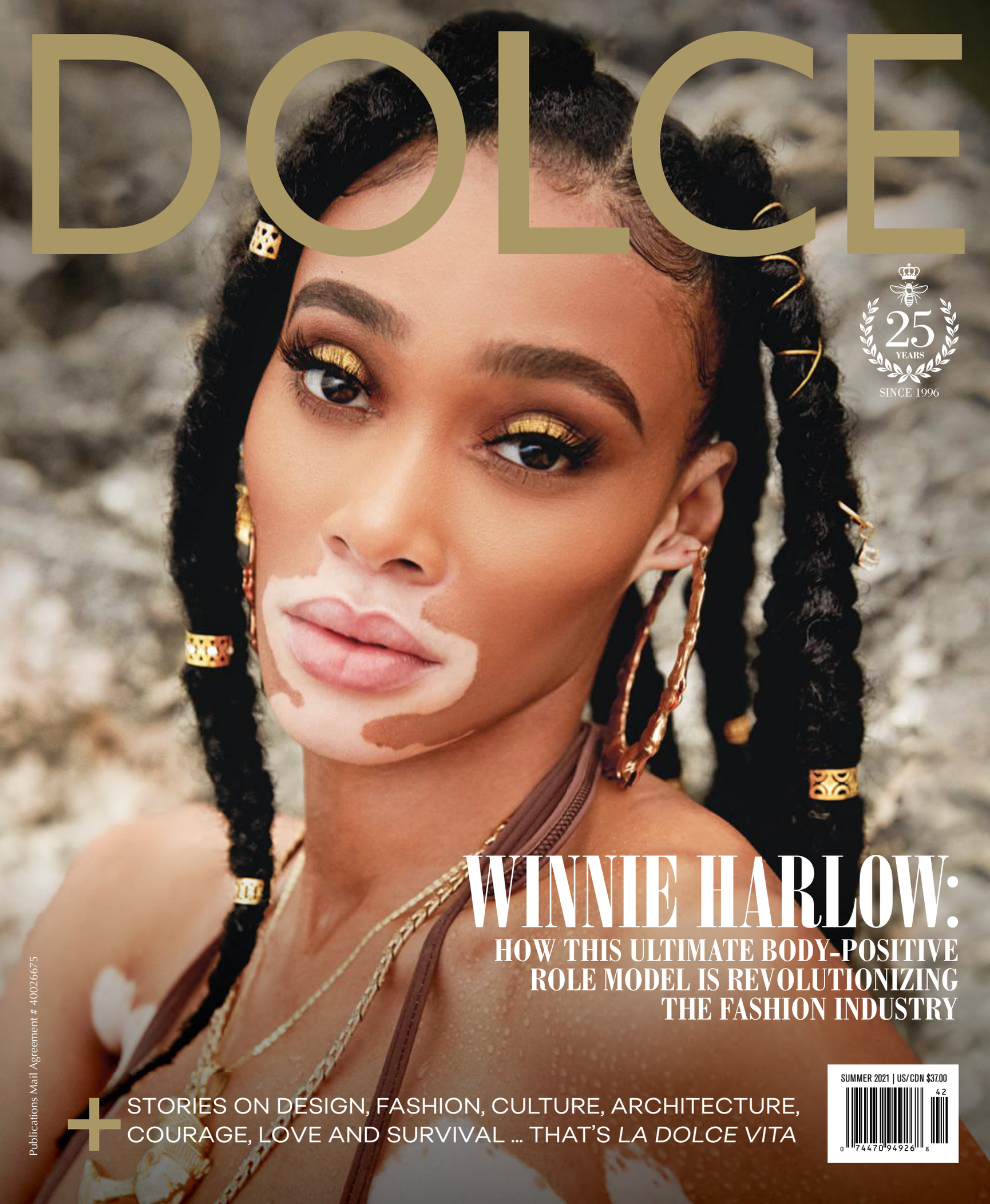

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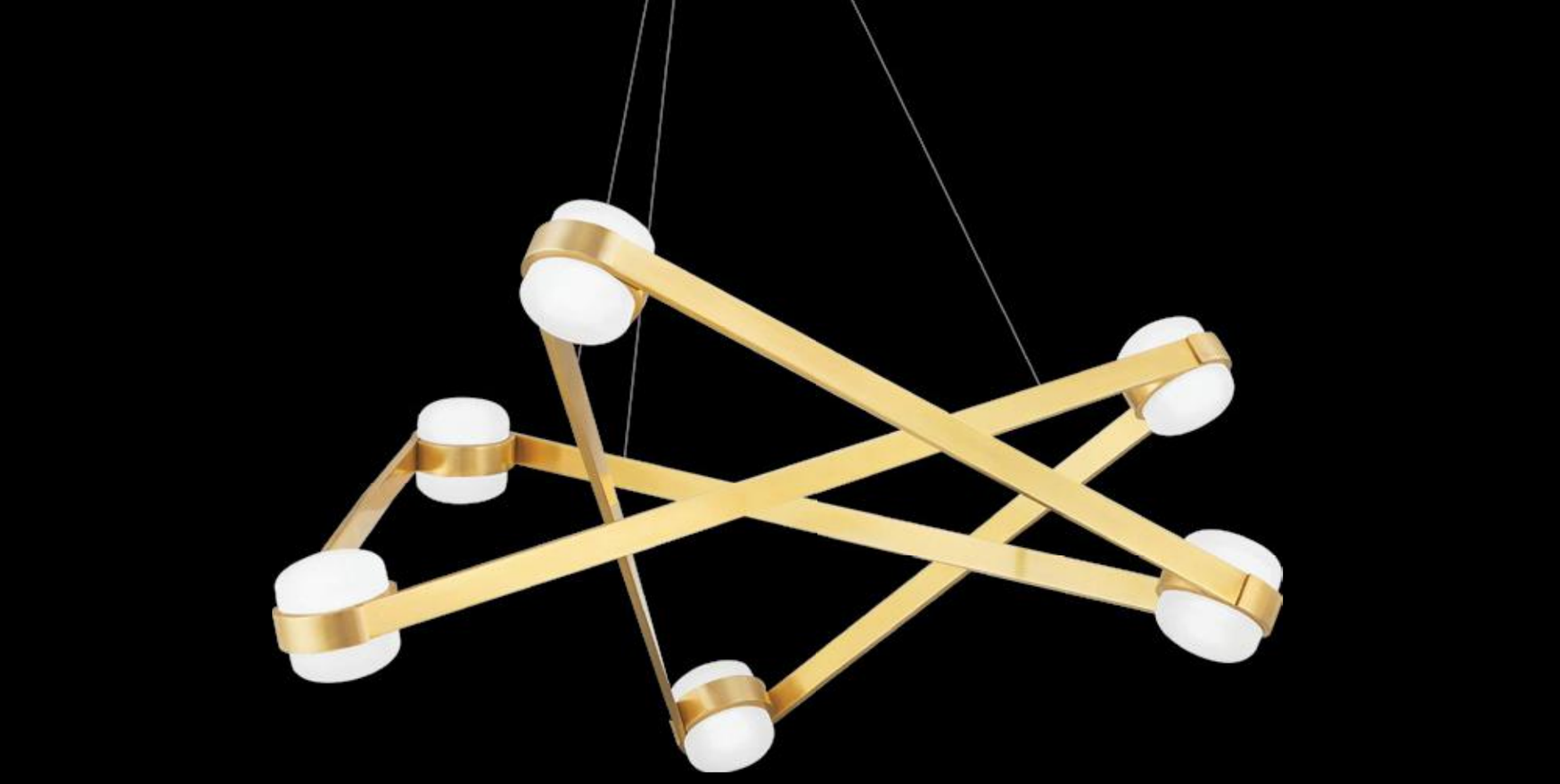


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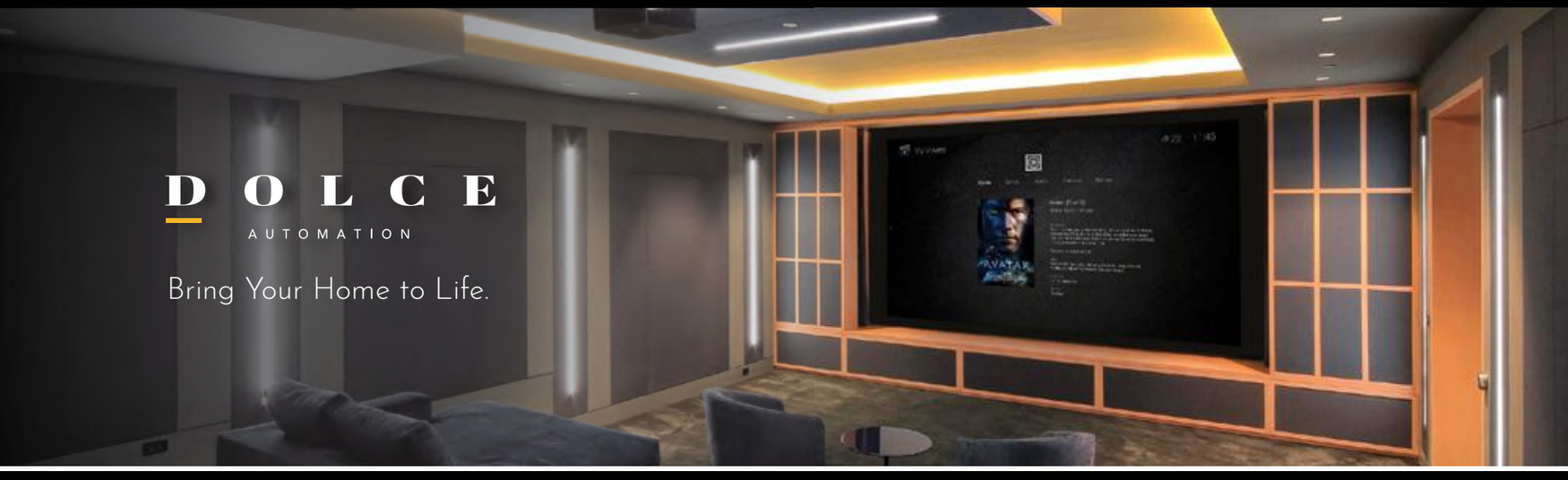




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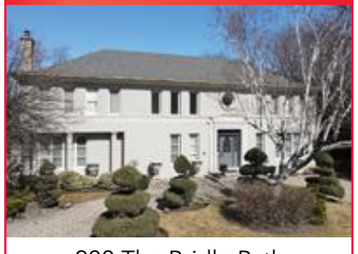
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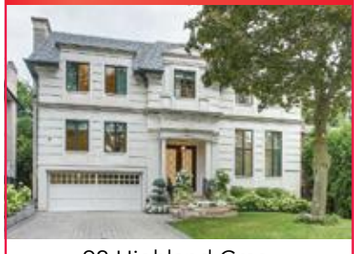
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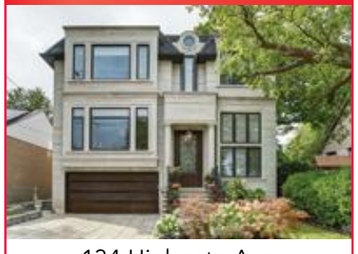
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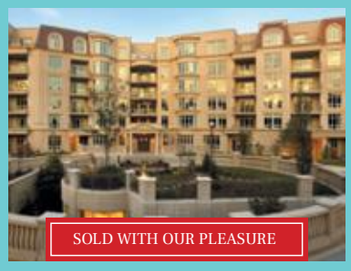
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Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief



Fernando Zerillo
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"There's so much happiness, and there's so much pride, and there's so much good vibrations that happen when you live in your purpose," Yusef Salaam, one of the Exonerated Five and a criminal justice advocate, says in his interview with *Dolce*. Salaam, the award-winning motivational and transformational speaker, as well as bestselling author of *Better, Not Bitter: Living on Purpose in the Pursuit of Racial Justice*, says that living with purpose is "the most hopeful that you can be, because as soon as you give up hope, all of the darkness around you begins to overcome the light that is trying to be buried by the darkness. But when you have tremendous hope in yourself, in your body, in your community and in your life, you begin to turn your light up — you live on purpose."

One of the most poignant lessons you will garner while reading Salaam's story is the fact that when you believe in yourself — when you tell yourself, "I've got this" — empowerment becomes your gift.

Sir Winston Churchill, the powerful British statesman, famously said, "If you're going through hell, keep going."

And as the much-loved "Footprints in the Sand" poem states:

"When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

Keep your faith and belief that God is always with you.

It is an inherent lesson to be grateful and humble, and that the more you practise these traits, the more God raises your light, with the end result being a sense of well-being, rather than bitterness. Salaam teaches us to look for beauty in the rubble and to appreciate it — find the hand of God in all that we do.

> "You are born on purpose and for a purpose"
>
> — Yusef Salaam

Loving ourselves despite what others might think of us is a hard lesson that our cover girl, Winnie Harlow, one of the most successful Black supermodels and the first prominent model with vitiligo, had to learn on her road to success.

As a young girl, Harlow was bullied relentlessly, with the abuse reaching such challenging levels that she dropped out of high school. Harlow credits this decision as a brave and defining move in her life, because it gave her the courage to stand up for herself and deal with life's obstacles with inner self-confidence.

"People worry too much about what other people think, but what other people think isn't what's going to make you happy in your life, and it's your life to live," Harlow says.

Gérard Bertrand, master vintner and owner of 16 estate vineyards in southern France, where he creates some of the best wines in the world, shares with *Dolce* how he embraces the harmonies of life and nature to do so. Locally known as "The Tall Guy" — "*Le Grand*" — the moniker refers to not just his height (he is almost two metres tall), but also encompasses the admiration for his character and personality. What better purpose behind the making of wine than sharing a message of peace, love and harmony. Recognized throughout the industry as a leader in respecting the environment and biodiversity, Bertrand is a much-sought-after speaker in his role as an early adopter biodynamics winemaker.

His new book, titled *Nature at Heart*, about human beings and nature — and the fact that our bodies are our temples, Bertrand explains, "You have to take care of your own temple and then you can go in another temple to try and feel the connection with nature, for some people, or with God, or with both of them."

We hope you enjoy these and all the other stories we have curated for you in our summer issue of *Dolce*. May you find inspiration for your own purpose as you live each day with positivity and resolve. May you also discover the zest for a *dolce vita* life — an enthusiasm that you share with others along the way.

We leave you with gratitude and respect until the next edition.



Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
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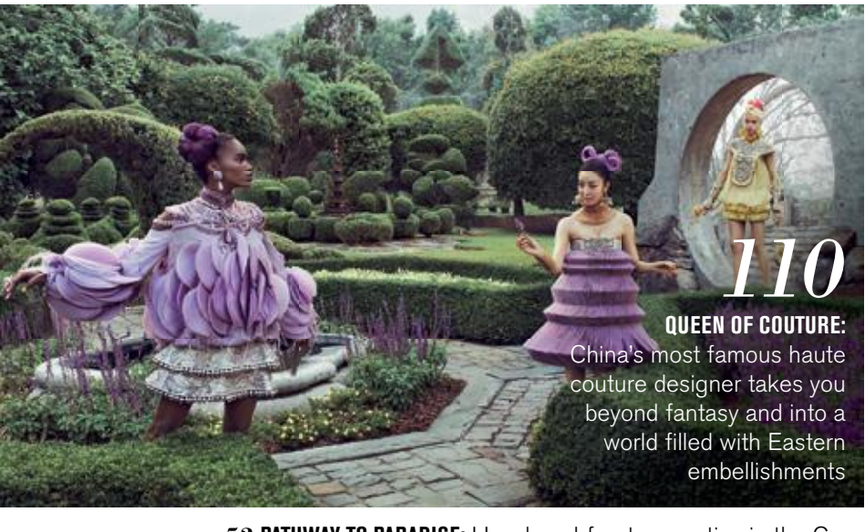
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A SUPERYACHT CHARTER ON THE MEDITERRANEAN CELEBRATES 2021



PHOTO BY TOM CLAEREN

BEST OFF can accommodate 11 guests in five luxurious cabins, and with three decks it offers elegant spaces ideal for intimate privacy or large gatherings





PHOTOS BY LOÏC THEBAUD

Posh privacy with exquisite cuisine and service on board the superyacht BEST OFF mark a return to luxury living

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

If summer 2021 is a time of opening up international travel and getting back out there, doing it in luxurious style may be a way of rewarding ourselves, and sunning yourself, family and friends on a private superyacht cruising the Mediterranean can be one of life's greatest rewards.

BEST OFF, a 33-metre Ferretti Custom Line Navetta superyacht, is available to book for charters on the Mediterranean this summer. The area is open for the yachting season, including Greece, Croatia, Turkey, Spain, France and Italy, and the demand for superyacht charters has never been higher.

The BEST OFF can accommodate 11 guests in a five-cabin layout of the finest and most luxurious of finishes, and as opposed to most other superyachts, the BEST OFF features two master staterooms instead of the usual one for a yacht her size.

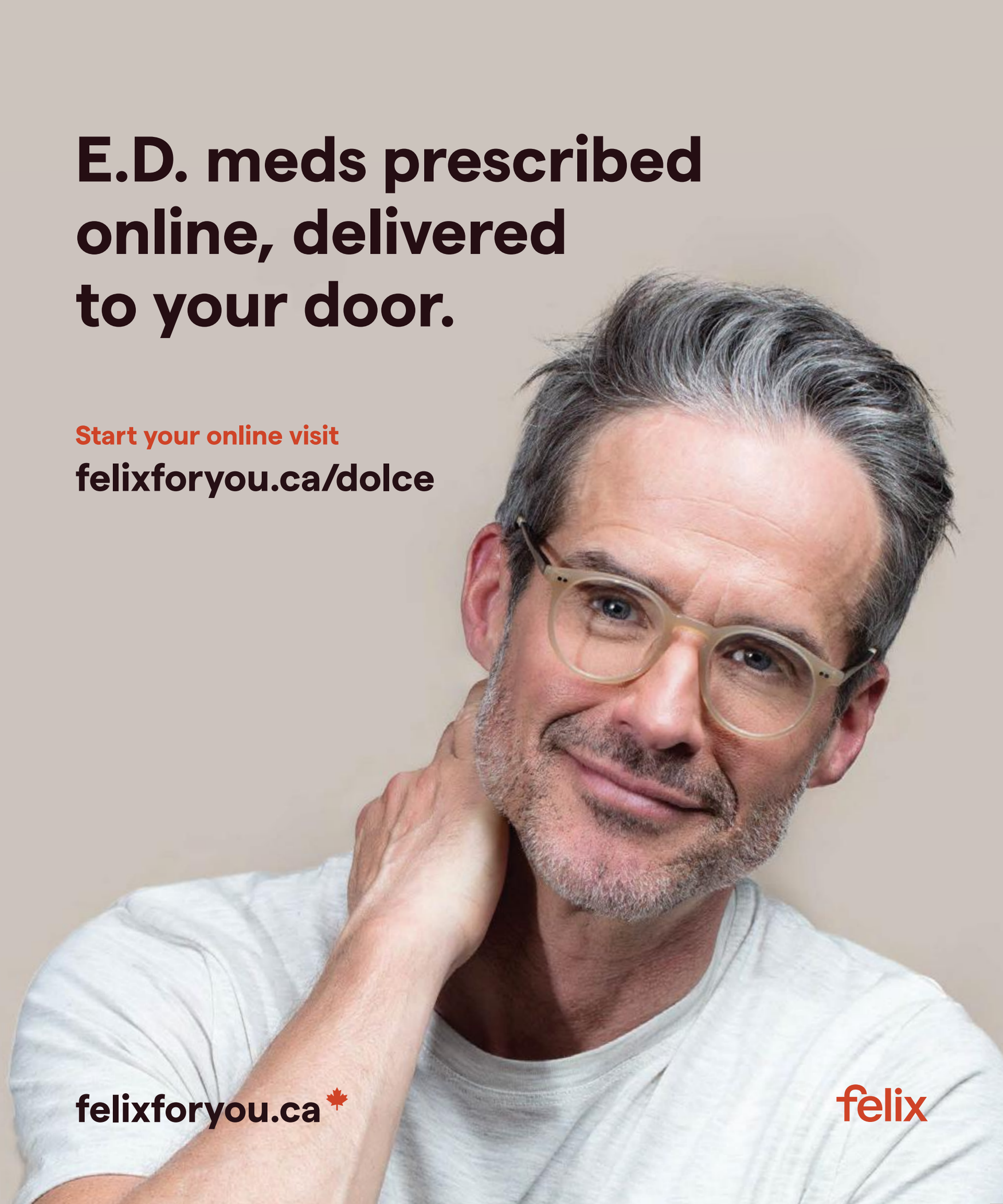
The biggest decision to make during the cruise may be deciding where to relax among the generous exterior space over three decks. There is a fully covered main deck to host lunch or dinner, a bridge deck for lounging or cocktails and two sun pads on the bow and flybridge deck to fully embrace the warmth of the Mediterranean sun.

There are six talented crew members, including the exciting addition of chef Antonio Chiaradia, who previously worked at Cipriani, one of the best restaurants in Monaco. He will ensure the quality of food and wine match the quality of the overall experience. The captain is an excellent yacht manager with a charismatic personality, while the chief stewardess is fluent in French, English, Italian, Spanish and German.

Summer 2021 can be a fabulous summer, one during which we all deserve to do something special. A superyacht private charter on the Mediterranean on board the BEST OFF could make it one of the best ever.

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BIDDING FOR HISTORY



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The world's most valuable stamp, rarest coin and a stamp rarity were up for auction by collector and designer Stuart Weitzman to benefit his charities

World records fall as three historical treasures are auctioned by Sotheby's New York

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

For coin and stamp collectors, June 8, 2021, in New York City was a day as rare as the treasured pieces offered for auction at Sotheby's. Three Treasures – Collected by Stuart Weitzman was a dedicated live auction of specimens of unrivalled rarity, value and history from the personal collection of the renowned fashion designer and collector.

On offer at this historic auction was the fabled and elusive 1933 Double Eagle coin, known as the Holy Grail of Coins, which set a world record when it last sold at auction in 2002; the most famous and valuable stamp in the world, the sole surviving example of the British Guiana One-Cent Magenta; and The Inverted Jenny Plate Block, the most well-known and sought-after American stamp rarity.

These three treasures are as iconic as they are rare and valued by collectors the world over. The 1933 Double Eagle gold coin, with a face value of $20 and a distinctive design of an American eagle in flight on one side and Liberty striding forward on the other, was the last gold coin struck for circulation in the United States and is the only example that is legally sanctioned by the United States government for private ownership.

When Weitzman anonymously purchased the coin at Sotheby's New York in 2002 for $7.59 million, it established a new world auction record for any coin at the time. This time, an anonymous buyer bought the coin for a record-setting $18.9 million, well above its expected price of between $10 million and $15 million.

The British Guiana One-Cent Magenta sold for $8.3 million to an anonymous buyer, confirming its place as the most valuable stamp in the world. This unassuming penny issue was printed black on magenta paper in British Guiana in 1856. The stamp was rediscovered by a 12-year-old schoolboy amongst some family papers bearing many British Guiana issues in 1873 and has passed through many private collections since.

The Inverted Jenny Plate Block was first issued in 1918 for the first United States airmail letters. It is the most famous and valuable item in the United States stamp-collecting realm. It has been a collector's item because of a printing error in which its biplane design appears upside down. It was purchased at the auction for $4.9 million by David Rubenstein, a co-founder of private equity company The Carlyle Group.

