

All that glisters

Two cheers for a 'slow-dating' app

- 1 In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia's suitors may win her hand only by working out which of three metal caskets conceals her image. The golden box, inscribed with a promise to deliver "what many men desire", turns out to contain only death. It is the leaden casket, with its sullen legend – "Who chooses me must give and hazard all he hath" – that holds true happiness (or, at least, marriage to a fabulously rich and beautiful woman).
- 2 There is a useful lesson here for those with ears to hear it in the frenetic and often shallow world of online dating: the first glance is overrated. Tinder, an app that is particularly popular among the young for arranging hook-ups with strangers, is a grand bazaar of golden caskets. Users start by sizing up one another's pictures and only then get around to talking. It is by all accounts a highly efficient tool for procuring casual encounters; but not, perhaps, so very conducive to forming the bonds of mutual curiosity and affection that hold durable relationships together.
- 3 Appetence, a new rival to Tinder, turns this etiquette on its head. The app matches its customers according to their interests. You begin with your photograph hidden beneath a panel of 50 coloured shards. Each time you 'like' something your match has said, one of these shards is dispelled, so that your face is slowly revealed.
- 4 As an attempt to revive the arts of patience and conversation, it is welcome but not quite satisfactory. Likes are a pretty poor measure for the earliest glimmers of intimacy. As a universal medium of exchange, they risk undervaluing flashes of wit or kindness and overvaluing a shared taste for craft lager or Richard Curtis films.
- 5 Appetence is a start. But it seems that there is still room in the market for a truly disruptive dating concept: why not try turning off your smartphone, going outside and meeting people?

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