous. My sexuality was a huge secret, and I spent much of that time with the underlying fear, every day, of being beaten up. I hated the fact that I couldn't be myself and that others were able to dictate how I felt simply because of who I was attracted to. So, I left school as soon as I could to get a job and make some money, because what I learnt from observing successful people is that they took control of their financial life and didn't answer to anyone. In my case, I couldn't wait to get away from feeling like shit at school and taking on the world on my own. I wanted a lifestyle where I could do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted and with whomever I wanted.

I was fortunate to experience the joys of dial up internet, ICQ and Nokia brick phones that would survive a 10 storey fall. I grew up playing on the road and I knew every kid in my street. I am so happy to have grown up when I did, and before we entered the digital world we live in now where there is both an online life and a 'real' life. Long before people became "Insta-famous", before 14 year olds could ever be labeled as "influencers", before 6 year olds had iPads and certainly long before you could video chat with that cute 32yo guy in Brazil from your apartment at 3:40am on a Tuesday morning.

So, what does this have to do with building wealth? Well apart from the fact that flights to Brazil are not cheap, to state the obvious; your online life is not real and will rarely help you financially. What really matters, is what your actual life looks like when you switch off all your devices. I've spoken to thousands of people over the years about investing and I've found the vast majority of people are drifting through life without a clear focus on their financial situation or with very little, if any, planning for the future. Building long term, sustainable wealth takes time, commitment and an understanding of the underlying principal of delayed gratification.

"I start early, and I stay late, day after day, year after year, and it took me 17 years and 114 days to become an overnight success"
– Lionel Messi

I love this quote, not because I have any real interest in soccer (apart from some of the players of course) but because the same principal applies to anything you want to become good at. Real success takes time.

With most things in life, finding the right balance is the key to success. It's okay to go on a cool holiday, or buy that new car, or eat out at that fancy restaurant (and it's okay to post pics to prove it) but unfortunately some people are not looking beyond the next bunch of likes, or feel good comments, and fail to plan for the rest of their lives.

Where do you want to be in 10, 20, or 30 years from now? What sort of lifestyle do you want to be living? The scary reality for a lot of people is that they are drifting down a river not realizing there is a steep waterfall coming up just around the bend. Regardless of where you are at in life right now, you have the choice to bury your head in the sand and hope for the best, or start paying attention to your financial life and take control of your financial future. After all, nobody is going to do it for you!

In the future, what will matter are the results you have been able to achieve through the plans you make today and the investments you make tomorrow. Ask yourself, is what I am doing in my life right now getting me closer to, or further away from what I want to achieve? #letsgetreal