"I had a lifelong dream of collecting the single greatest rarities and placing them on public view," says Weitzman. "I did that, and today my dream is to leave a legacy of charitable works to which the proceeds from the sales of these treasures will go."

All of the seller's proceeds will benefit charitable ventures, including The Weitzman Family Foundation, which supports medical research and higher education, such as the Stuart Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, and a museum in Madrid, the first of its kind, devoted to Spanish Judaica.

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LET IT BURN WITH KANDL

Founded in 2018, KANDL is the culmination of a family's 50 years of expertise and experience in candle-making and fragrance development. KANDL's newly launched Virtual Lab now educates consumers on how to formulate their own exceptional candle creations

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**





Each one of KANDL's core collection of five sophisticated fragrances has the star power to stand alone. From Basil & Lime or Garden Soirée to Sueded Oud, each candle is meticulously crafted to enhance your space

It can be dangerous to play with fire – but not when it comes to the bespoke candle-making experience that KANDL offers through its Virtual Lab, which allows you to fully customize a candle in the comfort of your home.

With the ability to choose from over one hundred different fragrance combinations, you'll be able to get a whiff of what the art of candle-making entails: "Our KANDL Lab is unlike any other experience in the world and has been a core business for us since inception. Not only do we try to educate our clients on the art of candle-making and burning, but we also allow them to take on the role of a perfumer and candlemaker as soon as they immerse themselves in the two-hour candle-making process."

When it comes to creating an atmosphere in your home through decor, there's no better way to enhance your space than with the perfect candle. Whether it's crafted specifically to your tastes, or one that KANDL offers through its in-house collection, the perfect candle can make your space sing beautiful notes of cassis berry, fresh basil leaves, smoky oud, orange blossom and jasmine, to name a few.

Elegantly displayed in hand-blown glass vessels from Poland, inspired by the very essence of a candle flame, KANDL's five-piece collection truly represents a work of art. "The blue glass is such a soothing colour and was inspired by the innermost light of the candle flame. Our Polish supplier has been a long-trusted vendor of ours, and each piece is handblown, so no one vessel is exactly the same."

Sourcing the best material from around the world, KANDL understands the art of making candles like no other. "Making a candle is very much like cooking – the better your ingredients, the better your meal will be. We pride ourselves in perfecting our wax formulation, which uses a blend of multiple types of waxes of various grades. Each wax formulation is determined by the burn and fragrance profile we are trying to achieve. Every candle at KANDL Artistique burns cleanly, lasts exceptionally long and maximizes the cold and hot throw of the fragrance."

Every aspect of KANDL's collection is infused with meaning, including its signature logo. "The logo, glass and packaging are modern, fresh and luxurious, yet, while the brand is steeped in history, it is relatively new. The goddess figure represents light and hope, and, though we didn't know it at the time, it is relevant now more than ever."

Bringing a bespoke approach to the art, KANDL understands the intimate relationship that we have when it comes to scents. "What one person loves to smell may be off-putting to another. The perfect example is rose. Some people absolutely adore rose-scented candles, but some won't bother sampling anything with rose on the label."

With the olfactory world at your fingertips, every candle created through KANDL's Virtual Lab is as unique as a fingerprint. And whether you like the scent of rose or not, a bespoke candle captures the distinct symbol of the element of fire and gives each of us the opportunity to satisfy a universal impulse – to melt away the excess and be seen for the light that we are.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF KANDL

Luxury, style and elegance reside at No. 7 Dale.

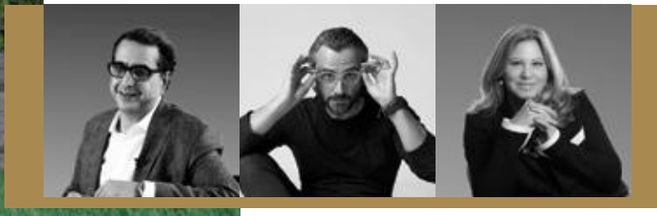
No. 7 Dale, an address like no other, pushes the possibilities of what fine and gracious living can be, seamlessly fusing the best elements of modern elegance and historic grandeur.

Combining the rare talents of world-renowned architect Siamak Hariri, interior designer Alessandro Munge, and landscape architect Janet Rosenberg, the pinnacle of luxury living has been achieved.

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N°7
ROSEDALE





Shaminder Gogna (right) and Mitchell Coburn are achieving new levels of success for Condoville's clients

MARKETING INTELLIGENCE

Condoville's vision and real estate insights are the undercover advantage in helping clients maximize real estate investment potential

Success in business takes vision — vision in where and how you want your business to grow and thrive, but also vision in being able to see what others may miss. In the sometimes-intimidating world of real estate development and investing, Toronto-based Condoville is a company that has leveraged vision with expertise in assisting real estate developers, builders and investors to make the intelligent decisions required to maximize potential returns with regard to real estate investments.

"When I hear the word 'vision,' I think of the route one would take on a journey," says Shaminder Gogna, founder and CEO of Condoville. "When exploring areas of opportunity, while we dive into the numbers and market statistics to generate new data, we also visit sites and learn from local businesses and residents. We're working with people and won't ever lose sight of that."

Market intelligence driven by new data is the key, and Condoville offers insight into the pre-construction marketplace for its clients. "Our marketing consulting company, Condoville Marketing, has many roles in the preliminary planning stage of land development to ensure the developments are designed in line with market demand," says Gogna. "Our services include consulting with regard to the building or community unit mix, pricing, design, branding and creating a memorable customer experience."

Condoville Marketing associates monitor new and existing development sites across Canada, often in overlooked or emerging secondary markets, to generate market analytics. By understanding the current and future competition, Condoville Marketing critically assesses the marketplace dynamics to create information that may not be readily available, providing tremendous value in making the correct real estate decision, in timing, price and product.

"There are real estate boards and associations that will offer statistics on past sales or previous market activity," says Gogna. "However, that information is extremely linear and doesn't provide any indication of the upcoming sales activity or trends. Condoville digs deeper into the data to gain insights that aren't readily available or simply don't exist. Our competitive edges are our vision and market insight."

Beginning business in 2017, Condoville was formed to give back power to the purchasers. If someone owned a small store on a main street in a smaller secondary market, Condoville's vision sees the value in that location, which can be repurposed, and develops that site into a top-quality condominium, providing a much greater return on the property. "Back when we started the company, we wanted to offer the best guidance to investors, and our insight pointed to secondary markets. And those who listened have received an extraordinary return," says Gogna.

When he started Condoville, Shaminder Gogna was considered a bit of a maverick because of his innovative techniques and take on the background intelligence real estate investors would need to succeed. He was joined in his quest by Mitchell Coburn, now the director of marketing and sales. "The two of us were really passionate about creating a better sales experience online and in person," says Coburn. "We're not ever satisfied. Growth and the customer experience are always top of mind."

Given its experience and insight into real estate, Condoville has developed three key tips for those who are looking to invest in a pre-construction condominium or home — tips which will help realize the financial returns they are looking for.

"Always consider the ongoing operating cost of the condo or the home at the time of purchasing, because that number will only continue to rise," says Gogna. "Therefore, prioritize the functionality of the space over the size of the suite. Lastly, North Americans seem to be utterly fascinated with bathrooms, so buy as many as you can. These three tips will maximize a purchaser's return in the long run.

By offering industry-leading expertise, sound advice and counsel, and unparalleled market insight and intelligence, Condoville has become an invaluable strategic advantage for real estate developers, builders and investors looking to maximize their returns.

condovillerealestate.ca

PHOTO BY CARLOS A. PINTO







PHOTO BY CARLOS A. PINTO

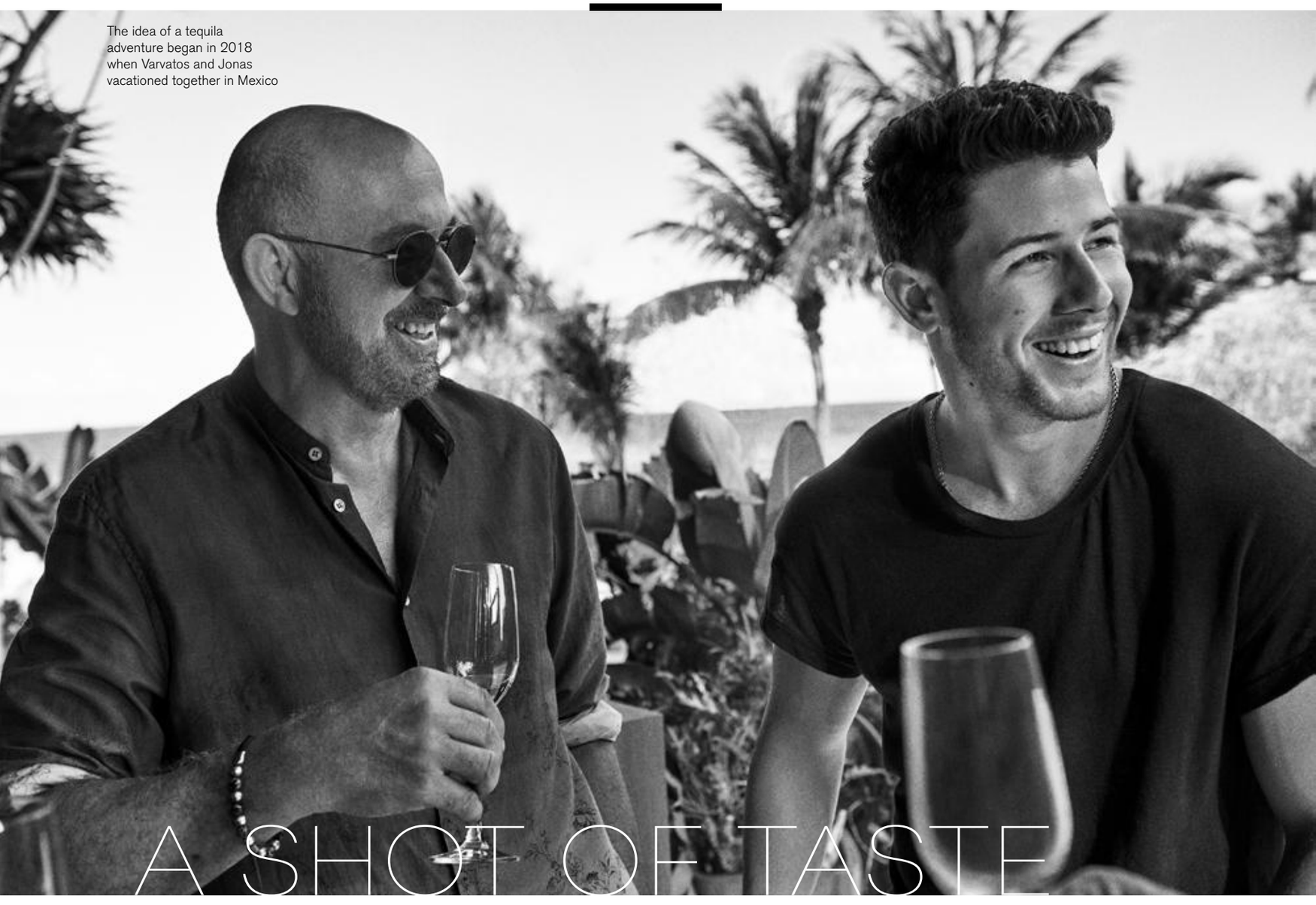
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The idea of a tequila adventure began in 2018 when Varvatos and Jonas vacationed together in Mexico

A SHOT OF TASTE AND STYLE:

NICK JONAS AND JOHN VARVATOS PAIRED WITH STOLI GROUP TO CREATE VILLA ONE TEQUILA AS A CELEBRATION OF 'LIFE AS IT SHOULD BE'

Driven by their mutual passion and commitment to authenticity, Varvatos and Jonas took a hands-on approach to Villa One Tequila in creating a spirit that is memorable WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VILLA ONE TEQUILA

Musician and actor Nick Jonas is known as one of the world's most versatile entertainers, equally at home in front of a camera as he is in front of thousands of screaming fans at a stadium concert. Jonas is also known as a man of the world, with many interests and a sense of style and sophistication well beyond his 28 years.

This is evidenced by Jonas's collaboration with renowned international luxury menswear designer John Varvatos in teaming up with one of the world's leading premium spirits organizations, Stoli Group, to launch Villa One Tequila, which launched in the United States last September and is now available in Canada. The ultra-premium tequila is offered in three expressions, including Silver, Reposado and Añejo.

The venture with Varvatos and Stoli Group began in 2018, when Jonas and Varvatos were vacationing in Mexico, and the idea of a new adventure involving tequila was initially discussed. Inspired by the spirit and beauty of the property at which they were staying and the enjoyment of time with family and friends, the idea soon developed into a tangible venture with the name Villa One, with the goal of making this tequila memorable and celebrating "life as it should be."

Driven by their mutual passion and their commitment to authenticity, craftsmanship and ethically sourced ingredients, the duo turned to master distiller Arturo Fuentes, known as "the godfather of tequila," to bring their vision to life by embracing his 30 years of expertise in creating one of the finest crafted agave spirits.

Villa One is a smooth-tasting tequila handcrafted in its own craft distillery — Fabrica de Tequilas Finos, in Jalisco, Mexico. The distillery team uses traditional techniques, sustainably sourced 100-per-cent blue weber agave (the only species that can be used to make a high-quality authentic tequila) and fresh water drawn from its very own well.

Every batch of Villa One is made with slow-cooked agave, which allows for the sugars to be extracted for fermentation and uses a double-pot distillation process with copper stills. The care and commitment of the process is further underscored by the luxury of time, as both Reposado and Añejo are gently aged in American oak barrels, Reposado for more than six months, and Añejo for more than 12 months.

Villa One is distinct from most other tequilas in that it uses agave sourced from both the highland and lowland regions of Jalisco, a process that combines herbaceous, earthy lowland notes with sweeter, fruitier highland notes, resulting in a tequila with a rare character and a distinctively smooth and refined finish.

True to his nature, whether it be working on film or television projects or in his songwriting and signing career, Jonas took a hands-on approach throughout both the conceptual phase and manufacturing process. "When it came to Villa One, it was critical to us that we take part in the decision-making process every step of the way," says Jonas. "We feel that this is exactly the tequila we sought out to create almost three years ago."



Partnering with one of the world's premium spirits organizations, Stoli Group, the ultra-premium Villa One Tequila is offered in three expressions, including Silver, Añejo and Reposado

This involvement has been part of the Jonas playbook ever since he burst upon the entertainment world with his older brothers Joe and Kevin as the Jonas Brothers, who rocketed to pop stardom with their self-titled second album released in 2007.

Known for their mature songwriting about the highs and lows of life and love, their up-energy stage shows and good-natured brotherly banter on stage, the Jonas Brothers became the pre-eminent male group of this century. They earned three consecutive No. 1 albums and played to screaming sold-out shows on three continents before going onto successful solo recording careers.

As an actor, Nick Jonas garnered high critical praise for his lead role in the 2016 Sundance Film Festival favourite *Goat*. He has appeared in such television shows as *Scream Queens* and *Kingdom*, and, alongside Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart and Jack Black, starred in *JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE*, Columbia Pictures' highest-grossing film ever at the U.S. box office. He also recently starred in Lionsgate Films' post-apocalyptic thriller *Chaos Walking*, released last year. As evidenced by the respect he has already earned in his acting career, Jonas and his wife,



Villa One uses agave sourced from both the highland and lowland regions of Jalisco, Mexico, giving it a distinctively smooth and refined finish



Jonas and Varvatos were inspired by the beauty and spirit of a property in Mexico and the enjoyment of time spent with family and friends

> **WE FEEL THAT THIS IS EXACTLY THE TEQUILA WE SOUGHT OUT TO CREATE ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO**
>
> — Nick Jonas

Priyanka Chopra, were selected to announce the nominees for the 93rd Academy Awards in April of this year.

Equally influential in his chosen creative field, John Varvatos celebrated the 20th anniversary of his international luxury menswear designer company in 2020. He has received several awards, including three "Designer of the Year" awards and, in 2007, he was named "GQ Designer of the Year." One of his many other business ventures includes his record label, John Varvatos Records, which boasts many notable artists, including the multi-platinum-awarded Zac Brown Band.

Varvatos brought his accomplished entrepreneurial spirit to the Villa One venture in making it a success. "The experience Nick and I have shared in creating the Villa One spirit has been incredible," says Varvatos. "We found nimble, creative, well-connected partners in Stoli Group and a genuine artisan in Arturo Fuentes, who worked with us to guarantee that the liquid inside the bottle was unlike anything else on the market."

As two men of considerable taste and style, Villa One seems an ideal complement to the careers of Nick Jonas and John Varvatos, as well as an authentic and well-aged expression of "life as it should be."

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FLAVOURS OF THE SEASON

This summer's palette for him comes with an eclectic mix of influences, including mixed drinks, a playful wardrobe and a little reading and spice for good measure WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**



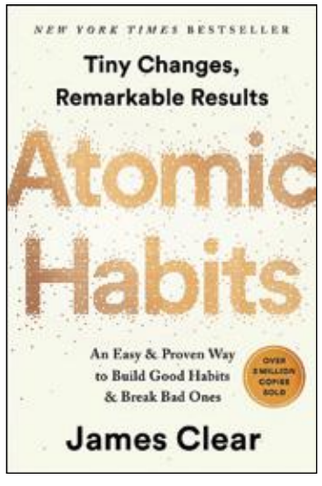
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THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF NATURE BY ART

Midway through her exhibit at the New York Botanical Garden, celebrated Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama takes visitors on a voyage of discovery, wonder and artistry

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**



Kusama poses with *Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity*, one of her signature pieces

The exhibit includes some 50 drawings of Kusama's capturing the bloom cycle of tree peonies

It would be an injustice to not let artist Yayoi Kusama's own artistic language describe her current exhibition, *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, at the New York Botanical Garden, running until Oct. 31: "Dancing through our universe are noble souls whose magnificent forms are saturated with mystery. I invite you to explore the endlessly expanding ode to the beauty of love that is my art."

Postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic, the exhibition by the internationally acclaimed artist opened in April 2021 at the botanical garden in the Bronx and includes four distinctive experiences. The exhibition is presented through multiple outdoor installations revealing Kusama's lifelong fascination with the natural world and its countless manifestations, beginning in her childhood, when she spent time in the greenhouses and fields of her family's seed nursery in Matsumoto, Japan.

By integrating seasonal horticultural displays, *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* further illuminates the power of nature that pervades the artist's practice



My Soul Blooms Forever are colossal polka-dotted flowers made of stainless steel in dramatic colours

PHOTOS COURTESY OF YAYOI KUSAMA

and her dynamic body of work. The exhibit is almost living and breathing, as it is designed to change through spectacular seasonal displays making each visit different as new plantings, textures and palettes are introduced.

Yayoi Kusama is one of those rare artistic visionaries who inspires, excites, makes us wonder and, perhaps most importantly, think. She is both intriguing and fascinating, and has been acknowledged as one of the most important living artists to come out of Japan. She has continued to create art, most notably installations in various museums around the world, since the late 1970s.

A contemporary artist who works primarily in sculpture and installation, it is perhaps her wide spectrum of abilities that separates Kusama from others. She is also active in painting, performance, film, fashion, poetry, fiction and other arts. Her work is based in conceptual art and is known to be deeply personal and revealing about herself, her life and her struggles.

Kusama has been open about her mental health and says that art has become her way to express her mental health issues. Through her use of some attributes of feminism, minimalism, surrealism, art brut, pop art and abstract expressionism, her art is infused with autobiographical, psychological and sexual content.

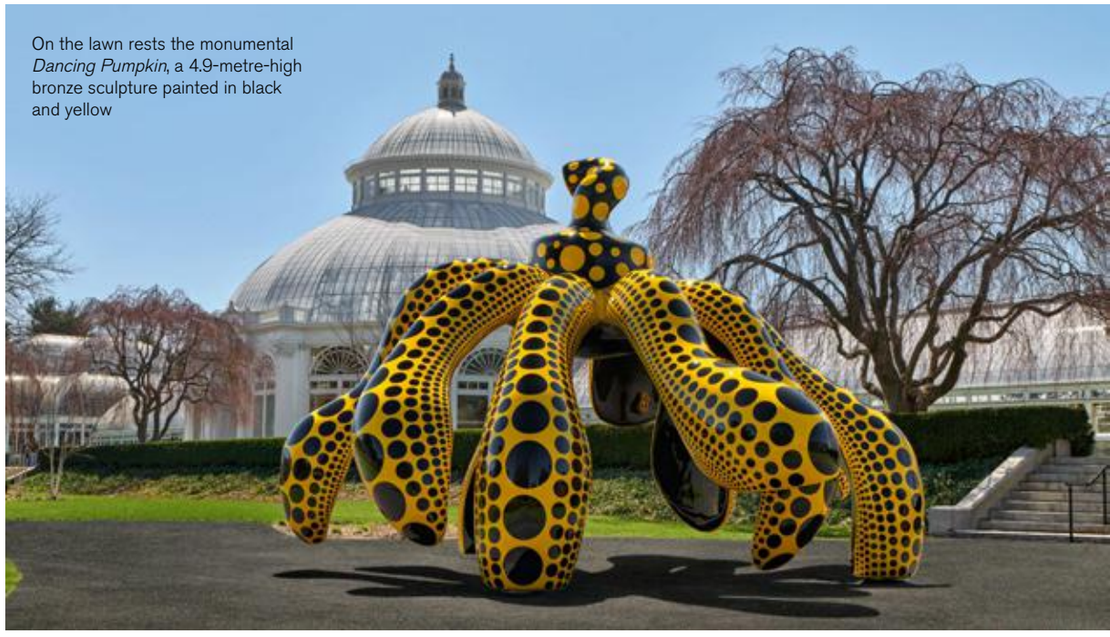
She moved to New York City in 1958 and was part of the avant-garde scene of the 1960s, especially in the pop-art movement. She embraced the rise of the hippie counterculture and came to widespread public attention when she organized a series of "happenings" in which naked participants were painted in brightly coloured polka dots.

Polka dots have been a recurring imagery for Kusama throughout her life and career, beginning at 10 years old when she began to experience vivid hallucinations, which she described as "flashes of light, auras, or dense field of dots." These images included flowers and patterns in fabric that Kusama stared at coming to life, multiplying and engulfing her. This is a process she has carried into her artistic career and which she calls "self-obliteration."

The New York Botanical Garden exhibition is installed across the garden's 101-hectare landscape, which has been transformed by Kusama's monumental sculptures of flora, accented by her signature polka-dotted organic forms and captivating paintings of plants and flowers.

Among Kusama's works created for, and debuting in, this exhibition are:

- *Flower Obsession* (2017/2021): Kusama's first-ever obliteration greenhouse.
- *Dancing Pumpkin* (2020): a monumental sculpture presented on the lawn of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory.
- *I Want to Fly to the Universe* (2020): a four-metre-high biomorphic form presented in the Garden's Visitor Center.
- *Infinity Mirrored Room – Illusion Inside the Heart*



On the lawn rests the monumental *Dancing Pumpkin*, a 4.9-metre-high bronze sculpture painted in black and yellow

> "I INVITE YOU TO EXPLORE THE ENDLESSLY EXPANDING ODE TO THE BEAUTY OF LOVE THAT IS MY ART"
>
> — Yayoi Kusama



Kusama's lifelong fascination with nature stems from her childhood spent at her family's seed farm in Japan



I Want to Fly to the Universe in the reflecting pool features a vivid yellow primordial face, while (right) *Hymn of Life – Tulips* depicts outsized fibreglass flowers among white lilies

(2020): an outdoor installation reflecting its environs.

