

Staying inside the lines to help keep our stress at bay

Adult colouring books have become a global phenomenon in a very short time, but **DICK LUMSDEN** isn't a fan

Welcome to a land of purple elephants, green tigers and blue dogs. A land where trees are red, leaves are orange and fruit can be any colour in your imagination – or at least any colour in your pencil case.

This is the world of adult colouring in, a craze which, far from showing signs of slowing down or disappearing, is taking the world by storm – including here at Lumsden Towers, where Mrs L has been spending hours in an armchair, tongue poking out slightly as she concentrates on staying within the lines.

Even my old Dad, at 82, has just helped Millie Marotta's Animal Kingdom knock Jamie Oliver off top spot in the Amazon best-selling book list as he too was gripped by the fever.

If you don't know who Millie Marotta or Johanna Basford are, which planet have you been on this year?

They are the new global superstars who, between them, are responsible for the Champagne corks popping in the beleaguered world of publishing and bookselling. Globally, we are now talking about millions of adult colouring books being bought.

Basford, from her home in Scotland, is widely credited with starting the craze three years ago, with her first book, but others including Marotta from Wales, have not been slow to get on board.

But why? What is so great about sitting down with a colouring book and a set of crayons? And why has it only become popular because they are called "adult colouring books"?

Surely colouring books have been around for generations and any deprived adult who felt the need to create a blue lion could easily have popped into WH Smith.

The clue, of course, is in the way they are being marketed as the latest anti-stress product.

A few years ago, crosswords were the way to relax, keep your brain active and stay sharper for longer. Then we had the Nintendo brain training games and the

■ Stacy Mead is one of a growing number of adults who are picking up their colouring pencils.
Photo: CONTRIBUTED



I don't know about anti-stress, but it certainly keeps Mrs L quiet of an evening.

Perhaps the level of concentration required to crayon an elephant's eyelashes precludes the human brain from worrying about work, money or the rising threat of global Armageddon?

I have to say though, that if adult colouring is the latest pandemic, I must be immune. I just don't get it.

Maybe I am tainted by memories of when I was young, trying to paint by numbers and always producing rubbish efforts where the colours ran into each other and no matter how much paint I applied you could always see the number underneath.

Or maybe it is that I worry that if I shut my brain down too much I might never get it back up to speed again. Adult colouring could become a prescribed NHS sedative, calming down anxious patients.

Police forces up and down the

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cool their heels before going in and taking a full and frank confession written on the other side of a lovely bunch of carnations.

What next? News at Ten in join the dots? Here's a picture of David Cameron in a hard hat, talking to construction workers in Leeds... we'll just give you five minutes to go over your touch-screen TV with your finger while you join the dots to complete the picture...

Don't get me wrong. I'm not actually against adult colouring

success these publishers have had and the way they have used social media to create a viral phenomenon of sharing coloured-in pictures (good and bad) to drive the craze.

In fact, they may just have hit on a great new way to re-present the same old staples.

I foresee a whole new set of advertising next year for things like adult fish fingers, adult lemonade and adult chocolate with the ads being shown after the watershed with promises of what they can do for your virility or helping the anti-aging process.

Meanwhile, I'm already getting in on the ground floor of the next big thing – Plasticine models of household pets. I'm going to be getting in touch with Plasticine about upping their production levels as I drive demand for blue Labradors and green cats.

You heard it here first.

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