In and around the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Kusama's plant-inspired polka-dotted sculptures are nestled among meadow grasses, bellflowers, water lilies and other plantings. The glorious outdoor displays of tulips and irises in the spring have now given way to dahlias and sunflowers for these summer months, to be followed by masses of pumpkins and autumnal flowers this coming fall. Also featured this fall will be stunning displays of meticulously trained *kiku* (Japanese for "chrysanthemum," one of that country's most heralded fall-flowering plants), which will create a dramatic finale for the abundant displays at the conservatory.

"For Kusama, cosmic nature is a life force that integrates the terrestrial and celestial orders of the universe from both the micro- and macrocosmic perspectives she investigates in her practice," says Mika Yoshitake, PhD and *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* guest curator. "Her explorations evoke meanings that are both personal and universal. Nature is not only a central source of inspiration, but also integral to the visceral effects of Kusama's artistic language in which organic growth and the proliferation of life are made ever-present."

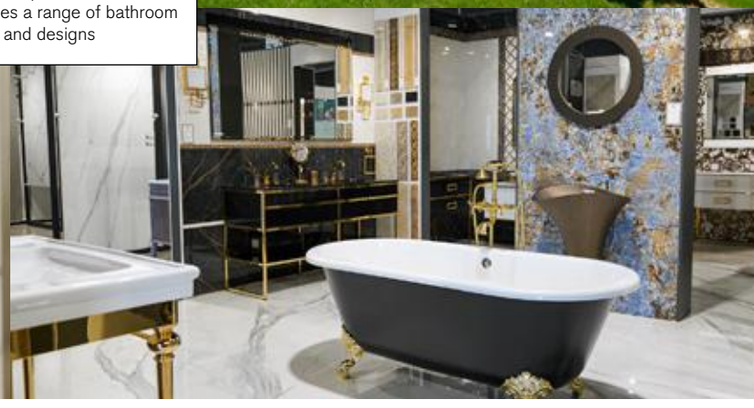
Advance, timed-entry, limited-capacity tickets for this landmark exhibition are required and on sale at www.nybg.org/kusama.

We have all been quite naturally focused on Mother Earth these last 18 months, but it does provide some comfort and perspective to have an artist such as Yayoi Kusama lending us her artistry to remind us of the overwhelming power and beauty of nature and the universe and that we are all a part of something much bigger. Perhaps cosmic nature is exactly what is needed when we're most in need.

yayoi-kusama.jp
@yayoikusama_







Canaroma's new showroom at 25 Torbarrie Rd. spans 20,000 square feet and includes a range of bathroom styles and designs

CANAROMA: FROM SHOWROOM TO SHOWPIECE

With more than 40 years in the business, Canaroma Bath & Tile has just opened its new showroom and shows no sign of slowing down

Canaroma began in July 1979, when brothers-in-law Frank Piacentini and Roy Mancini saw how showrooms in Italy were moving beyond the idea of displaying individual bathroom components, like faucets, sinks and showers, to presenting settings complete with an ensuite, bathroom and powder room. Inspired by the concept and how much closer it brought people to the final product, they decided to bring the approach to Canada.

Since then, Canaroma has embedded itself in the design community, earning a reputation for its stunning range of products and commitment to customers. Its roots are so firmly embedded with its journey from Italy to North America that the name comes from a play on the words "Canada" and Italy's capital, "Roma." It's a testament to the ethics and values the brand holds today and the approach it takes when it comes to business.

Headed by Piacentini and Mancini, alongside their sons, the business is family run, and the owners work hard to ensure that ethos runs throughout. "What we've instilled in our families is that we care for our business," Piacentini says. "We have heart, hard work, honesty and respect. That's what I look for when hiring people. I try to create that family environment."

While Canaroma's beginnings stretch back to the late 1970s, the products it stocks are the most modern and up-to-date and, with the company being originators in Canada when it comes to showing the bathroom as it would appear in the home, have a habit of staying ahead of the curve.

The new showroom is a testament to that. As well as being ideally situated in Toronto at 25 Torbarrie Rd., its 20,000 square feet showcase the variety of brands, fixtures and styles Canaroma has to offer. Whether it's an extensive tile gallery, elaborate fixtures, a working water station, its Slab Hall, exclusive Versace boutique or vanities from around the world, there's something for all tastes.

"It's so elaborately done," Mancini says. "It's beautiful and shows the products really well. If you want to see faucets, there's a faucet area. If you want to see sinks, there's a sink area. We also have vignettes, so you can see complete bathrooms, with a shower, vanity, toilet and tiles," Mancini continues. Where most showrooms include shower bases as they are, he describes how Canaroma goes to the next level, cutting its thin bases into the concrete itself, so viewers get a true sense of how it would appear in a real-life setting.

"From the moment you walk in the front door to when you pick up your product, we create the best experience for the customer," Piacentini continues. While the product is a driving force of this experience, it also comes down to attention to detail, the family environment already mentioned and the expertise of the people working there.

For that reason, you'll meet tile specialists and technical experts, and they'll even connect you with installers, if that's something you need. As Mancini says, "We have people who have been selling in our industry for years. All of our sales people are knowledgeable. It's more than just selling a product at the best price."

What also makes Canaroma so individual is its exclusivity. The establishment carries 12 international brands no one else does in Canada, including Baden Haus, Q'in and Sherle Wagner; as well as a wide range of other brands that are semi-exclusive. Canaroma also has the largest boutique in Canada for Dornbracht, Zucchetti and Fantini, and Versace floor and wall tiles.

All of these are curated from extensive research, trips to international shows and having a finger on the pulse of what's new and upcoming. Canaroma Bath & Tile covers all sorts of different styles, colours and materials, whether that's contemporary, traditional or something else entirely.

"You have to have passion to do it and really love it," Mancini says. "After 40 years of doing this, I [still] love going to shows and looking at new products. When we first started, bathrooms in Canada were a room you just used. Today, people come into the home, and both the kitchen and bathroom are showpieces."

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Everything DiRisio knows about interior design has come from first-hand experience

SERENITY IN SYMMETRY

Niagara-based creative Enrico DiRisio on struggling with asymmetry, building trust in the world of interior design and marketing via word of mouth

WRITTEN BY **JOSH WALKER**

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DiRisio has worked on the interior design of a number of homes in the Niagara region

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK BILLER WWW.PATRICKBILLER.COM | STYLING BY ME & MO CREATIVE INFO@MEANDMOCREATIVE.CA

For many, growing up in the restaurant industry would inspire a career in food. For Enrico DiRisio, it offered an introduction to the world of interior design. "My grandfather came from Italy and started an Italian-style restaurant here," he says. "My parents got involved and were passionate about the restaurant business. They had a restaurant for 40 years and renovated it multiple times, which was the start of getting into that design mindset."

After working on the restaurant, DiRisio's parents embarked on a number of renovation projects. He watched his father, someone he describes as "very hands-on, who loved getting into electricals and plumbing," work with his mother's keen eye for décor and design to create home after home. With each new project, DiRisio describes how he dealt with the technical details and became more involved in the construction process, moving from picking finishes for rooms to working with the architect on the layouts and floor plans.

This natural progression to the world of interiors reflects his training. Instead of studying the craft at school, everything he knows about interior design is founded on first-hand experience. "Doing this for over 10 years, I've realized that interior design and design are a form of art," he continues. "As much as you can educate yourself and learn the tools that you need in school, it's something people are naturally born or gifted with."

> "BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN DOING IT FOR A LONG TIME IS SO IMPORTANT. THAT'S WHERE I'VE LEARNED THE MOST"

When it comes to offering advice to those hoping to get into the interior design field, DiRisio advises people to get as much hands-on experience as they can. Whether that's working in a fabric mill, tile store or directly on-site, it's a chance to see if it's something you're passionate about and can be combined with the foundational skills a school might provide. "Building relationships with people who have been doing it for a long time is so important. That's where I've learned the most," DiRisio says. "Standing outside and bringing coffee to the bricklayer or masons, talking to them about their work and understanding the small details about the different styles of mortar between the bricks."

Today, DiRisio is putting all of his knowledge into practice daily. As well as working on side projects with clients in the Niagara area, he works for Mountainview Building Group, one of the region's largest homebuilders. "I was still working in the restaurant, and my name was passed onto someone at the company," he says. "They reached out to me, we did an interview and, 10 years later, I've done a lot of design work for them."

As someone who doesn't actively share their work on social media or have a website that promotes his portfolio, DiRisio has managed to jump from project to project on the back of compliments delivered via word of mouth. It's something that's seen him work on a number of projects within the Niagara, Ont., area and turn clients into people he'd consider friends. "Trust is a big word when it comes to designing someone's home," he explains. "I've been able to gain a lot of trust in clients by feeling what the style of their home relates to. If it's a new build, it's about working from the ground up. If it's a renovation, it's about taking what's there and bringing it back to its original place, in a modern way."

It's this intuitiveness and awareness of surroundings that drive a lot of his process. His favourite designers might be Frank Lloyd Wright and Ralph Lauren, but he's quick to admit he can draw inspiration from anything.

Most recently, DiRisio has completed a project of a 10,000-square-foot home, nestled on the shoreline of the Niagara River. The home, which features four bedrooms, nine bathrooms, gym, spa, and hair salon in the lower level, was collaboratively completed alongside architectural designer Santy Yeh, and contractor Rocco Strazzella. Throughout the home, DiRisio incorporated touches of Art Deco design, which balanced the clean architectural lines of the home.



> “IT’S ABOUT TRYING THINGS OUT TO SEE IF THEY WORK, BUT ALSO HAVING THINGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL HAPPY”

DiRisio’s projects include a property that brings together traditional and modern influences, nestled on the shoreline of the Niagara river





This Niagara property spans 10,000 square feet and comes complete with four bedrooms, nine bathrooms, a gym, a spa and a hair salon



DiRisio's start in interior design was inspired by his time working in the restaurant industry

When it comes to actually putting the intricacies of a space together, DiRisio shares how it's a process of assembling multiple elements and moving parts. "For me, it's about balance and scale. It's about looking at the space and seeing what the focal point is and what creates the attention in a room."

It's a process informed by what he does at home, saying his own space is one where he can experiment. "It's about trying things out to see if they work, but also having things that make you feel happy," he says, describing the objects surrounding him. "That could be things I've found at a flea market or while travelling, something I've seen in a store that I love or an antique piece that I received from my grandmother that's in front of me right now."

But, for all the different ways DiRisio has helped introduce the inspirations of his clients into their homes, there's one thread that runs through all of them: symmetry. "Asymmetry is very difficult for me," he says. "If there's something weighty on the right, there needs to be something weighty on the left. That's the tying string in all my designs, and people I've worked with over the years have said the same. There's something about symmetry in a room that also creates a calmness. If there's a balance of weight, colour and texture, there's a sense of calm. Most of the time, you don't notice it, but you can feel it."

DOLCE DESIGN

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WRITTEN BY **JOSH WALKER**



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TAMARA BAHRY

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INTERSECTING CRAFTSMANSHIP AND THE FRENCH *ART DE VIVRE*

How Carole Tessier, textile aficionado, owner of ultra-luxe brand Preciously Paris, and mother to nine children, is upholding the artisanal skills of the local Firenze region

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

Made from the finest cloth in Firenze by a team of dedicated master art embroiderers, Carole Tessier's exclusive line of handmade, embroidered clutches are just as extraordinary and wondrous as the designer herself.

Tessier's designs reflect her incredible eye for quality, elegance and sophistication. The pieces are each sold as unique one-off bespoke pieces worthy of their painstaking 20- to 30-hour artisanship. Graphically, Tessier's clutches exhibit complex geometric patterns, drawing from such landmarks as the floor mosaic of Saint Mark's Basilica, as well as reinterpretations of the 18th-century engravings of Romulus and Remus, and everything in between. The clutches are so beautifully designed that they are just as suitable as wall-mounted art. Tessier describes the esthetic of her hand-held art as follows: "I think we feel the craftsmanship through the embroidery. We don't know if this embroidery came from two or 50 years ago. Some of the last ones [clutches] are a little bit like vintage pieces. They could've come from a museum," says Tessier.

Born in Switzerland, Tessier decided to move to Paris to complete her formal education in interior design. Tessier's clutches are influenced by her interior design training and traditional embroidery techniques, such as Lunéville Crochet, as well as nifty nuances, such as the application of gold threads: "The fabrics inspire me because I see a lot of fabrics through the job of interior design, art galleries and the French *Art de Vivre*. In the last collection, the French haute couture, I tried to keep an old *savoir faire* on my bags ... Most of my inspiration comes more from design and art than it does fashion. I'm not so inspired by fashion. I never look at which colour will be in season. I'm not influenced by that."

Interior design eventually led Tessier to her second life love: her now-husband and interior designer, Rémi Tessier, who ranks among the world's most celebrated yacht interior designers. The couple met at a job interview for his design firm, Rémi Tessier Design. The interview took place at Café de Flore in Paris, near the then-site of Remi's art gallery in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Currently, Rémi's design studio is located at 8th arrondissement of Paris (VIII^{e} arrondissement), in the same building as Gagosian Art Gallery. Despite each other's artistic pedigree, Rémi and Carole began formally working together on design projects only once they started a family.

One result of this working relationship, Preciously Paris, was born out of one of their projects together. "I was working on a project in Gstaad, for one of my husband's clients, and the client wanted some embroidery on the curtains. I developed some very nice curtains with Jean-François Lesage in Paris. I fell in love with what we did with this project, so I decided to embroider some of my own jeans. When I went to Art Basel in 2012, a lot of women saw these jeans and asked, 'Where are these from?' So I decided to launch a line of clutches. It was easier to develop because the jeans have to fit the woman; it's more complicated. The bags are easier to develop; there is no shape."

The rest, as they say, is history. The design powerhouse collaborates on Rémi Tessier Design projects together, transforming private residences, yachts and private jets with timeless and sophisticated interiors. It is safe to say, however, that the Tessiers' professional collaboration is not the pinnacle of their work. Today, they have nine children together, having recently welcomed a newborn girl in early July 2021. It's hard to believe that Carole, who exudes the air of the model who has just stepped off of the runway, is a mother to nine children – Sienna-Rose, Lou-Victoria, Ambre-Camelia, Diane-Opale, Kiara-May, Jade-Hermine, Oscar-Louis, Charly-Victor, and their latest addition to the family, daughter Ornella-Joyce.

Although Carole's design success is clear, the way she describes the love she feels as a mother is something to which all mothers relate and which easily transcends the material world: "I love the love that it gives you. I think this is the only thing that can bring you so much joy, so much love. It's a true feeling ... and it will be there for all of your life ... At the end of your life when you're 60, 70, it's the children that are important."

Interestingly, the approach Tessier takes to raising her children is the same for her work. "It's more of a feeling than a reflection. And I do

Carole Tessier is the founder and designer behind Preciously Paris, a line of ultra-luxe clutches that merge art and craftsmanship into haute couture



PHOTO BY LUCA DE PARIS









PHOTO BY RICHARD JENSEN

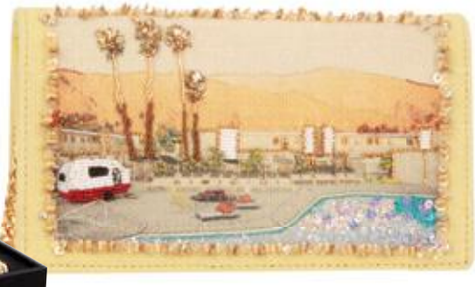


From clutches inspired by the Italian renaissance to uber-playful designs, each purse is crafted in Preciously Paris' Parisian workshops and requires 20-30 hours to make.











Tessier pictured with her eight children— (in order of birth) Sienna-Rose, Lou-Victoria, Ambre-Camelia, Diane-Opale, Kiara-May, Jade-Hermine, Oscar-Louis and Charly-Victor. Tessier recently welcomed her ninth child Ornella-Joyce into the world on July 9th, 2021

> **MOST OF MY INSPIRATION COMES MORE FROM DESIGN AND ART THAN IT DOES FASHION. I'M NOT SO INSPIRED BY FASHION. I NEVER LOOK AT WHICH COLOUR WILL BE IN SEASON**

everything the same in my life. The children are more a feeling, you know. If I think too much, I would never have so many children. I never think too much, because I think if you think too much, you'll never do anything."

If you're wondering what the secret to her stunning figure and general beauty is, you'd be surprised by the moderate approach she takes to her health and beauty regime: "I just eat well, never drink soda, just water, rice milk, fish, meat and vegetables. I do everything normal in moderation, and never alcohol — never never. I feel I have to respect my body and that's it. This is what I try to teach my children; just respect your body and your health."

Tessier is the epitome of what everyone envies about French effortlessness, chic minimalism, charm, style and beauty: never overdoing it, using makeup to enhance features, never shying away from embracing natural beauty. "I love to be sophisticated, for sure. But not everything is sophisticated. The jewelry, the shoes, the bag. I'm also quite natural when it comes to makeup and hair, never too much ... I always keep a natural touch," says Tessier.

As much as Tessier is inspired by the French *savoir faire*, rendered by skill and artistry, she is equally inspired by Italy, where her newest collection's fabrics come from: "I love Capri. I love the story of Vulcano in Naples, and I met this company in Firenze in Florence [Fondazione Arte della Seta Lisio Firenze], and I decided to launch an antique collection," says Tessier. The antique collection can be found at exclusive locations, like the Ritz Paris, Le Bristol Paris, and Hotel de Crillon. As a true creative, Tessier's inspiration comes naturally to her: "I'm never searching for a big idea. The ideas come to me quite easily. When I have an idea, I just launch it ... Some of my clutches are custom made for special occasions like weddings. Whatever inspires her [the client], I can translate it into embroidery on the clutch."

Each piece tells a story and is influenced by Tessier's colourful imagination: "Dolce Vita inspires me a lot. This period, this time, the nice cars, everything was nice, everything was quiet, in a peaceful world ... I love this time because women were very feminine, they were chic and I think women are sometimes so, you know, they show everything, there is no mystery anymore ... I love the time of Grace Kelly, just chic, sophisticated, but also a real woman, not under the power of the man."

Tessier describes la Dolce Vita in a way that evokes the scenes depicted on some of her bespoke clutches: "It means to wake up in the morning in the sun and to have a nice walk somewhere in a nice little village, and when you can eat an easy lunch with natural vegetables, and simple fish with olive oil, a little rest in the afternoon, and a nice bath in the sea afterwards in a nice swimwear and a nice cappuccino at the terrace — that would be the perfect summer day for me."

Just like a beautiful pair of pumps, a clutch can be worn throughout a lifetime, evolving step-for-step with the woman carrying it. "The women who appreciate the clutches are the women who have everything, all the luxury bags, but who want to be more exclusive, different from their friends, and who appreciate craftsmanship."

It's trite to say that the unique power of fashion is its ability to influence how others perceive us and how we feel about ourselves. However, Preciously Paris' clutches are the rare pieces that balance these abilities — each clutch has the power to emote nostalgia and beauty in narrative form, while sharing a glimpse into some of the finest couture in the world. By melding the classic French emphasis on timeless pieces with deliberate Italian craftsmanship, a Preciously Paris clutch instantly transforms an ordinary outfit into something extraordinary.

While the skill of master artisans and the finest fabrics in the world define Preciously Paris, Tessier's most perfect creation, however, is also her most natural — her family. "It's so nice to see them grow up with all your values. I think this is for sure the most important thing in my life."

www.preciouslyparis.com

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF PRECIOUSLY PARIS



Freddy Mak and Palace Row's mission is to sell and market the most exclusive properties in Toronto

LEADING IN LUXURY

Admired product and market knowledge within the Toronto real estate market make Palace Row an industry leader in ultra-luxury real estate

One of the first things children draw, besides perhaps an animal or a smiling sun, is a house, usually including a chimney with a squiggly line coming out of it, which we all thought exceptionally clever. Freddy Mak took things a step further, which may explain why he's heading up Palace Row, one of the world's leading real estate organizations dealing in ultra-luxury properties.

"When I was just a young kid living in Toronto, I had this strange little hobby. I would walk around the city with my Spacemaker, filled with pencil crayons and notepads, and sketch out buildings," said Mak. "I would draw the cityscape, and then try to capture individual building details like the facades or tower patterns. At the time, it was just for fun. Little did I know it was early signs of a passion for real estate design and architecture."

That passion and eye for detail Mak possesses turned into Palace Row, the luxury division of Ferrow Real Estate Inc., which now has more than $250 million worth of exclusive resale product both on- and off-market, ranging from $3 million to $45 million, as well as $2 billion worth of luxury prebuild product it will be launching in the next 24-36 months. This includes 1140 Yonge Street, which is located in the desirable Summerhill and Rosedale area of midtown Toronto, and 30 Scollard Street in the heart of Yorkville. Its diverse team of real estate professionals speaks more than 14 languages fluently and they have relationships with exclusive networks from Toronto and beyond.

"Our product and marketplace knowledge, our communications skills in knowing how to speak with high-end property buyers and sellers, and our ability to execute in trading real estate is what sets us apart," said Mak. "We thoroughly vet our inventory and have extensive networks in the Toronto real estate market. We choose to sell homes that can only be categorized as luxury, are unique and tell a story."

Two current listing examples in Toronto illustrate the universe Palace Row operates in. They are 128 Hazelton Avenue, a nine-storey boutique building of only 16 residences offering services such as 24-hour concierge, valet parking and private garages in exclusive Yorkville with suites ranging in price from $3.5 million to $9 million, and The One, currently under construction at Yonge and Bloor, which will be Canada's tallest building at 85 storeys, housing a five-star hotel and high-end restaurants and cafés.

Palace Row has exclusive listing rights to the penthouses at The One and each penthouse, at 7,000 square feet, is priced at $25 million. The three-storey penthouses feature a rooftop terrace with a private outdoor swimming pool and waterfall and private elevator whisking you to forever views 1,000 feet in the air.

These residences speak to Palace Row's mission to sell and market the most exclusive properties across Toronto, while elevating the city's global presence in high-end real estate, a goal which has never changed since the beginnings of Ferrow Real Estate.

Mak partnered with two of the most accomplished business professionals in forming Ferrow Real Estate: Edward Rogers, the chairman of Rogers Communications, and Robert Hiscox, a money manager from New York who is the co-founder and chief executive officer of Constantine Enterprises.

"Our first project together was 8188 Yonge Street in the prestigious Uplands community of Thornhill, and the logical next step in our partnership was to create a sales and marketing division, which led to Ferrow Real Estate and Palace Row," recalls Mak. "We now have a vertically integrated real estate company in that we offer everything you need to bring a project to market and to trade real estate. Robert and Edward are two of the most intelligent business people I've ever encountered. Incredible things can happen when you work with talented business minds who care deeply about everything they do."

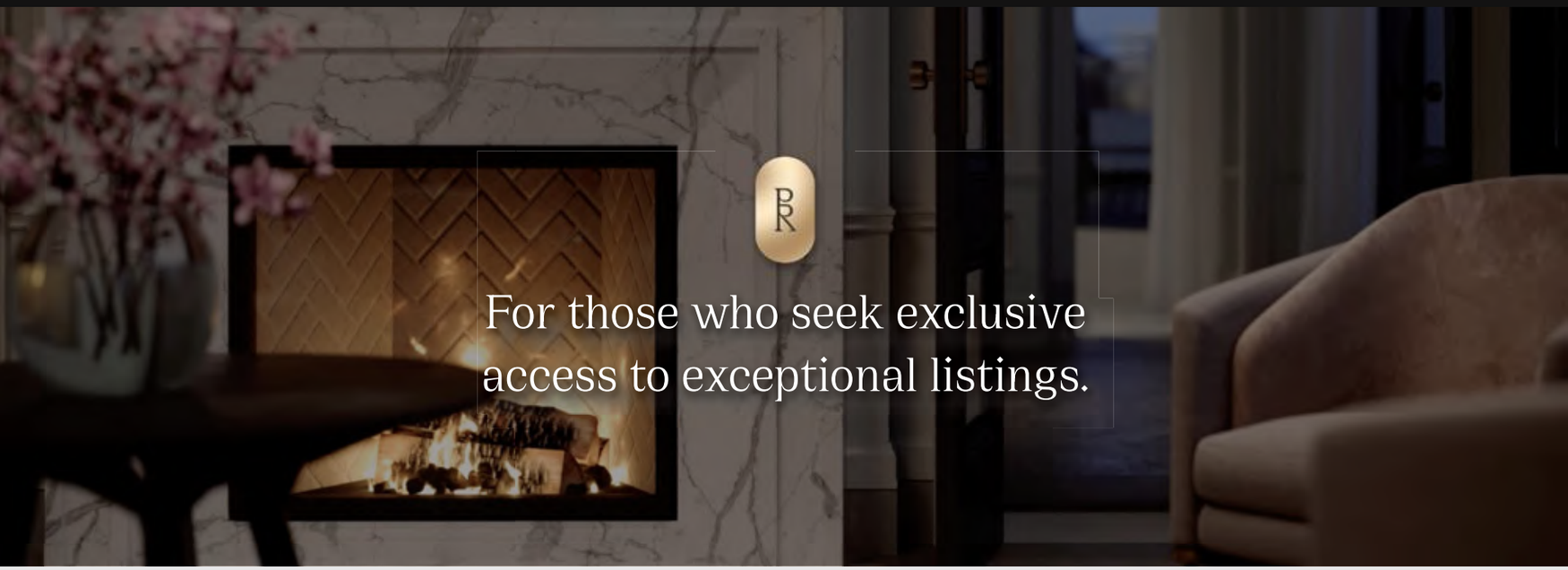
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With a pent-up wave of demand for beachfront homes on islands across the Caribbean, we take a look at properties on the rise in the Cayman Islands



CAYMANKIND: WHEN A VACATION DESTINATION STARTS TO LOOK LIKE A HOME

Taking a closer look at how beachfront investment properties have taken centre stage after the global health crisis and are offering a permanent pathway to paradise

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

The significant time spent at home since the onset of the pandemic has prompted many to consider the space in which they surround themselves in new and thoughtful ways. Home construction and improvements are at record highs. Pool installation businesses are hardly able to keep up with demand. Cottage properties are flying off the market shortly after listing. But many have also concluded that there's nothing quite like letting the ocean's waves bury your feet under the sand. Now, more than ever, people are looking to turn vacation locations into long-term investment properties.

A recent luxury lifestyle report released by Sotheby's International Realty finds that real estate agents have seen new buyers from the United States fueling the demand for beachfront homes priced at US$3 million and above, with a demand in prime properties on islands across the Caribbean, including Barbados, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, St. Barts, and Turks and Caicos.

With turnkey beachfront investment properties having taken centre stage during the global health crisis, we looked at one of the stars of the Caribbean islands: Grand Cayman.

Described as the Caribbean's "best-kept secret," with its relaxed and vibrant atmosphere and sophisticated populace, Grand Cayman combines the utopian ideal of island paradise with luxury living by having a solid infrastructure, forward-thinking government and, above all, a warm welcome.

"Everyone is very casual here. There's no pretense, there's no formality; it's just a great place to live, do business and visit," says Kim Lund, Cayman Islands luxury real estate broker and No. 1 team global producer at RE/MAX for residential sales.

As one of the 14 British Overseas Territories, made up of a collection of three islands in the Caribbean – Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and

PHOTOS BY IRENE CORTI – IRENECORTI.COM

Cayman Brac – the Cayman Islands have grown over the past 30 years to become one of the top choices in the Caribbean as a luxury lifestyle destination and a global player in the Caribbean real estate luxury market.

The islands are a cat's jump away from Miami, Toronto and New York. And this surge in real estate has resulted from the demand of an increased number of investors who are choosing to make the Cayman Islands their long-term home, realizing that the Caymans not only act as a safe financial investment, but also offer the beauty of living in an oasis.

With a population slightly over 65,000 people, the Caymanian community is a melting pot of more than 100 different nationalities from around the world. "People here in Cayman welcome people from all over the world into their society and community. 'Caymankind' is an incredible way to describe the Cayman Islands, because it represents the people and the feeling here. A community of rich heritage, friendliness and natural beauty. Anyone coming in here leaves this place and wants to come back," says Lund. "Caymankind," is a Caymanian expression coined to describe the way of living in the Cayman Islands, that speaks to the multilayered landscape of both people and cultures that make up the community.

Colourful events and celebrations are abundant. Known as the culinary capital of the Caribbean, the islands' annual Cayman Cookout, one of the world's most treasured food and beverage festivals, hosted at The Ritz-Carlton, is an example of the islands' vibrant and cosmopolitan flavour and flare.

Another cultural gem is the islands' national carnival, Batabano. During the first week of May, George Town, the capital of the Cayman Islands, is filled with residents and visitors from all over the world, celebrating Caymanian music and dance, all while showcasing the most elaborate costumes that reflect the landscapes, heritage and culture of the islands.

With all the luxuries of a North American lifestyle within a Caribbean setting, it's no wonder that so many foreigners flee to the Cayman Islands for their vacation getaways. What was once a one-week trip, however, has grown into a long-term connection to the islands, due in part to the islands' hot real estate market. As an added incentive, "the government has provided a 25-year residency certificate if somebody invests US$1.2 million in real estate. If they invest double that, US$2.4 million, they are given permanent residency versus a 25-year certificate," says Lund.

With luxury waterfront properties in the Cayman Islands regularly selling north of US$5 million, some of the islands' most impressive and notable inventory includes luxury condominiums at The Watermark that are offered in the US$8 million to US$27 million price point and located on Seven Mile Beach – one of the islands' most popular attractions that draws in visitors each year. Despite its name, the actual length is just a bit over six miles. Currently, in the Seven Mile Beach area, there are an abundance of new developments under construction or planned to start next year, which include Kailani Hilton Residences, Grand Hyatt Residences, Aqua, Seacrest, Lacovia, Aqua Bay and The Watermark.



Currently under construction, The Watermark is one of seven new resort/residential developments under construction located on Seven Mile Beach

> "ANYONE COMING IN HERE LEAVES THIS PLACE AND WANTS TO COME BACK"

The Watermark, which is set to be completed in a few years, caters to ultra-high-net-worth individuals looking to invest in a lifestyle that comes with services and amenities that one would find at the most exclusive five-star hotels, but within a private residential setting. These include butler staff, concierge, beachfront owners' conservatory, private cinema, private dining room, library lounge and state-of-the-art fitness studio to name a few. Fraser Wellon, one of the Cayman Islands' most notable developers, who is leading The Watermark, focuses his work on catering to his target market. "By introducing a lifestyle focusing on the expectations and comforts of high-net-worth individuals, this allows me to be creative when introducing amenities that integrate lifestyle enhancements based on the evolution of our product offering over the years," says Wellon.

Another reason why foreign investors have been drawn to these Caribbean islands has been their relatively low COVID-19 cases and the successful handling of the Islands through the pandemic. In addition to prudent government policy, this was, in part, thanks to the support of local billionaires on the island. In times of crisis, like the pandemic, and even Hurricane Ivan, the rebuild of the island was greatly due to the personal donations injected into the island from the ultra-wealthy, which speaks to the community and the Caymankind mantra.

The islands' great schools, health care, wonderful restaurants and a host of other amenities have contributed to the Cayman Islands' well-deserved reputation as a safe, stable and civilized jurisdiction. "We are a sophisticated Caribbean destination with the charm of a tropical Caribbean island. We have a highly educated population, with a fiscally responsible and forward-thinking democratic government," says Wellon.

With the islands' concrete plan to reopen, including the reintroduction of tourism while limiting the impacts of COVID-19, laying your feet on Seven Mile Beach no longer seems like such a distant thought. And, perhaps, neither is your conception of the islands as a long-term investment, rather than simply a vacation spot.

Whether you're buying into turquoise waters, white-sand beaches or a solid investment opportunity, all who visit Cayman Islands' shores agree on the two words, as Lund put it, that best describe the island: "Absolutely amazing."

www.visitcaymanislands.com
www.caymanlundteam.com

A PASSIONATE JOURNEY

Kilani Jewellery is an inspiring international success story set amid the love of family and friends, and a commitment to quality craftsmanship

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

A signature of the hip-hop lifestyle since it emerged in the late 1980s is its jewelry, more commonly referred to in the culture as "bling": the heavy chains, oversized diamond rings or large crosses that seem to make up such a large part of the overall image. For many of the athletes, artists or musicians of the hip-hop culture, much of that bling comes from a luxury custom jewelry factory and showroom in midtown Toronto, owned and operated by the Kilani family. "The Kilani family journey has been crazy," says the engaging trendsetter of Kilani Jewellery, Akram Kilani, in a recent interview with *Dolce*, in recalling his family's journey from Iraq to the top of the jewelry business.

It is a story of passion and attention to detail that the family brings to its jewelry design and manufacturing business and which has created one of the most admired luxury jewelers in Toronto. The Kilani Jewellery complex attracts an international clientele of musicians, celebrities and athletes from around the world because of its distinctive designs and handcrafted quality in all of its pieces, which has made this family-owned-and-operated business known as "the world's hip-hop jewellers."

It is also a story of a family's perseverance and drive to succeed in a new country, while leaving behind a legacy in a land they loved. For those who have never had to go through it, you read and wonder how anyone could, and not only survive, but also thrive.

"Our craftsmanship in making jewelry and plates and sculptures was passed down to our family by our ancestors stretching back hundreds of years," says Akram. "My father was an engineer by trade, but at night and on the weekend he would open up his jewelry store, and he would bring me and my brothers when we were younger to work at the store alongside our mother and our uncle. I was especially interested in the pieces because when I was 13, I was very interested in hip hop, and jewelry was a feature of that."

The Kilani family immigrated from their homeland to Toronto in 2001, "We knew our target was the hopes and dreams of North America and we figured Canada was the best choice, and Toronto specifically," says Akram. "I still remember seeing the Canadian flag, as Canada was always leading the world in peace."

The new land brought new opportunities for the Kilanis to continue their jewelry business, and they opened up a small booth at a jewelry exchange in the suburb of Scarborough, Ont., surrounded by about 25 other jewellers in other small booths. But even among those others in that cramped exchange, something about the Kilanis stood out: their genuine personalities, engaging manner, quality of goods and, wow, did they know

PHOTOS BY JESSE MILNS



Akram shows off some of the signature pieces of Kilani Jewellery



their stuff. Their creativity and passion practically leapt out of that kiosk in that they loved crafting jewelry, not just selling it, which was distinctive at the time. It wasn't long before they were making a mark with clientele in their newly adopted city, clientele who continued to return to them.

But while the Kilanis were still selling the traditional jewelry, such as rings, bracelets, necklaces and pendants, Akram still had his hip-hop itch to scratch. One day he went to a wholesaler and took a few pieces on consignment that were standard hip-hop fare at the time: heavy chains, crosses and bright, coloured "bling." He brought them out back at his family's booth because he wanted to see if he could sell them at the exchange, and his father erupted, saying, "We don't sell things like that here."

"It was quite a clash with my father," recalls Akram. "And while we were arguing and fighting, a Rastafarian gentleman wandered by and picked up one of the chains, tried it on and bought it. He also said he'd call all his friends because he hadn't seen chains like this. That man, Chris, is still a friend of mine today, and that really sent the Kilani family on its journey to where we are today."

Where the Kilani family is today is at Toronto's biggest and most luxurious jewelry complex, adjacent to Upper Forest Hill, one of Toronto's most desirable neighbourhoods. Here you will find the father, Zaed, the president and CEO; Zaed's wife, Nadhema, an executive board member; and Akram and his brothers Tarik and Mohannad, all general managers and board members with the



Akram sits in the new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility and showroom in Toronto

company. The pride and passion are palpable within the complex, as the entire family takes joy from the creation of the art form, which is jewelry design and manufacturing.

This new location has been a dream in the making for the Kilanis for more than a decade, allowing them to maintain their exceptionally high values and standards. It also marks another signpost in the Kilani journey, fuelled by hard work and determination to succeed in their adopted country. The state-of-the-art facility allows them to manufacture, design and showcase their custom-designed pieces all under one roof. Now, the operations for the Kilani group of companies are based on a wide range of employees, factories and suppliers worldwide. The retail store offers engagement and wedding rings (using the finest in white gold and the cleanest cut and clarity of diamonds), custom pendants and necklaces, chains, bracelets, earrings and watches. They have even begun a Kilani Jewellery app featuring specials and future discount codes.

> “OUR CLIENTS ARE USUALLY OUR FIRST INSPIRATION BECAUSE THEY ARE SO INSPIRED BY OUR MAKING AND OUR DESIGN”

When they began their business, 95 per cent of their clientele was Toronto-based. Today, 80 per cent of their business is international, including well-known celebrities, athletes and musicians, all of whom are attracted by the Kilani’s ability to listen to the customer and custom design what they want, and by doing this, the customer becomes an inspiration in the design.

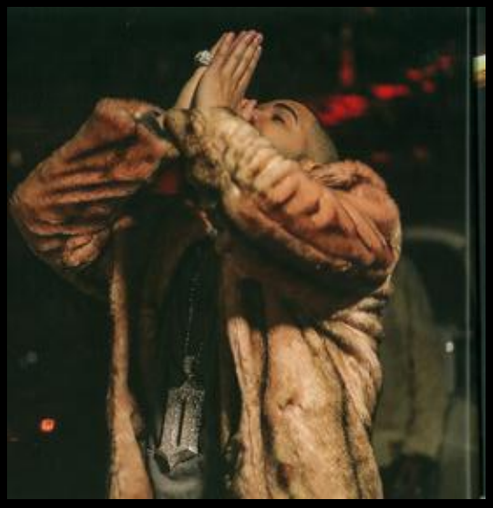
“Our clients are usually our first inspiration because they are so inspired by our making and our design,” says Akram. “Once they walk in here, they already become a part of the design, so our inspiration does happen from the influence of our clients.”

The Kilanis believe an educated customer is a satisfied customer, and that by going back and forth with them with sketches and creative ideas, they are involving the customer in the design and manufacturing process. This gives each piece the special added quality of personalization, and the comfort of knowing how their jewelry is made through the exclusive ToranoMAX brand name.

ToranoMAX reflects the standards and quality in which jewelry is made with full transparency. It also refers to a diamond-setting technique, where diamonds can be packed together seamlessly and as tightly as possible to create a spectacular look. ToranoMAX also reflects the quality of tools used to set diamonds, ensuring no chips, cracks or damage when diamonds are set. In short, having the ToranoMAX name associated with its products ensures Kilani Jewellery customers know they are only getting the highest quality of diamond in cut, clarity and colour.

“Listening and education is key,” says Akram. “Some people have celebration stories, or some others may have sad stories and they want a piece to remember someone by, and that can be very difficult because you have to incorporate so many things about the person into one piece. Or perhaps people are getting married and they want a piece to celebrate how they met. Then you see the smile on their faces, and that’s the real joy of our business, conveying the very real sentimental value of jewelry. Plus, the connection to people, keeping them as customers and friends who know we are always here for them.”

As an early adopter of lifestyles and trends, Akram has used social media to become a leading influencer in luxury custom jewelry, with the medium becoming even more important over these last 18 months of the pandemic. With his engaging smile, infectious personality and never-afraid-to-try-something-different mindset, Akram produces a video series on social media called









World-famous celebrities, influencers, actors, musicians and athletes such as rapper Drake, basketball star Steph Curry and the famed record producer and executive DJ Khaled among others have flocked to Kilani Jewellery because of the top quality of its diamonds, exquisite craftmanship and the captivating creativity of its custom designs, which seem to epitomize the hip-hop lifestyle









PHOTOS COURTESY OF KILANI JEWELLERY



Cool, confident and creative, Akram personifies an inspirational story of worldwide success

> “WE LOVE CRAFTING JEWELRY, AND SUCCESS HAPPENS THROUGH CONSISTENCY, LOVE AND PASSION FOR THE JOB YOU ARE DOING”

Fresh Out the Oven. His social media team numbers five people, and these professionally done videos are now approaching 70 episodes.

These marketing channels exist specifically to show potential customers how Kilani jewelry is made from beginning to end. There are Instagram videos showing the behind-the-scenes of jewelry making on a daily basis. Additionally, the Kilani Jewellery YouTube channel presents videos to further educate the consumer on buying jewelry. Kilani Jewellery is proud of its entire process and shows it with confidence.

“The quality of the drilling, the finishing, the polishing and the quality of the diamonds must be top,” says Akram. “It’s very important to have the quality of the diamonds because our tools are so high-end. We don’t think about how to save money during the creating process, we think about how to perfect every piece we come up with. I also like to share our success with others, as I believe sharing is caring.”

In expanding his video presence, Akram is planning on creating a movie in the future dealing with the hip-hop lifestyle and all of its personalities and its accoutrements, featuring Kilani jewelry, of course. With the full success and trending of the Kilani group of companies, there are plans for them to expand to other Canadian provinces, as well as to some of the major cities in the United States.

The Kilani family journey is an inspiring Canadian and international success story brought about through passion and a commitment to excellence. Their stature at the top of their business is also a result of a few key common attributes shared by all the family members.

“We love crafting jewelry, and success happens through consistency, love and passion for the job you are doing,” says Akram. “There has been so much this family has gone through together, and people love this family, and this makes me feel so great. There is no better feeling than this, and no money can be compared to my family, and that’s why we do it together all the time.”

www.kilanijewellery.com
@kilanijewellery

TASTEMAKER, PHILANTHROPIST, CONNECTOR AND INFLUENCER: NATASHA KOIFMAN

Koifman, one of the most respected names in North American public relations, drops her new collection of hand-picked items on her carefully curated e-commerce platform, ShopNK

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

Instrumental in developing some of the most successful publicity campaigns for a wide range of coveted brands ranging from fashion to luxury real estate across North America, Koifman has a sixth sense for the latest trends.

By and large, Koifman's expertise takes brand messaging to a whole new level. It only makes sense, then, that over the past couple of years, Koifman has successfully launched her own e-commerce platform, which displays collections meticulously curated by Koifman herself. Every item is a reflection of Koifman. As she told *Dolce*, "Intention is everything, and words matter."

With philanthropy always being top of mind for the PR guru, 10 per cent of every purchase made on the site goes to a charity of the purchaser's choice, bringing a humanitarian approach to the consumer experience.

From handcrafted heart-shaped coasters to her favourite cashmere robe, her latest venture goes to show that everything Koifman puts her name on is just an extension of who she is and the values she holds. "I want to leave the world a better place than I came into it."

Q: Can you tell us about ShopNK and the new home line?

A: I started ShopNK a couple of years ago, more so with my favourite items, whether it be clothing, or my favourite candles. This year, what I really wanted to do, because we've been spending so much time at home, was focus on all the elements that truly ground us within the space that we live in. That's why I focused on the home collection, specifically because I am an introvert and so I love my time at home and I wanted to share with others the things that truly give me that sense of comfort and peace.

Q: Tell us about the philanthropic component of ShopNK, and what role philanthropy plays in your life.

A: One of the reasons why I started ShopNK in the first place was because I wanted people to be mindful of the choices and the decisions they make when they make a purchase. Cause and philanthropy are really important to me, so I felt that if you make a conscious decision when you're actually choosing the charity when you're checking out, then you start to learn more about the charity, and therefore you might continue that process of donating or learning more about that cause, or maybe finding your own charity that you want to give back to on a more consistent basis. One of the most rewarding parts about my grown-up adult life is being able to give back to others, and so, for me, that was definitely a big aspect of ShopNK.

Q: And you also have the mentorship section. How did you come up with that idea?

A: Mentors to me are so important as you're developing your career. I feel fortunate that I attribute a lot of who I am and why I am who I am to the people who are around me, to my friends, and the people in the various industries. I recognized the value of that, and so what I did was I called a lot of my friends and asked if they could provide insight and help someone in their career, and everybody that I asked so far has said "Yes." So, we have these amazing mentors like Janet Zuccarini and Rajen Ruparell, who's one of the co-founders of Groupon and a founder of Endy. So, you have these brilliant minds that you have access to now for C$250, and 100 per cent of that will go back to a charity of your choice.

Q: Your curated selection of items is meant to elevate your everyday rituals, from morning to night. Could you give an example of one that could elevate your morning and one that could elevate your night?

A: I can give you the same thing that will elevate both, actually. One of my favourite items on the site is the cashmere robe. So, I literally wake up first thing in the morning and I put it on. It's the coziest thing. I actually travel with it as well, because it can also play double duty as a cardigan, but then, as soon as I go upstairs, one of the first things that I do is I put on my robe, and so I just find you want to feel that sense of coziness. The material on it is absolutely amazing. Parts of my daily ritual are: I always light a candle, first thing in the morning or during the day when I'm working at the counter, or even at night. When I used to go into the office every day, I would light a candle as soon as I came home. I love tea, because a lot of people, their daily routine is you come home at five o'clock and you have a cocktail. Five o'clock for me is when I have a cup of tea. That's what kind of calms me and relaxes me, and so those are just some of the things that give me that sense of comfort and peace, and that's really what I wanted to share with others.

Q: Throughout your home, we see how intentional the messaging around the artwork is, and, for example, the coasters in the collection also share a message. Why is it important for you to live intentionally, and how does that correlate with the work that you do every day?

A: I'm in PR, so intention is everything, and words matter. And so, the coasters are a really good example and they play into an exercise that I do with myself, that I've done since my twenties, called "The Five I Am's." And on the coaster, you'll have a coaster that says "I am" and then there are additional coasters that say "I am brave," "I am authentic," and it lists off the things that I've always felt are important to who I am, and I feel like they're important qualities for others as well. I think what's interesting about that exercise, actually, is the fact that as humans, we change, we evolve. Who you are in your twenties will be different than who you are at 25, 30, 35, and so, what I always do is ask myself: *What are those words that really help me stay my most authentic self?* And so, one of the words that's always consistent for

PHOTO BY JESSE MILNS

me is "I am philanthropic." That is an important one for me, and so that just goes back to I want to make sure that even when you look at COVID and everything that happened, there was so much need in the world, I remained consistent with where I gave back. And so, with the ShopNK site and Artists for Peace and Justice, that's a charity that's obviously very important to me. It's something that I started 13 years ago, and we've raised over $33 million for the children of Haiti. We built the very first free high school in Port-au-Prince, and this year, they lost probably 90 per cent of their funding, and that's because there's so much need in the world right now. And so, even during COVID last year, we still did a charity event and were able to raise just over $300,000. And so, I look at the things that really matter, and that's one of them. Making sure that we give back to others. And also I've always thought that I want to leave the world a better place than I came into it, and I think about that a lot, and that consistency is just important for me.

Q: What are three things that you can't live without?
A: My husband. I just got married. I can't live without love, and that's love in many aspects, love for my son, that's an important word for me, and I can't live without sunshine.

Q: What are you most proud of?
A: I would say one of the things I'm most proud of is the work that we've done in Haiti, because it has been 13 years, and we've been able to see the impact that providing an education for kids that they normally wouldn't have had, because there isn't any free education beyond junior high school. There's a girl that I met two years ago who's now at the University of Montreal. She was one of our graduates. She's in nursing school, and she's going back to Haiti to be able to help her community be better. Knowing that we were able to do that is just important for me.

Q: What is your definition of home?
A: Home is where the heart is. It's peace, it's comfort, it's love.

Q: What's your definition of happiness?
A: My definition of happiness is peace, and truly being surrounded by authentic, genuine love.

Q: What is your idea of *la Dolce vita*?
A: Being surrounded by love, being surrounded by authenticity, genuine people, but I would also say it's about giving of yourself to others genuinely and really sort of finding something that you can connect with where you're making a meaningful impact on someone else's life. And whether that's large-scale or small-scale, I think that's *la Dolce vita*.

www.shopnk.ca | nkpr.net
@natashankpr



Koifman, pictured in a stunning black dress by designer Andrew GN, notoriously only wears black, occasionally adding a pop of colour to her signature look

FLORIDA'S NEW BENTLEY RESIDENCES TOWER



The Bentley Residences Tower is 749 feet tall, with 200 units

The new Bentley Residences tower aspires to be, by the time it's unveiled in 2026, the most prestigious residential building in the already well-heeled neighbourhood of Sunny Isles Beach, Fla.

WRITTEN BY **CEZAR GREIF**

At first glance, what could be more different than a high-end car and a luxury condo? One is a small, albeit comfortable, box, while the other offers space over several rooms. Until recently, these two universes would never intersect. But, well-known Miami real estate developer Gil Dezer saw something in common: a commitment. A brand like Porsche, for example, is totally committed to what its brand represents. What if you could apply the same level of commitment to the identity of a high-end building?

"Working with a brand, there are things I know. I know that, for example, Armani is making sure I'm getting everything that Armani wants — they want to keep their name on the building," explains Dezer. "They know that a buyer might have stayed at the Armani hotel in Dubai and has a certain level of expectations. That's what a brand is: it's the same across the entire board. You step in the Armani in Milan, or in my lobby here in Miami, it'll smell the same. The textures will be the same. The types of woods used will be the same. Everything will be the same. If you walked into Mr. Armani's house, it would be the same. That's why it's Armani/Casa — the furniture runs through the whole building. A lot of buyers [are] going in and [buying] pre-construction these days. I look at myself as the buyer. I wouldn't give anybody my money unless I'm sure of what I'm getting, very simple. If a guy's going to show me a bunch of pictures, that's nice, but how do I even know I'm getting that? Who's making sure I'm getting that? We were able to do the Porsche Design Tower and then the Armani/Casa building. It got me excited working with brands. It made me notice they come up with buildings way better than all the other buildings. The brands really translate, from the design standpoint and functionality. It's really exciting."

His new project, the Bentley Residences tower, has just been unveiled and will be ready in 2026, with construction starting in 2023. The Bentley tower will be a 228-metre-tall building in Miami's Sunny Isles Beach area and will have more than 200 units.

But, why choose Bentley after doing the well-received Porsche Design Tower in 2018? "Bentley's one of the best car brands in the world," explains Dezer. "It's synonymous with the Rolls-Royce, but it's managed to keep itself more elegant than a Rolls by not getting involved in music video. It's kept itself above the fray. Look at the buyer of a Bentley and you'll immediately identify your customer base. It's the customer who identifies with the brand, who understands what they're looking for. A Porsche customer might be looking for something a bit more performance-oriented, while a Bentley customer might be looking for something a bit more luxurious. We don't need to focus only on celebrities. We can have the doctor who invented a pill that cured some disease."



Gil Dezer, president of Dezer Development, a company started in 1970 by his father, Michael Dezer. He had the vision to combine luxury car brands and high-end properties

> "IT'S GOING TO BE A DIAMOND THAT THEY CAN SEE ALL THE WAY FROM CUBA WHEN THE SUN HITS ON IT. IT'S GOING TO BE AMAZING"
>
> — Gil Dezer

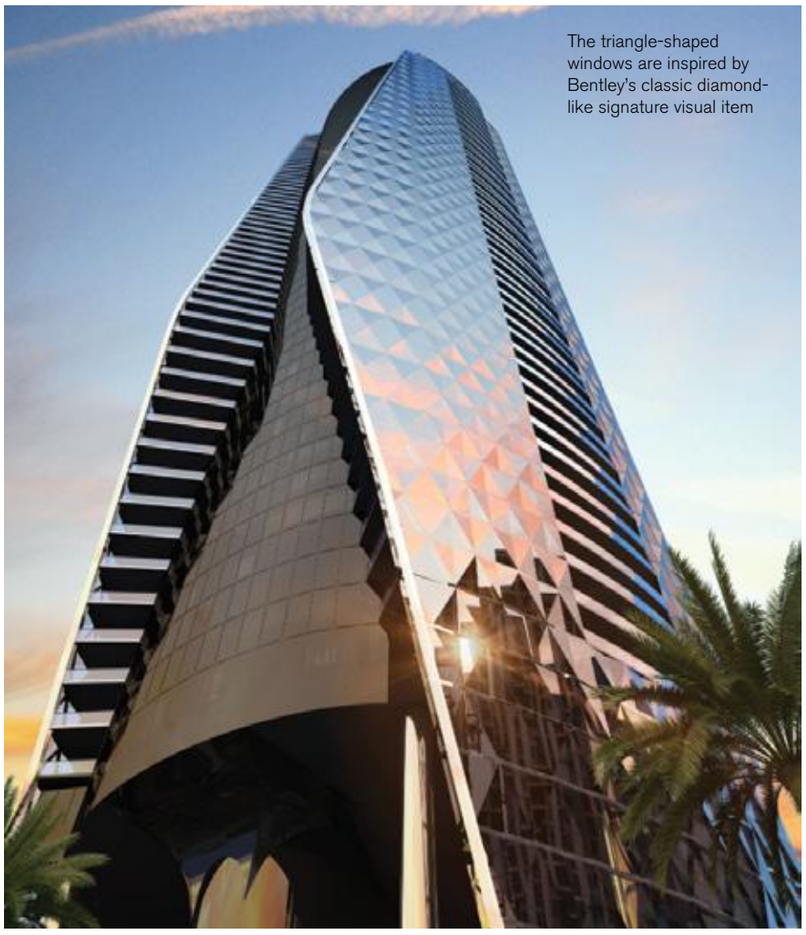
At the core of the technical side of the project is well-established architectural firm Sieger Suarez and its vice-president, Jose J. Suarez. "I studied under Louis Khan in Pennsylvania. Over the years, we grew from doing one-storey houses to thousand-feet-tall towers. Now, we specialize in high-end residential tall towers. We've gone as high as 1,500 feet [457 metres]. We don't have a lot of clients. We started working for the Dezer family 20 years ago. Gil stepped into his dad's shoes. It was at a time when nothing was happening in Miami. We were trying to find something different to do." Enter the branded residential building.

"These buildings are complicated; they take time," explains Charles M. Sieger, the firm's president. "It's not like working on a single-unit family house. They're very technical and, at the same time, very artistic. You need some experience doing these things. We worked with Bentley to pick up their esthetic, the way they do their stitching and diamond-shaped signature visual items. We assimilated those into the building. It's a pretty exciting building, even better than the Porsche one. We did something that had never been done before in Florida. We triangulated the glass and then pushed it in three inches [7.6 centimetres] to create that diamond effect that Bentley loves. Fifty per cent of the building has reflective silver. We built three mock-ups to make sure things fit — full-scale stuff. There are triangular windows in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, etc. They spend money because they can. But it's a bit different in America, and definitely a first for Florida."

If some modern luxury buildings are all flash and no substance, that's not the case for the Bentley building. The emblematic British car brand insists on being environmentally responsible. "Bentley's move toward sustainability has gotten really strong recently. They only use vegan leather made out of crushed grapes," explains Sieger. "They're doing a lot of things, so that they can recycle the cars. They impressed upon us that the project needs to be sustainable. Just by the nature of a high-rise, it's one of the most sustainable types of building you can have because they're usually in already ecologically destroyed areas."

The Bentley Residences is expected to surpass the Porsche Design Tower in terms of amenities and design. "What we learned from doing the Porsche Design Tower, we're now applying to the Bentley tower," explains Dezer. "Major things like each unit is now going to have a four-car garage inside the apartment, instead of two, on the Porsche tower. A four-car garage up in the sky? Unheard of. We had the swimming pools of the Porsche towers on the balcony, but it was also blocking the view of the ocean. Now, we've moved the location of the swimming pool, and we've sunken it. It's never been done before. It's going to be very cool. On every floor and every unit," enthuses Dezer. "You walk out of your elevator and you see water — from your own pool, 16 storeys up in the air," adds Sieger. "Things like that, that make the units a bit more liveable," says Dezer. "We're putting saunas in each unit, as well as outdoor showers on the balconies." When Dezer talks about balconies, don't start imagining small big-city balconies people use to store potted plants. "Balconies range from 1,100 feet to 1,800 feet [335 metres to 549 metres]; they're the size of a New York City apartment, with an outdoor kitchen," he laughs. "Of course, those buildings are also full service, they're like a five-star hotel without the transient guests," he adds. "You have the restaurants, the

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENTLEY RESIDENCES



The triangle-shaped windows are inspired by Bentley's classic diamond-like signature visual item



Charles M. Sieger, of Sieger Suarez Architects designed the tower after working on the Porsche Design Tower, also in Sunny Isles Beach, Miami

bars, the lounges, the massage rooms, the hair salons, car-racing simulators, etc."

Perhaps the most talked-about feature of the tower — its showstopper — will be its car elevators. Sieger remembers how the idea came about. "I said to Gil, 'Let's do a robotic elevator that takes you up to your apartment. Let's have something nobody can compare it to.'"

"We thought that if we do a car building, it has to be focused on the car lover, the car collector, the guy who wants it in his living room," adds Dezer. "We had engineers figure out how to do the car elevator in principle. I started YouTubing and Googling, and saw that there was an existing system in Germany. It was in Wolfsburg [Germany], in Volkswagen City, the brand headquarters. I saw this thing at their factory and thought, *This thing obviously works. The Germans don't mess around.* We figured out how to modify it to carry people inside the car and we got a patent. That's why we call it the 'Dezervator.'"

No one likes waiting for the elevator. Surely, a car elevator must mean more waiting. Not according to Sieger. "We had to actually slow the elevator down," he laughs. "They were faster than pedestrian elevators. Originally, they were 900 feet [274 metres] per minute. We had to slow them down to 800 feet [244 metres] per minute. It's not a long time to go 700 feet [213 metres]. Not only are they fast, [but also] you don't have to be in them. You can go and have a drink at the bar while your car gets deposited into your apartment. In the Porsche tower, we had one elevator serving two units. On the Bentley, we'll have four elevators serving four units. No one will have to wait. You go into a garage, you have to find a parking space, park your car, go to the elevator, change to another elevator. By the time you get home, you've done a lot of driving and a lot of walking. But with this, you pull in, you turn off your car and it's preprogrammed. It's always waiting for you when not in use. Even if you gave your car to a valet, it wouldn't be as fast. People who own these apartments don't want anyone banging up their expensive car; that's why they want to keep their car right next to them. Someone who has a $2.3-million Pagani car doesn't want anybody messing with it. They prefer to drive it themselves. There are all kinds of pluses that come with that car elevator. For example, the interesting thing about the elevators is that they're also very useful for moving in. The moving truck just puts all the furniture on the platforms, and then it almost instantly appears in your garage. You don't have to hold up the elevator to move in your couch."

Testing the elevator and making sure it worked seamlessly wasn't an easy task and took some time. "We developed this prototype building in Chicago to test the elevator moving up the cars," remembers Sieger. "It took about three years to make sure it worked. You can't take a risk with something like that. But the real key to the success of a car elevator is economic. Once you put a garage inside a unit, you get tremendous value for it, whereas if the garage is in some public garage box, you get almost no value for it. All of sudden, you can sell that garage space maybe not at the cost of your living room, but at a cost that more than pays for the cost of those elevators. That's how we got there. At the beginning, I got calls from my other clients saying, 'We heard you're doing an elevator to put cars into units. It's not gonna work; you're going to ruin your reputation.' But now, it has become a showcase around the world. We've gotten calls from China, from Taiwan … everybody's trying to steal the idea."

People living elsewhere watching the news are sure to associate the eastern Florida coast with high winds and hurricanes. Not to worry: the team behind the Bentley has planned for this. "When we get over eight storeys tall here

in Florida, we have to do wind-tunnel testing on buildings," explains Sieger. "We have to test three things: torsional drift (oscillation due to the wind), pedestrian comfort and wind pressure on the skin of the building, on the glass (for hurricanes)." But, sometimes, the extra weight from the swimming pools in each unit is actually an advantage. "The heavier the building, the less likely it is to move," says Sieger. "The bigger concern is always the wind. When it's blowing five miles an hour on the ground, it's blowing 30 miles [48 kilometres per hour] an hour 600 feet [183 metres] up in the air. What we've been doing in the upper levels of towers is we're including a secondary layer of glass — what we call a backpressure pocket. It captures the air, the air stops and then it's forced to go around the corner and leak back out of that area. So the air could be blowing at 40 or 50 miles [64 or 81 kilometres per hour] per hour outside, but you can still smoke a cigarette on your balcony, because there's no wind. That static pocket is important. You can create a great balcony, but no one can use it if it's too windy.

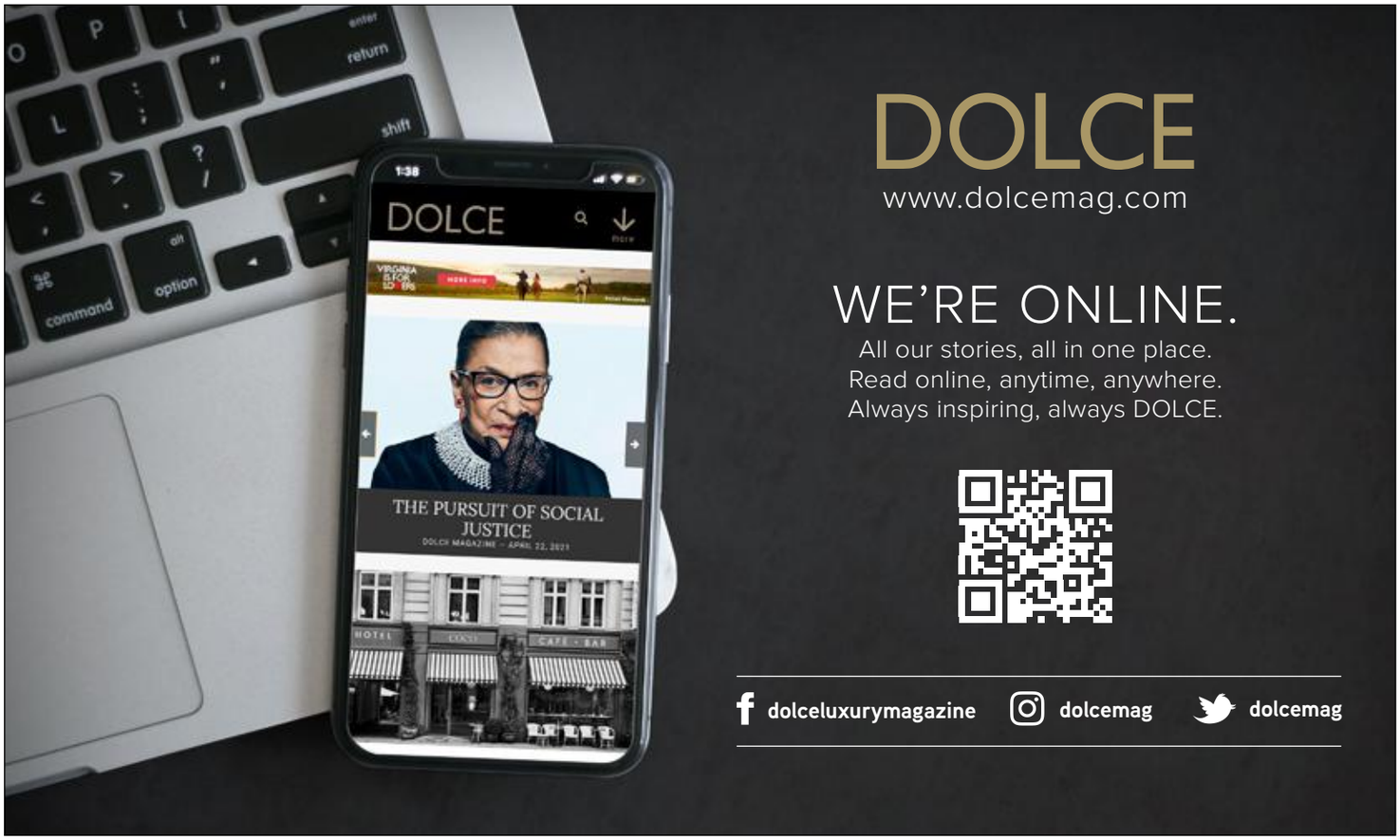
When looking at the rendering of what the Bentley tower will be like, one immediately notices the triangular-shaped windows. Dezer confirms this will be a replacement feature of the tower. "When we developed plans for the Bentley, we immediately thought of the triangular windows," he reveals. "We did the whole mock-up — I spent $300,000 just on the mock-up: to find out if we could do the windows that way. It's going to make a statement. It's going to be a diamond that they can see all the way from Cuba when the sun hits on it. It's going to be amazing.

> "I SAID TO GIL, 'LET'S DO A ROBOTIC ELEVATOR THAT TAKES YOU UP TO YOUR APARTMENT. LET'S HAVE SOMETHING NOBODY CAN COMPARE IT TO'"
>
> — Charles M. Sieger

You don't live on the exterior of your building, but when you tell people, 'Hey, I live in the Bentley tower,' people will understand. They'll ask, 'Is that the one with the diamonds sparkling?' Everybody will know where you live. There's a pride in ownership that makes a building iconic. After this one, we're going to have a hard time outdoing ourselves."

It's surely an exciting time for luxury real estate in southern Florida, with the region experiencing a true real estate boom. "What's been happening in Miami during the last three months is pretty unique," says Sieger. "We got a massive influx of very high-end people moving to Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach, ready to spend all kinds of money. They're coming from New York, Chicago, New Jersey, California. It's just crazy, I've never seen anything like it — I've been here my whole life. It reminds me of when I first started working out here. We'd open up a townhouse project in the suburbs. We'd have hot-air balloon rides and cotton candy for the children, and the properties would sell out over the weekend. It's almost what's happening here, except it's not a $16,000 home. It's much more expensive units. Last week, we were joking, 'Should we do Bugatti or Lamborghini next?'"

bentleyresidencesmiami.com



PAUL DE GELDER: SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

How a former Australian infantry-paratrooper-turned-Navy Clearance Diver survived a shark attack and became one of the world's leading shark advocates

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

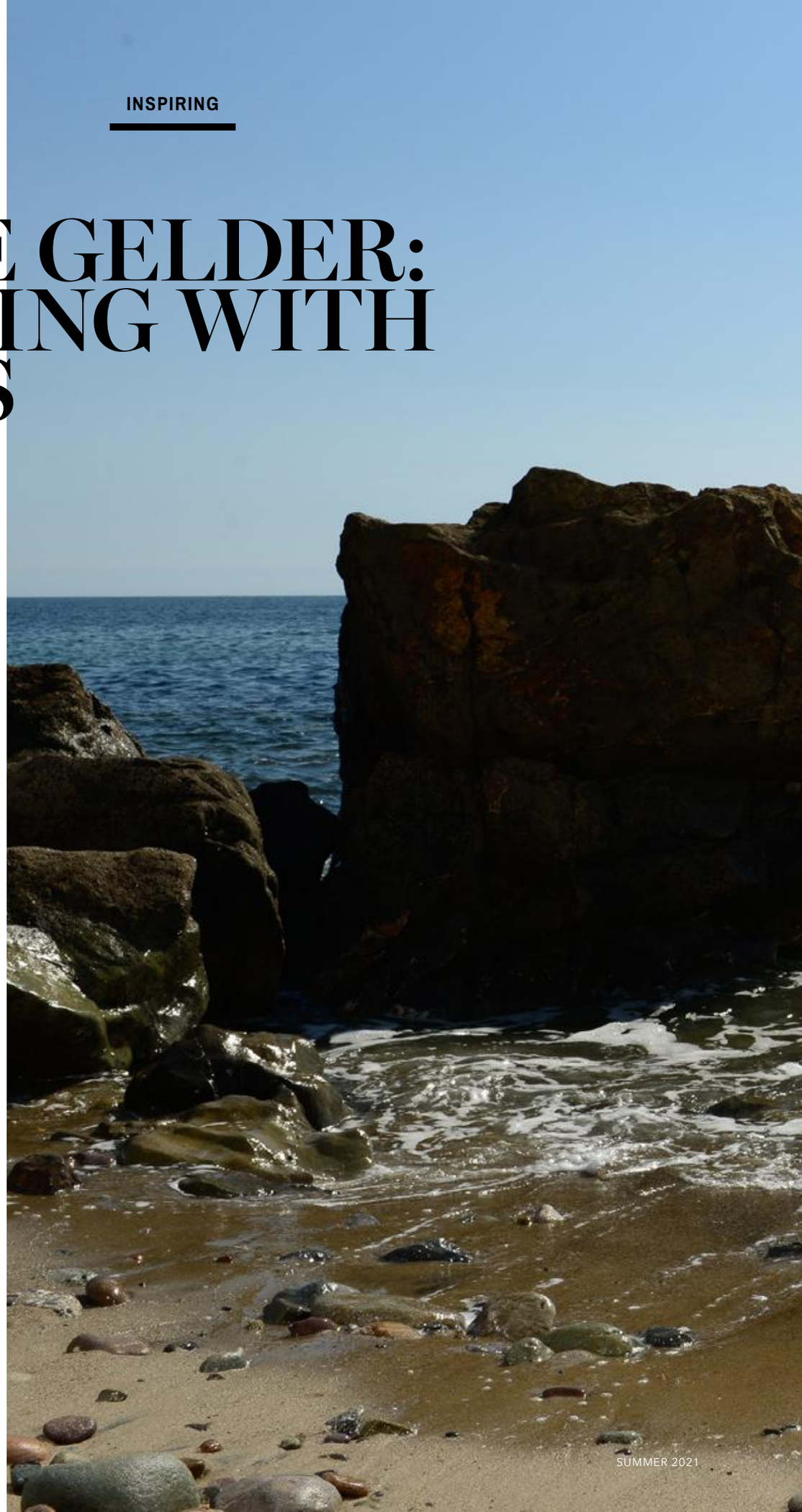


PHOTO COURTESY OF INDIGO INDUSTRIES

You're 110 feet under water, surrounded by four of the ocean's most ferocious predators — the great white shark — as you kneel on a bed of sea kelp. Without the safety of a cage and only the defence of a GoPro stick, the great whites slide out of the murky water directly by your face. This isn't your nightmare; this is Paul de Gelder's life.

De Gelder is one of the world's leading shark advocates and regularly comes face to face with the creatures themselves: "I'm looking at the shark, thinking, 'If it wants to, it could kill me' … I could never have imagined that I could hand-feed bull sharks in Fiji or hang out with massive tiger sharks in the Bahamas, but now that I know what to do, there is no fear. It's a mutual respect. It's a beautiful shared moment, where this wild apex predator will let you share its environment with it, and that's why they deserve our respect."

It's clear that de Gelder has a great deal of respect and admiration for some of the ocean's most dangerous predators, which may come as a surprise based on his introduction to the species. In February 2009, while he was serving in the Australian Navy, de Gelder was the victim of a shark attack that resulted in the loss of his right leg and his right hand.



Paul de Gelder lost his right leg and part of his right arm while he was serving in the Australian Navy. This event led him to becoming a shark-diving public speaker who advocates and educates people on the important role these apex predators play in our ecosystem

Before the attack, de Gelder grew up in Mornington Peninsula, Australia, with his two younger brothers and younger sister. He had a relatively normal upbringing until his teens, when he turned to self-harming and drugs (drugs came later) to cope with the bullying and discipline he experienced throughout high school.

Fortunately, he found an outlet through Thai boxing as a means to release stress and anxiety. It was a healthy way of coping with his environment at the time, until he took his fighting into the streets, smoked marijuana and drank, which led to him getting kicked out of his home at the age of 17. Throughout his early 20s, he worked in hospitality, but always knew he'd explore the world on a greater scale. So, he joined the Infantry Corps in the Australian Army, becoming a paratrooper in November 2000, and learned how to "hunt and kill people ... with the main job to hold ground no matter day, weather, season."

Successfully passing the extremely gruelling selection process, he went from being a soldier in the infantry unit into the Royal Australian Navy as a Clearance Diver, operationally in the Navy from April 2005 to February 2009.

De Gelder's attitude toward life is the furthest away from playing victim. Since his attack, he's been travelling the world, shining a light on the beauty of sharks and advocating for the role they play in our ecosystems. Most recently, he has written a book, *Uncaged*, which was published in July 2021. The book explores his journey from childhood to now, filled with all of the adventures that have come with his career in the military and as a shark-diving motivational speaker. We spoke with the charming Australian native from his Los Angeles home to understand how he overcame adversity and turned his fears into his greatest strengths.

Q: Can you tell us the motions of the day and what you remember of the day of the attack?

A: We were doing a counter-terrorism exercise. It was me and three of my teammates in a little black inflatable boat we call a 'zod,' and my chief, and all the scientists testing the equipment were on the wharf. This is alongside the big Navy base in Sydney right in Sydney Harbour, in the heart of Sydney. You can see the Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge; it's not way out in the middle of nowhere. So, me and three of my teammates were supposed to be in the water, one at a time, swimming from point A to point B. The goal was to do surface swimming, and then scuba diving, and then rebreathers, which have no bubbles. This automatic detection system was going to try and find us and track us, and so we get too far in the pipe of the exercise. I had my new guy in the water, and, then, about 30 minutes later, I pulled him out, and I jumped in to give him a rest. Within four or five minutes, a bull shark came up from underneath me and grabbed me by the right hand and the back of my right leg in the same bite and decided it wanted them more than I did, and so that was pretty terrifying. You know, I had never seen a big and dangerous shark, and the only thing I was more afraid of than sharks was public speaking, which is very strange because now I'm literally a shark-diving public speaker. But, I was terrified, and the pain was just agony. It was tearing the flesh out of my body while it was drowning me under water at the same time, and I was terrified. But, there was nothing I could do. I couldn't fight back. It had my hand. It had my leg. And, you really find out how vulnerable you are in the water when an animal like that decides to eat you. So, I just thought I was dead, but eventually the teeth

> "SOMETIMES FACING (THOSE) FEARS HEAD ON IS THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET PAST THEM"

got all the way through my leg and my hand and tore them out of my body. And, while the shark was swallowing and swimming away, I popped to the surface and saw my safety boat in the distance, and so I started to swim toward that, not even knowing that I was injured. And I took a stroke with my right hand, and that was when I saw that my hand was missing, and I didn't know what was wrong with my leg; I just couldn't feel it. So, I was swimming back to the safety boat with one hand and one leg, and the guys, my three teammates, in the boat said that they could see I was swimming through a pool of my own blood, and they said it was so thick that they could taste it in the air when they got closer to pick me up. I didn't think I was going to make it. I thought the shark was going to come back, and I was just waiting for it to grab my ankle and pull me under water and kill me. But, it never came, and the boat got to me first, and the guys pulled me out of the water, rendered first aid as best they could with the minimal amount of equipment that we had on the boat and just tried to keep me alive until the paramedics could get there.

Q: Wow, so was it even on anybody's radar that there could be animals or something like sharks in the water?

A: We knew that they were in Sydney Harbour, but nobody had been attacked in 60 years, so even though I had sharks on the brain every time I got in the water, you put it in the back of your mind, and you go, "There's more chance of me dying in the car on the way to work than there is a shark" – then a shark attacks you and eats you …

Q: Was the attack the moment you experienced the most pain or was it the physical and mental healing afterward?

A: I think the most painful bit was the day after the surgery to have the rest of my leg taken off, when the pain medication didn't work, or it exacerbated it, and I was moved out of my quiet corner of the hospital of the Navy wing and put into a general population area where all I had was a curtain around me. People had visitors, and I was tripping out on ketamine, I was on morphine, and I was in absolute agony. And, all I wanted to do was die for 20 hours. They couldn't get it under control. I was just rolling from side to side in my bed, bawling my eyes out, begging to die, so those 20 hours were probably the worst of everything, and probably my whole life.

Q: And what were the next few weeks like after that? How long did it take for reality to set in?

A: Within a day, reality set in. I guess the military is very good at training to disconnect the emotions and just thinking things from a logical standpoint, and I realized pretty much straight away that there was nothing I could do about it. You know, I'm not going to be able to grow my limbs back, and so the only thing I can do is deal with this situation as best I can, and so, instantly, I think, "I've got to just dispel this fear with knowledge." We have the world's knowledge at just a few keystrokes, and so I got onto Google and thought, "I'm going to need some prosthetics if I'm going to get back to work," because that was the goal, you know, this was all motivated out of fear. I was terrified of losing my whole career, everything that I had worked for throughout those past nine years or something and becoming that person I was before joining the military. And so people think fear is bad, but it can actually be a very powerful motivator, and so I just did every single little thing I could to try and ensure my best chances to get back to work … I would never be happy pushed under a desk, and so I thought, "OK, if I've got to mix it up with these elite athletes that I call my mates, then I'm going to have to train three times harder just to be half as good." And so it was very basic steps and very small achievable challenges and goals in the early days. What do I need to do? OK, I need to get really fit. I need to learn to use my body again, and I need prosthetics to help me … I started looking for the best and greatest in prosthetic technology. Then, I went to YouTube and started looking up Paralympic athletes and how they did their things, and, so, throughout all of these avenues, I started to create self-belief. As unrealistic as it seemed at



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAUL DE GELDER





De Gelder has taken some of the most famous people in the world diving with sharks and admits that every single one of them was scared, but that they came out of the water saying it was one of the most incredible things that they have ever done in their life

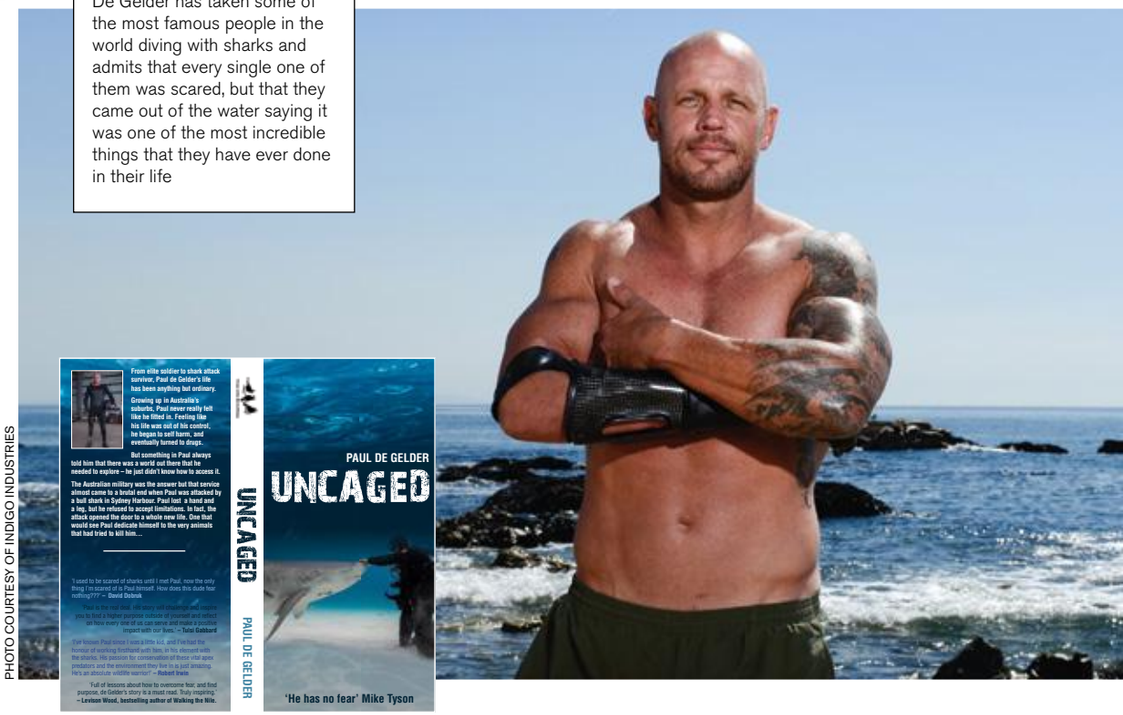


PHOTO COURTESY OF INDIGO INDUSTRIES

De Gelder recently published his book *Uncaged* in July of 2021. The book explores his journey from childhood until now, filled with all of the adventures that have come from his career in the military and as a shark-diving motivational speaker

the time, that was all I had to hang on to, small achievable goals to get me to the impossible dream at the end.

Q: Wow, and what would you like people to learn from your shark attack, and where you are now?

A: If you had asked me previous to the shark attack if I would rather lose two limbs or die, I would've said I'd rather die. And then something like this happens, and you realize that it's not so bad. A lot of the times, most of the time, we create scenarios in our lives and in our minds that are actually far worse than anything we're actually going to face. We diminish the life and the ability for us to achieve remarkable things just by having that internal dialogue that repetitively gives you that negative mindset, so we need to be very careful about that internal monologue that we feed ourselves. I was very fortunate that, after joining the military, I had trained myself into believing in myself because it was so hard to get into the areas of the military that I got into. Through selection processes, I had to say to myself, "You can do this, you can do this, you're strong enough, you're good enough." And so I practised that over and over again and so that had come into play in my recovery. So, if we can all sort of practise that internal monologue, that positive self-speak, then we're going to have a better chance at creating the lives that we all want. And I think that's part of the reason why a lot of people, depression and anxiety and suicide are all off the scales these days, and I think it's partially because we don't have that great internal monologue. We're not pumping ourselves up, and we can't rely on social media and comments and likes to have other people to tell us this stuff. We have to do it for ourselves, and then, then we can do it for other people, and we can lift other people around us. But, it's kind of like not looking after your body, eating unhealthy food, not working out and then expecting yourself to look after your kids and family and for them to be healthy and fit and strong. You just can't do it. You need to look after you first, and then lift up everyone around you.

Q: The idea that you're advocating for the thing that took parts of your body from you is just so beautiful. What was that process like when you decided to start advocating for these creatures?

A: I never blamed the shark. I was mad at it. I was pissed at it, but, like I said, I'm a very realistic person, and I chose a dangerous life. I'm riding a big, black Italian sports bike, I'm jumping out of aircraft, I'm playing with explosives under water. I'm doing all manner of crazy dangerous stuff. You can't choose that path and then get upset when something goes wrong. That's the path you chose, and it could've been any number of things. At least this way, I get a cool story, it gets me free beer at the pub, and so that's a win, as far as I'm concerned. And I didn't really want to have anything to do with sharks after that. I just wanted to get back to work, and so that was my entire focus, but because [the attack] was so high-profile, every time there was another shark-attack interaction around Australia, the media would come to me for a comment. And, I started to learn about sharks out of necessity because I wanted to be able to give an educated opinion instead of just an opinion. So, I started to learn. Once again, the greatest tool is the fact that we have the Internet. I can get on Google, and I can Google sharks, and I can learn all about them, and that was when I discovered that we, as humans, are killing over 100 million sharks a year, and, by comparison, sharks kill maybe 10 people in the whole world every year, and so that made me realize, who should be afraid of who?

You know, my military career was all about protecting those who can't protect themselves, and to stand up for those who can't stand up for themselves. And so I saw this as an opportunity to continue this ethos in another realm and speak up for these animals that don't have their own voice, that are vitally important to the oceans,

and they just don't deserve to be slaughtered like this. They're just going about their business being sharks … They have a very important position in the ecosystem that keeps our oceans healthy, and if we keep destroying our ocean the way that we are, it's going to reach a fulcrum point where it's going to tip over the edge and there is no return. And it will just die, and then we die next, so we're actually looking after ourselves by looking after the oceans, looking after the sharks, looking after the fish. The ripple effect always comes back to us, and so we need to be a little bit more cognizant about what we're doing to this one single home that we have that is on a steady decline.

Q: What would you say are some of the biggest misconceptions when it comes to sharks?

A: Maybe the fact that people think that they're just sitting there waiting, and lurking, to eat everyone, but they're not mindless killers. You dive with some of these big sharks, like great whites and tigers and bulls, and you can see the intelligence in their eyes. And, especially with great whites and tiger sharks, they all have different individual personalities. We have sharks that return to the same place every year, and you can always tell who it is by the personality. And, they're just beautiful animals, and I've taken some of the most famous people in the world diving with sharks — Mike Tyson, Will Smith, Ronda Rousey, David Dobrik — and every single one of them was scared, but every single one of them came out of the water saying it was one of the most incredible things that they have ever done in their life, and their whole perception on sharks had changed. And so sometimes facing those fears head on is the only way you're going to get past them.

Q: Why do you think Hollywood is obsessed with sharks?

A: I don't think Hollywood's obsessed with sharks. I think that they are obsessed with finding stories to scare the crap out of people for entertainment, and I love watching these shark movies. I got to interview Blake Lively and hang out with her for *The Shallows*, and I got to hang out with Ruby Rose and Jason Statham and interview them for *The Meg*. I thoroughly enjoy those shows. I'm more concerned about those people who can't tell the difference between a documentary and a Hollywood movie than I am about sharks. But, they're an animal, that, even though most people are terrified of them, most people will never, ever see them with their own eyeballs in their entire life. And so I think that's something that Hollywood loves because they can play on that fear that people already have inherently in their soul. But then you can tune into *Shark Week* and watch the actual facts of these sharks that are actually really amazing animals and a beautiful part of the ecosystem.

Q: Can you tell us about your vegan diet and why you have made that choice?

A: I started about four and a half years ago, and I'm just a firm believer that, when the universe is speaking to you, you need to listen, because it's for a very important reason. And so I didn't really know anything about it. Then, I went to Africa to shoot a documentary with a friend of mine called Damien Mander, who runs the International Anti-Poaching Foundation. He has a wonderful documentary called Akashinga, which means "the Brave Ones," that's about his entirely female-run anti-poaching unit in Zimbabwe. It's an amazing documentary about some incredible women, and so I was working with him, and he started talking about it. He was eating from a different pot to his rangers, and I thought he was saving the meat for himself, and so I was being cheeky, saying, "What's up with the separate pot?" And he was like, "I don't eat meat. The rangers eat meat." And it kind of took me off-kilter. I expected the opposite, and I said, "Why don't you eat meat?" And he said, "Well, I came out here to protect these animals, and then I was going home and I was eating these animals, and I felt like a hypocrite." That struck a bell with me because I dislike hypocrites thoroughly. The worst leaders that I've had in the military were always hypocrites, the "do as I say" sort of leader, not the "do as I do," and so I always strive to be a leader by example. I would never ask anybody to do something that I wouldn't be willing to do myself … And so I started looking at the health benefits, the ecological benefits, the environmental benefits, the torture and the suffering that these animals go through, and it basically made me think that there's no reason not to do it … The only reason I could think of not to do it was because I was scared I'd become a smelly, skinny, tree-hugging hippie, and so then I started meeting bodybuilders and really fit athletes that were vegan … Four and a half years later, I love it. It makes me feel good in my soul, and I think that's the most important aspect … to be able to maintain something like this and it's just not necessary. Some people aren't willing to think about what they're doing. They're not willing to progress to another level of compassion … People are just disconnected from their environment that they live in. They don't have compassion for these animals that deserve it. No living creature, as far as I'm concerned, deserves to go through a life of cruelty, suffering and torture, and that's exactly what happens to these animals.

Q: If you were to be a shark species, out of the more than 500 that exist, which one would you be most like and why?

A: I'd probably be a cookiecutter shark because they just sneak out of the depths and grab a bite of food, and nobody even knows they're there, and you can just sneak up. I like to eat, and so the cookiecutter sharks were first discovered when the U.S. Navy were bringing their submarines in for refits, and they kept finding all of the cookiecutter-shaped chunks out of the rubber dome on their sonars, and they couldn't work out what it was. It was these tiny little sharks called the cookiecutter shark, and they do it to whales and everything. They just sneak up to everything and take a cookiecutter bit out and take off. I think that would be me, sneaking to get the food.

Q: Where's your favourite place to travel to and why?

A: Wherever the adventure is. I don't really have any favourite place. Just like I love all sharks for the beauty and the differences of each of them, every other place that I go to has another aspect that's amazing about it. I just love travelling and seeing new cultures and new places.

Q: What does your family think of your career now?

A: I've never asked them. I think Mum is just really proud, probably Dad, too, after where I started out. They probably didn't have very high hopes for me, and so now I've done really well. I excelled in the military; they're all proud back there, I'm sure. Now, taking what happened to me to another level and creating another whole life, I think they're pretty proud. I think my brothers and sister think I'm crazy. I think most of my friends think I'm nuts.

Q: How would your 10-year-old self react to what you do now?

A: I would be my own hero, absolutely. I literally get to walk in the footsteps of my own heroes now, like Alby Mangels, the Leyland brothers, obviously Steve Irwin, Ron and Valerie Taylor — you know, those are the people that I loved watching growing up. Now, I get to do exactly what they did, and it just makes me so happy.

Q: Where do you feel most at peace?

A: Under the water, in the ocean. I don't understand why people don't want to scuba dive because they get claustrophobic, whereas I have the total opposite feeling. It's so open and just vast, and I think there's no other way to be totally encompassed by nature as when you're under the water in the ocean, breathing like one of the fishes, hanging out with weird aliens. It's like going to space, an alien environment. There's all these little alien creatures swimming around you. You've got to have a breathing apparatus. It's the coolest thing ever. It's so relaxing and peaceful; no one can talk to you, there's no social media. You can just hang out with fish.

Q: What's your definition of pain?

A: Going through life without finding value or purpose.

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A NEW YORK MINUTE

As the world picks up again, keep track of time in style, no matter where you're headed. Whether it's to the Big Apple, or anywhere else in the world, it's *time* we get back into the moving parts of life — which includes top-tier timepieces

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**



1.MORITZ GROSSMANN, BACKPAGE TRANSPARENT Grossmann offers a glimpse into its German watchmaking artistry with the Backpage Transparent, which flaunts a transparent sapphire crystal dial, gold chatons with white sapphire jewels, and brown-violet hue handcrafted hands. **www.cellinijewelers.com**

2. A. LANGE & SÖHNE, SAXONIA THIN (37MM) Saxon watchmakers A. LANGE & SÖHNE have distilled both elegance and timelessness into the svelte architecture of this watch, designed with care and attention to match the sophistication of its owner. **www.cellinijewelers.com**

3. FRANCK MULLER, LONG ISLAND PEONY As its name suggests, Franck Muller's luscious creation flaunts a bouquet of eight delicate hand-painted blooming peonies on its dial, paired with mesmerizing diamonds, exquisitely wrapped by a whimsical pink alligator strap. **www.cellinijewelers.com**

4. BOVET, RÉCITAL 26 BRAINSTORM CHAPTER ONE A true collector's watch, Chapter One's complexity of miniaturized components is a feast for the eyes to a watch aficionado, and a testament to Bovet's ability to create wonders for the wrist. **www.cellinijewelers.com**

5. BOVET, RÉCITAL 26 BRAINSTORM CHAPTER TWO Entirely manufactured in the Bovet 1822 workshops, with a limited production of 60 movements for the entire collection, this blue quartz dial in an 18K gold case lives in every horological fantasy. **www.cellinijewelers.com**



Welcome to Virginia, THE STATE WITH A LOT TO LOVE

For more than 50 years, 'Virginia is For Lovers' has been one of the most recognizable tourism taglines in the world. With its stunning scenery, memorable wineries and open roads, it's also a tagline founded in truth



PHOTO BY KELSEY JOHNSON

Humpback Rocks provides glorious views of the mountains and the Shenandoah Valley at the Blue Ridge Parkway Milemarker 5.9, George Washington National Forest



PHOTO BY MARK MACKOVIAK

At Great Falls, the Potomac River builds up speed and force as it falls over a series of steep, jagged rocks and flows through the narrow Mather Gorge. It offers many opportunities to explore history and nature, all in a beautiful 324-hectare park only 24 kilometres from the nation's capital

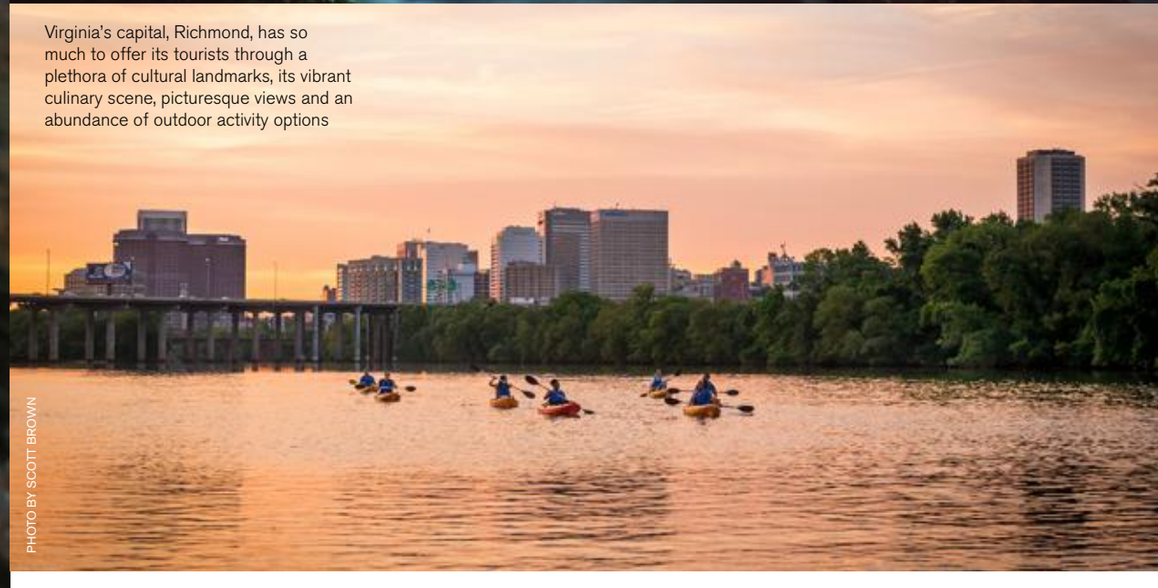


PHOTO BY SCOTT BROWN

Virginia's capital, Richmond, has so much to offer its tourists through a plethora of cultural landmarks, its vibrant culinary scene, picturesque views and an abundance of outdoor activity options

There's a lot to love about Virginia. Located halfway between New York and Florida, it's a place defined by its natural beauty and rich history. Whether it's the views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, home to what's known as America's Favourite Drive, the fact that the state has more than 300 wineries or that it's an always-open golf destination, Virginia is a place filled with wonder waiting to be discovered.

To understand what makes Virginia so captivating is to first take a look at its history. Being the place that provided eight of America's presidents, you don't have to travel far to see residencies, museums and cultural establishments that explore America's past. Thomas Jefferson was one such president so passionate about food and wine that, when he travelled abroad, he would bring back recipes to try, along with vines he hoped would flourish at his Virginia home, Monticello.

As the house that appears on the back of the American nickel, Monticello is a staple of American history and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site open for tours and visits. Other historical sites include Colonial Williamsburg, the world's largest outdoor living museum, that serves to educate its guests through immersive 18th-century experiences and houses 88 original, historically preserved buildings. As well as getting to see how people used to live in that time, you can watch demonstrations of foraging and frequent taverns to enjoy meals prepared as they were back then.

If that weren't enough, you can visit Jamestown, America's first permanent English colony; or Yorktown, widely known as the location for the final battle of the American Revolutionary War; or take a drive to Mount Vernon, as it's the home of America's first president, George Washington, a top destination in the state. Whatever the town or city you want to see in Virginia, you'll be sure to find something with a story.

History is only one of many ways to explore the state. Another fine way is to take to its roads. As a place with so many different regions, Virginia is packed with personality. You have Virginia Beach, the closest warm-water beach to Canada. Drive

No other home in the United States more accurately reflects the personality of its owner than Monticello, Jefferson's architectural masterpiece and beloved mountaintop home. Guided tours of the house are offered daily throughout the year, while outdoor gardens and plantation tours are offered from April through to October

Colonial Williamsburg's historical area explores dozens of original buildings, homes and shops reconstructed on 122 hectares — most on their original foundations. Rare animal breeds, historic trades, re-enactments and lovingly restored gardens add layers of authenticity to the Colonial Williamsburg experience

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION

four hours west and you'll find yourself hiking or cycling in spectacular mountains. Jump back in the car and head for a place like Richmond, a city gaining a reputation for its upcoming chefs and shopping scene. There's so much to do in the state that you'll struggle to decide what you want to see first.

And whether you're taking a car or motorcycle, travelling Virginia's roads will allow you to take in the scenery and experience the state's beauty as intended. Its landscapes encompass beaches with pristine sand dunes, national parks with panoramic views, state parks consistently rated the best in the nation and hiking trails stretching past natural landmarks. Shenandoah National Park is just one. With nearly 80,000 hectares of protected land, a visit here could see you stumble across wildflowers, waterfalls, songbirds and black bears. Great Falls Park is another; it's a beautiful 324-hectare park home to a range of outdoor activities.

For many, the best way to experience all of this in one trip is via the Blue Ridge Parkway. Running for 755 kilometres through the southern and central Appalachians, it promises wildlife and offers activities like hiking, camping and picnicking, to name just a few. Particularly in the fall, the trees showcase an unforgettable view of their rich, full and vibrant colours.

As well as habitats, mountains and other natural sightseeing opportunities, driving the roads of Virginia will introduce you to its small towns. Here, you'll find places filled with people ready to hear your story, share theirs and welcome you with open arms and southern comfort. Last year, the state had the *Virginia Values Act* go into effect, extending non-discrimination protections for the LGBTQ+ community, as well as legal protection for people of colour, people of faith, immigrants, women and more. There are multiple events celebrating diversity throughout Virginia, including a growing number of Pride festivals and inclusivity initiatives such as OutRVA in the state capital of Richmond.

For all the different destinations that work to shape Virginia, there are a number of points that bring everything together. First, a love for food. With a climate that makes for four distinct seasons, agriculture booms. Chefs have access to incredible produce that, naturally, translates to incredible tastes. If you're looking to dine at one of the finest restaurants in the world, The Inn at Little Washington in Virginia remains the first and only Michelin three-star restaurant in the nation's entire capital region for the third year in a row. Inspired by American cuisine, chef and proprietor Patrick O'Connell's inn draws admirers from around the world.

Oysters are one Virginian staple. As the oyster capital of the East Coast, Virginia's eight regions produce different flavours and styles, and you can expect to see oyster farms and restaurants pushing



PHOTO BY SCOTT K. BROWN

Starting in northern Virginia and following the Appalachian Mountains along the western part of Virginia, the Blue Ridge Parkway boasts some of the world's most spectacular scenery, making it a great road for cycling enthusiasts

THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO IN THE STATE THAT YOU'LL STRUGGLE TO DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE FIRST



PHOTO BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS

Whether you've already treated your palate to a legendary Lynnhaven oyster or have yet to take your first slurp, Pleasure House Oysters will delight your senses as you set out on the Lynnhaven River for an on-the-water experience unlike any other. See how Lynnhaven oysters are harvested, all while enjoying their legendary flavour during your visit to the Lynnhaven



The Cavalier is a well-known presence overlooking Virginia Beach's exclusive north end, standing as a luxurious symbol of the days of elegant, refined hospitality. Originally opened in 1927, its restoration and reopening in 2018 reimagines luxury brimming with history



PHOTO BY ASHLEY LESTER



PHOTO BY SARAH HAUSER

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum showcases the lasting role that Virginia has had, and continues to have, on the development of country music. As an ode to Virginia's music heritage, Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion music festival, a yearly festival, celebrates the past, present and future of Appalachian music

THERE ARE MORE THAN 300 WINERIES IN THE STATE OF VIRGINIA, EACH CRAFTING THEIR OWN SPECTACULAR, AWARD-WINNING DRINKS WAITING TO BE EXPLORED

the envelope to bring you into the experience. Picture being seated at a table in the water and served oysters with unrivalled freshness. Here, you can make it happen.

Another product, and perhaps lesser known, is peanuts. Virginia is home to a number of peanut growers all producing standout produce, and you have the Virginia ham, another staple of the state, known for its southern sweetness. Agriculture abounds in Virginia, and you'll find a festival dedicated to celebrating so many delicacies, from apples and chocolate to garlic and Brunswick stew.

Naturally, all good food has the potential to be paired with good wine. There are more than 300 wineries in the state of Virginia, each crafting their own spectacular, award-winning vintages waiting to be explored. The state's reputation when it comes to wine is so renowned that some consider it the Napa Valley of the East Coast.

For those looking to take their indulgences to the next level, the state also offers wonderful accommodations and spas to help you relax, depending on your tastes. A number of the state's downtown inns use historic houses to celebrate history, offering a comfortable stay in a place that promises the true state experience. In addition to these historic inns, you'll find resorts perched at the top of mountains in South Virginia and hotels spanning Virginia Beach with unrivalled spas and pampering treatments.

With so much luxury on offer, there's also something about the place when it comes to superstar talent. Dwayne Johnson owns a farm in Virginia, author John Grisham lives in Charlottesville and Dave Matthews of the Dave Matthews Band started his career in the same city, working as a bartender at one of the town's bars. Similarly, TV shows like *Homeland* and even movies like *Wonder Woman 1984, Harriet* and *Dirty Dancing* have all been filmed in a Virginian location. For those who are particularly big fans of the 1987 classic with Jennifer Grey and Patrick Swayze, you can sign up to take part in one of the Dirty Dancing weekends.

Pharrell Williams is another. Originally from Virginia Beach, he is extremely passionate about his home state and is dedicated to making it a better place for residents and visitors alike.

Virginia is a state that is scattered with more than 300 spectacular wineries, which allow for Virginia winemakers and wine lovers alike to explore an array in both the quantity and quality of Virginia wine. Nestled along Virginia's Monticello Wine Trail, Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards is a boutique culinary vineyard in the heart of Virginia's wine country

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION



Visitors can experience a beautiful range of accommodations, including living in a luxury glamping teepee at Sandy River Outdoor Adventures in Rice, Va., which sits on about 10 hectares of land and houses four log cabins, one cottage, six teepees, several pastures, a little pond and an adventure park

PHOTO BY ALI ZAMAN

Pharrell put together a festival called Something In The Water, which takes place on a stage set up right on the beach. The event has hosted the biggest names in R&B and hip hop, including Tyler, The Creator, Missy Elliott and Post Malone.

With so much talent in one place, it's not surprising how much influence the state has had on the music world, in general. So influential that you may be surprised to learn that the first country music recordings took place in Bristol, Va. As a city with half of it located in Virginia and the other in Tennessee, you could start the day by being in two states at once before heading to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum. Or, if you plan ahead, you can go all out at the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion music festival.

No matter when you choose to visit Virginia, or where you choose to go in the state, you're sure to take something home. For some, that might be a bottle of wine. For others, a souvenir from one of the many national parks. But, there is one thing that everybody who visits leaves with — a desire to go back.

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PHOTO BY CAMERON DAVIDSON

Open to visitors year-round, Mount Vernon, famously known as the home to America's first president, George Washington, has so much to see and do, that you'll easily spend a few hours exploring the estate. Between walking the grounds to visit Washington's four gardens and more than a dozen historic outbuildings to touring the fully functioning reconstructions of George Washington's Distillery, your first visit will be beyond memorable

The Virginia Beach Boardwalk offers oceanfront views, along with monuments, museums, shops and dining

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION



SAVOURING THE SEASONS OF LIFE

Gérard Bertrand's 16 estate vineyards in southern France create some of the best wines in the world, but that is just a sample tasting of this embracer of the harmonies of life and nature

INTERVIEW BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL** | WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

PHOTO BY DAVID FRITZ GOEPPINGER



Master vintner Gérard's biodynamic approach to winemaking has put his estates at the top of the industry



The 2017 clos d'Ora is an exceptional and rare organic red wine already listed in some of the world's most beautiful establishments

If you were fortunate enough to be enjoying the delights of a morning in a café in the South of France, and Gérard Bertrand happened to be in that same café sipping a coffee at another table, you might look over and probably think to yourself, *I'll bet that guy is some famous winemaker at some fabulous estate vineyard near here.*

And you would be absolutely correct.

There is no doubt that if you were a movie director looking to fill a part about a French winemaker, you'd get a photo of Gérard and tell your casting people to "get me someone who looks like him." But it goes much deeper than appearances with Gérard, whose passion for the grape, the soil and the environment are in his DNA.

Gérard has been called a visionary and a model for how to grow wines in harmony with nature, and this entrepreneur has turned his family vineyard in the South of France into a worldwide, award-winning leader for excellence and biodynamic farming, owing to the passion and knowledge of his father, George Bertrand.

"My father was a source of inspiration for me," says Gérard in a recent interview with *Dolce*. "All of us grew up in the South of France, in the Languedoc area, and he started to make wine in the early '70s at Château de Villemajou, in the Corbières area. He proposed when I was just 10 years old in 1975 that I spend time with him in the vineyard and in the cellar, and at the end of the harvest he'd say to me, 'You know, Gérard, you're lucky, because when you are 50, you'll have 40 years' experience.' And it was great because he taught me and showed me his passion and, of course, his dedication and his real talent for blending. And I now know the price of work."

That price of work has grown in value to where Gérard is now the owner of 16 châteaux and estates, from where he exports wines to 178 countries. In the Best Wine of the World Competition 2021, three Gérard Bertrand rosé wines were awarded gold medals.

But winemaking wasn't Gérard's first passion. It was rugby. Much like cricket in India, football in Brazil or ice hockey in Canada, rugby is almost like a religion in the South of France. Beginning at just three years of age, Gérard's started with a ball in his hands or on his foot, and he was good. Quite good. His abilities grew to where he was a standout player in France, playing at the highest levels. In 1984, he started his career with RC Narbonne, where he played for 17 years, and he finished his career in 1994 as captain of Stade Français. During that season, the club was promoted.

"Just like wine, rugby is really emotional for me," says Gérard. "Rugby is friendship, it is leadership and it was one of the ultimate experiences I've had in my life, because, you know, alone you go faster, but as a team, you go further, and it was a lesson. It was a lesson of humility, a lesson of leadership and a lesson of team building. I learned so much from the rugby field to now apply in my management of my company and to take advantage of that experience."

When his father died suddenly when Gérard was just 22, he turned to winemaking full time, with the distinct advantage of turning to the teachings of his father and bringing those to his love of the land and the process.

"Of course, you pick up the grapes at the perfect time, but what is important is the blend, and I have done that for 45 years," says Gérard. "Blending is like creating a painting or creating a perfume. You just have to find the perfect balance, and that is a source of humility, because you have to receive the message in the bottle and let your intuition drive you. It's a question of feeling, and as soon as you feel that balance is there, you are done."

That balance in blending can be married to Gérard's balance of nature and the environment, as he was one of the early adopters of biodynamics in winemaking and is now recognized throughout the industry as a leader in respecting the environment and biodiversity. He has been a much sought-after speaker at prestigious conferences for 20 years.

"In the wine industry, we are driven by the vineyard and by the season and we are connected to the natural," says Gérard. "It was important to me to go further and move to the organic and biodynamic principle. It reinforces the vitality and health of the vineyard using only plants, and also using the lunar calendar to reinforce the strength and potential of your vineyard. So the strength of life is coming from the sun. To make a great wine, you have to have a live soil, and a live soil provides the possibility of the roots to have good nutrition and to go deeper and capture the water and take advantage of the climate."

Gérard's passion for Mother Earth and the human experience will be laid bare in February next year with the release of his book about human beings and nature, where he talks about how our bodies are our temples. "You have to take care of your own temple and then you can go in another temple to try and feel the connection with nature for some people, or with God or with both of them," he says. "But first of all, you have to take care of yourself, of your body, and this is the beginning of the journey."

Lest anyone think Gérard is one-dimensional, nothing could be further from the truth. His life journey also includes tapping into the creative side to find what makes one happy. And for this man for all seasons, music is a big part of that, specifically jazz, which he celebrates by staging an annual jazz festival, Jazz à l'Hospitalet, which takes place at his biodynamic estate Château l'Hospitalet in Narbonne, in southern France, at the end of July every year. The festival has



Master vintner Gerard Bertrand's biodynamic approach to winemaking has put his estates at the very top of the industry

PHOTO BY MARIE ORMIERES



With careful attention to his biodynamic methods in his winemaking, Gérard is known for bringing commitment and craftmanship to his grape varieties and terroirs

PHOTO BY GILLES DESCHAMPS



PHOTO BY DAVID FRITZ GOEPPINGER

Beginning with just 1.6 hectares 20 years ago, Gérard now commands more than 809 hectares



PHOTO BY GEOFFREY LUCAS



Gérard believes to make a great wine you must have a live soil to provide the possibility for the roots to have good nutrition, go deeper and capture the water



Despite his worldwide acclaim, Gérard is often in the vineyards working, exploring and seeing first-hand the health of the land and grapes

PHOTO BY GEOFFREY LUCAS

> **IN THE WINE INDUSTRY, WE ARE DRIVEN BY THE VINEYARD AND BY THE SEASON AND WE ARE CONNECTED TO THE NATURAL**

included past performers such as George Benson and Norah Jones and is now in its 18th year.

"For me, jazz is like wine; it talks to your soul," says Gérard. "Jazz is unique, because jazz comes from the heart, like wine, and I like to pair jazz and wine, or wine and jazz, because you don't know what will happen. And when you sit down and start to listen to some musician, this is a new paradigm, this is a new time. Time has been suspended. This is exactly the same feeling I receive when I open a great bottle of wine."

It marks just one more event this year in what is shaping up as another busy summer for this life force, including the unveiling of the Clos du Temple wine cellar, with the world's most expensive and precious rosé. This particular rosé was recognized last year by *The Drinks Business* magazine as the best rosé in the world. Summer 2021 also offers the September relaunch, after renovations, of his flagship estate, Château l'Hospitalet as Château l'Hospitalet Wine Resort.

"We are very close to the beach and will have a beach restaurant on the sand, and the concept is to create the most iconic wine resort in the world. That means we have to pay attention to how to share our emotion and to play between wine, the culture of the region, the gastronomy and heart. This is how we reveal the Mediterranean lifestyle," says Gérard.

As evidenced by Gérard, emotion plays a large part in the winemaking process and perhaps an even bigger part in enjoying the wine experience. It's probably something most of us never consider when we order a really good bottle of wine. When you open a 1994 vintage from a vineyard in France, you are also opening a moment in time, from that place and that environment. *What was happening at that vineyard just then? Who took the care, passion and dedication to their craft to make what I am enjoying?*

The answer is, people like Gérard Bertrand and his team at his many estates, and no one appreciates that emotion better than this wordly renaissance man. "Sometimes I open up a bottle of wine from the 1970s or 1980s and I still feel the sense of place, which is the most important thing in a bottle of wine," recalls Gérard. "With each vintage you capture the DNA and the footprint of the year. That means when you open a bottle of vintage, it reminds you of what was happening during that time, and that's also the source of emotion."

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ANTHONY DI IORIO: A MAKER OF MOVEMENTS

After finding notable success as the co-founder of cryptocurrency platform Ethereum, you might think Anthony Di Iorio is thinking of slowing down. In reality, he's just getting started

INTERVIEW BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL** | WRITTEN BY **JOSH WALKER**

You don't have to sit with Anthony Di Iorio long to understand that he sees the world differently. His favourite movie is *The Best of Me*, his favourite book is Ryan Holiday's *The Daily Stoic* and his favourite food to cook is thin-crust pizza, taking care to make everything from the dough to the sauce from scratch. But beyond all that, he has a mind that's constantly on the move, looking at how the world and its systems can be revolutionized for the better.

"I've spent the years since 2018 trying to figure out the what, why and how," Di Iorio says. "What I'm going to do, why I'm going to do it and how. To me it all comes down to wanting to be happy. I've figured out that comes in being of service to others. To improve the world and other people's lives."

Di Iorio calls himself a problem solver and believes his visionary traits started at an early age. He grew up in the north of Toronto, playing hockey and soccer, and is the youngest of three. His mother was a supply teacher, and he describes his father, who owned a sliding-door manufacturing company, as an inventor and handyman. "I learned from him to ask why about everything," he says. "That's a big thing for me. Why is that like that, and is there a better way to do things? That's really the genesis of creativity, inventing and thinking beyond what exists today."

Alongside that, he also had a keen interest in computing and programming. When the Internet was first introduced to people, he was young but already had a sense of how it was going to change things. "I couldn't connect to just one computer; I could connect to websites and this network that allowed for the democratization of information all around the world," he says. "I saw it was going to be a radical change, but I was too young to utilize it at the time."

Over the next few years, Di Iorio worked in the family's sliding-door business and completed a degree in marketing, before realizing that, too, is an area that's in need of radical change. "Some of the biggest issues I've seen in the world are advertising models," he explains. "These models tech companies use to collect money by giving ad space and then getting their users to do things. Unsuspecting people are being taken down paths that lead to divisive tribes that have been forming, and it's because of business models that use AI [artificial intelligence] and take advantage of people to achieve a goal the advertiser wants to happen."

In 2012, after a few years studying economics and what happened with the period's housing and financial crisis, he heard about Bitcoin. "Right away I understood, because of my technology and computer background, and knowledge of decentralized systems, here's the technology that can match my economical thinking, computer and entrepreneurial background. It was the perfect storm for me, where I felt ready to do what I couldn't do with the Internet when that came along, which was to empower people."

After looking for a Bitcoin community to join and discovering there wasn't one, he created his own, starting the Toronto Bitcoin Meetup group, where people who were passionate about the technology could come together. It was there he met Russian-Canadian fellow crypto enthusiast Vitalik Buterin, whom he would go on to found Ethereum with. "The system of money should be transparent, trustworthy and open to everybody. What about the millions of people around the world who are unbanked?" Di Iorio continues. "I saw Bitcoin as a very freedom-oriented, empowering technology that would make a greater change and have more impact than the Internet did."

Alongside exploring the potential for digital currency, it was during this time that Di Iorio saw the impact of building community and bringing people together. He grew the meetup group to thousands of members, hosted numerous events and eventually founded the Bitcoin Alliance of Canada to help bring Bitcoin to the media and appeal to governments to use it as a new technology. The rest is, as they say, history, with Di Iorio co-founding and funding Ethereum in late 2013 and blockchain company Decentral soon

PHOTOS BY JESSE MILNS



> “WITH EVERYBODY ON BOARD, YOU’RE NOT FIGHTING. EVERYONE’S ON YOUR SIDE, BECAUSE YOU’RE HELPING THEM. THAT’S HOW MOVEMENTS, I BELIEVE, ARE CREATED”

Di Iorio describes himself as a problem solver and is dedicated to exploring how innovation can improve the lives of others



Di Iorio is passionate about bringing people together, and founded the Toronto Bitcoin Meetup group

after. As well as being appointed the first chief digital officer of the Toronto Stock Exchange by TMX Group, he was named on *Toronto Life*'s list of the 50 Most Influential people in 2018.

That's not to say these achievements have been reached without struggle. Alongside his successes, Di Iorio has been learning the art of balance. "I come up with ideas I want to do, but I've found over the years that can lead to a sense of overwhelmingness where I need to reset," he explains. "I'll go through dark periods where I need to get my mind rested, because I will overwhelm it and go into peaks and valleys, which is no good for anybody."

For Di Iorio, that balance comes through the establishment of an interesting routine. "I've learned I need to have a good three or four hours to myself in the morning," he shares. "My ideal situation is waking up at 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. and going to bed at 8 p.m. I love to cook. That's my meditation. Taking care of my space. That's the time I can do that."

Today, Di Iorio is dedicated to using all of this experience and applying his methodology of problem solving to change the world for the better. "I want to sell what I've built and enable that to carry on in someone else's hands, because my mind is into solving bigger problems, being in service to the world and being in the philanthropic realm, rather than the money-making realm," he says. "The more I'm able to obtain from the sale of my company, the more I'll be able to give back."

He intends to do this through a problem-solving process he calls the perfect formula. "It's getting as close to 100 per cent as you can with anything or any problem you're trying to solve, so you've checked it all, thought of everything and created amazing experiences for people," he explains. "If we can think along those lines and problem solve to get up to 100 per cent of a formula, all stakeholders are being thought of, everybody's being served and you're creating a situation that brings joy, happiness and great things to the world."

It's a process Di Iorio coined and has perfected over the last few years, and feels it offers an opportunity to do things better in any sector, so everyone is aligned and heading toward the same goals. In short, he sees a future of thinking differently with the result of helping as many people as possible and starting positive revolutions.

"With everybody on board, you're not fighting," he says. "Everyone's on your side, because you're helping them. That's how movements, I believe, are created. That's going to be a lot of my goals in future. To create sustainable movements of people all aligned to do good for others. That's how we're going to change the world."

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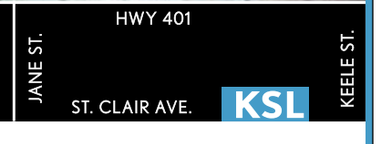
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Salaam is now an award-winning motivational and transformational speaker, trainer, bestselling author and coach

PHOTO BY RONALD GRAY

BEYOND JUSTICE

A young woman is brutally assaulted and raped in a park. Five Black and Latino youths are arrested, convicted and imprisoned. Originally known as the Central Park Five, they are now the Exonerated Five — when an inmate confessed to the crime, the convictions were overturned. Their story has been told in a documentary, a Pulitzer Prize award-winning opera, and a 2019 Netflix series that has been viewed by millions around the world. Now, more than 30 years later, one of the men, Yusef Salaam, has penned a book, *Better, Not Bitter* (Grand Central Publishing, New York, 2021), filled with not anger, not bitterness, not vindictiveness nor recrimination. Instead, the pages flow with words of hope and inspiration

INTERVIEW BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL** | WRITTEN BY **DONNA PARIS**

⚠ The following story contains vivid and gory details of brutal crimes.

Yusef Salaam was waiting in the courthouse while a jury deliberated on his fate. He really believed they would render a verdict of "Not guilty." Hope died for him that day, and it would be years before it was resurrected. But it did. "My life did not begin or end that day; my life is more than the sum of the worst thing that ever happened to me," he writes in *Better, Not Bitter*. "You and I were born on purpose and for a purpose."

He wrote the book to tell us about the foundation laid by both his family and his faith in Islam, which he says ensured he would not only survive this awful injustice, but also thrive in the midst of it. When the cell doors shut, he knew that if he was not careful to protect his mind and his heart, he could become attached to the process of getting his nourishment from a system that didn't care about him at all.

You may wonder how an innocent man keeps hope alive behind bars. It is in prayer that Salaam found his greatest inspiration. Beyond this, basketball, art, meditation and poetry … sometimes the lines would just come to him as he was walking down a corridor in the prison. "The Central Park jogger case is actually a love story between God and His people about a system of injustice placed on trial itself, then toppled, in order to produce what amounts to a miracle in modern time," he writes.

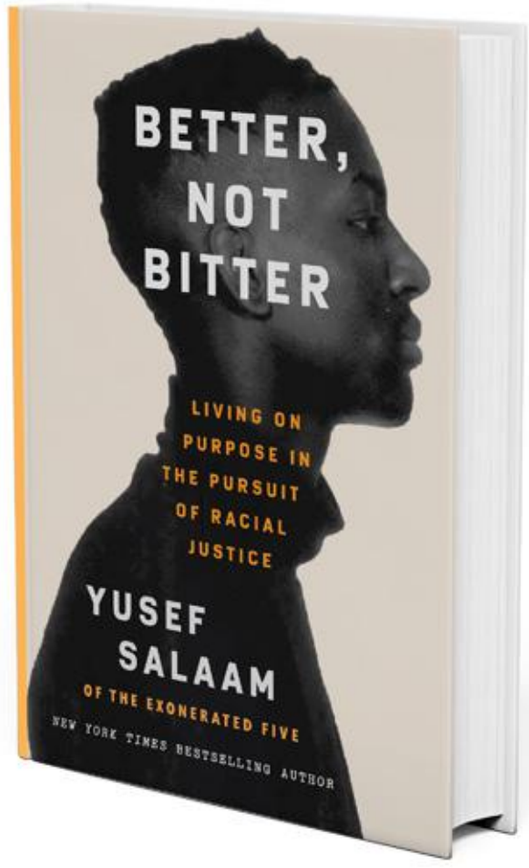
Today Salaam is based in Georgia, just living his life. He follows a vegan diet as much as he can and always looks for healthier options on restaurant menus. He found love in a Starbucks coffee shop, and he's happily remarried with 10 children. "Here we are 14 years later, with a beautiful blended family," he says. His son, named after him, was born on his birthday, "so he is a Junior in the truest fashion," he laughs.

He's a sharp dresser, and credits his wife as his stylist. "She says, 'Oh no, use this tie, this pocket square … Oh, you need those shoes to go with that.' She has a great eye for fashion, it's really a great thing." He is a public speaker, a criminal justice reform advocate (he sits on the board of The Innocence Project), a poet and now a published author. In 2016, President Barack Obama honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

And what does *la dolce vita*, the good life, mean to Salaam? He sees the beauty of just being alive. "To be able to live fully, be appreciative, be thankful, be humble, be human, keep your humanity, never allow the system to turn you into a monster, but do everything with grace and mercy, and always become more better and less bitter," he says.

In a telephone interview, Yusef Salaam graciously spoke to *Dolce* about everything from defining hope and justice to women and children in his life – and standing on the shoulders of his ancestors to choose better, brighter, stronger and wiser.

YOU MAY WONDER HOW AN INNOCENT MAN KEEPS HOPE ALIVE BEHIND BARS. YUSEF SALAAM FOUND PRAYER TO BE HIS GREATEST INSPIRATION



Salaam's book, *Better, Not Bitter*, is filled with inspiration for anyone looking for purpose in their life

Q: How do you define *justice*?

A: My definition of justice has a lot to do with making sure people are being treated fairly from the start. There's a lot of injustice that goes on in the world, and a lot of it is man's inhumanity to man. When you think about my case, for example, you really get the opportunity to kind of understand the broad view, just because time has gone by, how people built their careers off our backs.

Had justice prevailed in the Central Park jogger case from the beginning, we would have never gone to jail, we would have never been victimized and criminalized in a system that says that we are innocent until proven guilty. We were seen as guilty having to prove ourselves innocent, specifically because of how Black and Brown bodies have been socialized in this country.

It's not like the socialization happens, and everyone who's here immigrated to this country willingly. We were imported. Those of us who know the true history can understand it, perhaps had done genealogy work to retrace their steps and family steps. We were taken against our will from places that we were in and turned into cattle slaves, and then our memory of home was completely erased. I remember a quote by Dr. James Baldwin, who said, "To be African American is to be African without memory and American without privilege."

Q: How do you define *hope*?

A: My definition of hope is never giving up on the true purpose of who you are. And what I mean by that is, when we go and we understand that when our mothers and fathers got together, we were all one of over 400 million options, each and every one of us, every human being on the planet, and we made it, right? And the fact that we made it means that we were born on purpose, and we were born with a purpose. And I think that the greatest hope that we can have is to find the purpose, that we were born, and as Dr. King said, to live it as if God himself called us to do it at that very moment of time.

There's so much happiness, and there's so much pride, and there's so much good vibrations that happen when you live in your purpose. And that's the most hopeful that you can be, because as soon as you give up hope, all of the darkness around you begins to overcome the light that is trying to be buried by the darkness. But when you have tremendous hope in yourself, in your body, in your community and in your life, you begin to turn your light up, you live on purpose, you don't ask permission to do what it is that God gave you the right to do, and to be, which is human, and it's a really liberating thing.

Q: In your book, you explain how you are often on high alert. How do you relax, or do you ever have a chance to put your guard down?

A: Never. You know, being in a situation where you were run over by the cycles of justice for one,





Top: As a child, Salaam was well loved with powerful guides in his life, including his parents when he was quite young (left), especially his mom (right) and family, like his cousin Mieasia (far right).
Centre: The Exonerated Five share a story of wrongful conviction, and from their collective journey, they forged a lifetime bond.
Bottom: Wise Brother Luqman, in the red kufi cap, always had Salaam's back (left). Salaam with his first daughter, Rain (centre). One of Salaam's first speaking engagements was as a member of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty (right).





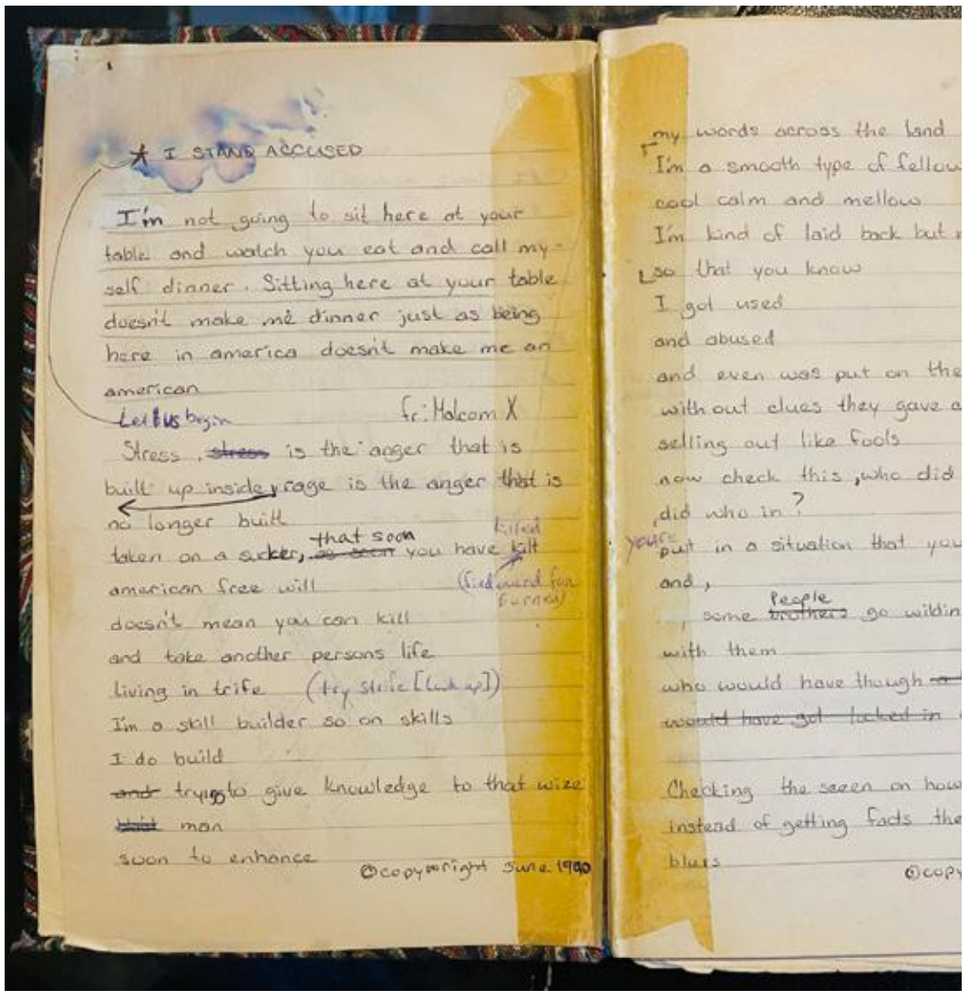
PHOTO BY BENNETT RAGLIN

> "YOU AND I WERE BORN ON PURPOSE AND FOR A PURPOSE"
>
> *— Better, Not Bitter*









Lyrics and poetry flowed from Salaam. In fact, when he addressed the courtroom, his lyrics told everyone exactly who he was. "A kid who loved hip hop and his mother and Triple F.A.T. Goose coats, a kid who'd read enough to know the train they'd run him over with should have long been banned from the tracks. A kid who was innocent," he writes in *Better, Not Bitter.* In prison, writing poetry helped get him through many of his days

in a country that sees Black and Brown bodies as crimes, and, therefore, people who look like me don't get the opportunity to live as full a life as they can or want to. Even if they're living life now, oftentimes the life that they've been living has been a life where they've been walking on eggshells, and what kind of life is that to live? What kind of hope is that in the future, as opposed to being given the opportunity to live as full a life as you can and should be living?

I think being aware of the hypervigilance that you now have to live in and move in and thrive in also gives light to what Dr. James Baldwin said when he said something to the effect of, "The victim who can articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be the victim; he or she has become a threat." And so, we're trying to figure out how to set as many people free as possible, and a lot of it is to understand the space and the place that you're in, to know who you are, to know where you are, why you are, what you are and, most importantly, how you are. Because in a state that you find yourself in terms of hypervigilance or the margins of life, quite often you also find yourself in great mental challenges, so the mental health in those communities is very real and very challenging, and the grace that's given to people who are going through that kind of crisis is not really afforded to people with Black and Brown skin. They're told to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and Dr. King said something very interesting, he said that is one of the most cruel things you can say to a bootless man.

Q: You dress impeccably and you mentioned that you designed some of your clothes even when you were younger. Has fashion always played a role in your life?

A: It always has. My wife is actually my stylist. She has a great eye for fashion; it's really a great thing. A friend of mine, Jimmie Gardner, who did 27 years for a crime he didn't commit, I remember he said one day, "Thank God I don't look like what I went through." What a beautiful statement.

So, when you see us, you get the opportunity to see people who still have life in them, to see people who still can smile and appreciate things, as opposed to people who have become bitter. So, even in the title of my book, *Better, Not Bitter*, there's an opportunity there. There's an opportunity because of what Dr. Maya Angelou encouraged us to become: alchemists in our lives. She said, "You should be angry. You must not be bitter." She said bitterness is like a cancer, it eats upon the hosts. It doesn't do anything to the object of its displeasure. In the alchemy, she teaches us to use that anger — you dance it, you march it, you vote it, you do everything about it, she said, and then you talk it, never stop talking it.

I found that when I grace stages, it is a greater visual picture and representation to be standing there looking like I was one of the characters in the Bible, Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego, having gone through the fire, and not even smelling like smoke.

I love being able to represent not only myself, but also people who have been run over by life in that way, because it gives them the opportunity, not necessarily for the system to see them differently, but for them to see themselves differently. When you look at yourself in the mirror, you feel better when you clean up, and I think that's the thing that we should all take a lesson from: it has nothing to do with the oppressor, it has everything to do with your own mind and your own mentality.

Q: Can you tell us how poetry helped you in prison?

I'll Meet You in Between Venus and Mars

In between Venus and Mars
Is the center of our attraction
Of those connected to the stars
Hardly a fraction
It behooves man to work for the day
When this will all end
Life is mortal, so follow the ways of those Heaven sent
Awaken and receive that which will give you life
Or remain horizontal and never begin the flight
For the solution, I'll descend from amongst the stars
And I'll meet you in between Venus and Mars.
— Yusef Salaam

A: Just the thought of that, just the revisiting of that poem, here I am in prison, I'm in Clinton Dannemora [Correctional Facility] talking about "I'll descend from amongst the stars." I would never have imagined that I would be in a place or space in the world where I would be celebrated, because we were victimized and we were turned into the pariahs, into the scum of the earth and, so, to even write those words to encourage me, one day you're going to make it, one day you're going to make it big … and meet people on Earth in between Venus and Mars, and share your story, share your grace with them.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF YUSEF SALAAM

Q: A lot of inspiration comes from outside stimulation — nature, travel, along those lines. Where did you find your inspiration when you weren't superstimulated?

A: I've always found the greatest inspiration in prayer. Prayer is something that I have to do at least five times a day. The more awake you are in that process, the more that process reveals itself to you. And so, I've always been really appreciative whenever I tapped back into the sacredness of life, to be able to plug in for all creation, and it's a really powerful thing because you find, even in your own heartbeat, you can be inspired.

Q: You spoke about your platforms and how that's kind of a silver lining to the experience, because you're able to help other people now and inspire other people, of course, and I was wondering if you could speak on The Innocence Project and how your experience has been able to help others who have gone through a similar experience?

A: Yes, so I sit on the board of The Innocence Project with other great members of the The Innocence Project and I tell you, these are graces afforded to you because you are able to use the opportunity that you have grown through. And I'm going to use that word intentionally, that you have "grown" through, you've been able to use the opportunities to really shed more light on things.

I think that when people know that I'm on the board of The Innocence Project, there's a great deal of aspiration and inspiration that happens with that, and it shows where you can go and also what you do when you get there. And so, some of the most egregious realities that I've been experiencing have been as a result of The Innocence Project, being able to free people through DNA evidence. And this wasn't, "Oh, there was a blunder, and the courts and something happened and made a mistake." This is, "These individuals were innocent, and you knew it all along." And maybe the science wasn't there when they were arrested, but there "weren'ts" were, the evidence of what was in the case was. Remember in the Central Park jogger's case? They said that Raymond Santana and Kevin Richardson, after they were picked up that night, they said that Kevin had gotten a scratch on his face because he was struggling with the jogger. There was no skin underneath his fingernails. They said that this woman had been brutally raped and left for dead. Had this been true, then that would've meant that Raymond Santana and Kevin Richardson, the first of the five of us to be arrested, would've had evidence on them, blood at least from the victim, after doing such a heinous thing.

You can't escape a splatter had you bludgeoned someone. And when you think about what the real perpetrator said and how he said it, and what he did, you know one of the most interesting things is that when he was leaving Central Park, the police officer saw him, and they came up to him in their car and shined their light on him, and they shined their light on his face, and they asked him if he had seen any young people in Central Park. And, of course, he said no. He had just finished raping the Central Park jogger; he was walking out of the park with her headphones on his head listening to her music. He said, "No, I hadn't seen anything." And they said, "Well, listen, go on. It's a little crazy in the park tonight." He said, out of his own mouth, "Had they shone their light on me from the waist down, they would've seen that I was bloody from the waist down." Now he's out there, left to commit more crimes because the system believes that they got it right, and they got it so wrong. And one of his last victims was a young pregnant Latino woman, who I imagine, if we can kind of try to recreate this horrific crime scene, that he comes into her home, and she thinks the worst: *I'm about to be violated.* She's pregnant, she's there with her two small children. She pleads with the assailant, "Can you please just let me put my two children in the next room?" He allows her to do so, then prepares himself. And she comes out and she's probably thinking, *This is going to be bad, but I'm going to survive.* His modus operandi was at that point to kill everyone whom he harms. He used to say when he gave his victims a choice after he did the deed, "Your eyes or your life." And if you said to him you could live without your eyes, he would cut them out, so that you could not identify him in the court of law. But if you could not live without your eyes, he would kill you, almost certainly try to. And in this particular instance, he stabbed her to death. The people, the residents in the building, her neighbours, hearing her pleads, hearing her cry, came out of their homes and they sat on him. And they did a citizen's arrest and held him until the police came. That's how he got caught. He didn't get caught because of the police work, he got caught because of the great work of the residents in the building. He was what people knew in that neighbourhood as the "East Side Rapist" and the "East Side Slasher," because if you fight him off, you might get caught. But if you didn't fight him off, you might get raped, harmed, now murdered.

Q: You described your situation as people looking at you as if you were the scum of the earth, which





Right: A happy moment and reunion — at the after-party of Oprah's special for "When They See Us." **Below:** Salaam and his wife, Sanovia. "I didn't know that someone else could be a salve and create peace in your soul until I found love again. Sanovia loved me back to life," he writes in *Better, Not Bitter*

> THE SWEET LIFE FOR ME IS FINDING THE BEAUTY IN THE RUBBLE, FINDING THE HAND OF GOD IN IT ALL

is horrible. So how do you deal with that transition mentally, from that point to, let's say, a higher point that you're experiencing now, and the fact that you never changed, and the fact that it was never your fault?

A: I love that question. You know, in Islam … in the adhan [call to prayer] played in various Muslim communities, you hear "Allahu Akbar." What that saying means is that God is the greatest, or God is greater than anything you can imagine. And so, here you are, you're walking throughout your day and all of a sudden you hear the adhan and it really is calling you because, remember, God is greater than what you're doing, so if you just pause for a moment, I mean prayer can be as short as five minutes, if you just pause for a moment, you reactivate the thankfulness that you should always be about. And by being thankful and remaining in a state of thankfulness, remaining in a state of humbleness and humility, you really give yourself the greatest opportunity to be giving more and more and more.

As soon as you say to yourself, "I got this because I survived," I'm saying that there's a certain truth to that, but in that truth is also that God is the footprints that you did not see, right? I'm talking about the poem "Footprints," because there's always a question when you're going through so-called hell, they say you got to keep going to get out of it. You know when life knocks you down, as my good friend Les Brown says, try to land on your back, because if you can look up, you can get up.

In this particular case, we fell on our face, and so I wasn't able to hear the words of the great philosopher Cardi B yet, who said, "Knock me down nine times, and I'll get up 10," but that's what life is about. And I think that the more thankful you are, that God is the orchestrator of all of this, the more you see the hand of God in it, the more God raises your light in the world and allows it to be guidance for others. But then, the more humble you have to be, and the more thankful you have to be, and the more humble you have to be, and the more thankful you have to be. And there's a certain level of happiness that comes from that, because when you let go, as the church says, when you let go and let God — oh, man.

Q: Can you share the story about meeting your wife in Starbucks? How has she has helped you heal?

A: There was this moment, and this was the most truest thing that I have ever felt, there was this moment when I was in my mother's office, and there was this feeling that I should take the trash out. And then I just had this overwhelming feeling to go for this walk, aimlessly walking downtown and I walk into Starbucks (at that point it was the only Starbucks in Harlem). It was the one that Magic Johnson had brought to Harlem; it was the coolest thing when he brought it there. I actually worked at that Starbucks as well.

Here I am standing in Starbucks. And I'm realizing I didn't tell anybody back at the office that I was going to Starbucks; they probably want something. And I'm calling them, asking, "Hey, what do you guys want? I'm here at Starbucks, what do you guys want?" She's in front of me and she doesn't say anything yet, but she's watching me. And she told me that later on she was saying, "Who comes to Starbucks and doesn't know what they want?"

Then all of a sudden, she caught my eye, and I walked up to her and she said, "Can you believe it?" I didn't know what I was going to say. I didn't have any kind of cool points or how to talk to women or anything like that, but I walked over there and her energy was just exuding out of her and she said, "Could you believe it? There's no soy milk." And I'm not even aware that she said that there's no soy milk. I see her mouth moving, and I remember hearing myself say, "Are you a model?" and she's looking at me like, "A model? I'm 5-4. How could I be a model?" But the way that she looked and the expression, it was just graceful.

When I got a chance to revisit it in my book, it was more profound than what I had imagined and understood it to be even at that time. Because when I talk about it in my book, I want people to understand that you have to always be listening to the grace of God, you have to listen to your gut, when your gut tells you to move, you have to understand that when you let go and let God, magic happens.

In this case, here we are 14 years later, with a beautiful blended family. When we met each other, we had three children each. She had two boys and a girl, and I had three girls, and as we began to grow our family we had another girl, and then another girl. And then, we had two more children. One was a girl, and then, on my 42nd birthday … my first son was born to me, so he is a Junior in the truest fashion. His name is Yusef Salaam. He has a different middle name, but hopefully he'll have all of the blessings and none of the hardship, none of the heartache.

Q: What would you consider to be *la dolce vita*, the sweet life?

A: I have a really funny story. It's a sad story, but it's a cool story at the same time. So, at one point in my prison time, I was in prison with Kevin Richardson. And Kevin Richardson is, of course, one of the members of the Exonerated Five, and we were in the same prison for a few years together, not living in the same housing unit at the time, but we would see each other sometimes in the mess hall. And I would raise my milk carton, the same milk cartons that you would find in elementary schools, high schools and junior highs, things like that. I would raise my milk carton, and I would say, "Yo, Kev, to the good life."

The sweet life for me is finding the beauty in the rubble, is finding the hand of God in it all. When I look at the Central Park jogger case, lately I've been describing it as a love story between God and his people. I've said that it's a story where God has used this case in particular to put the whole system in America on trial. It's a story where people can be brought low only to rise, because the truth can never stay buried, and it's a story of a people buried alive and forgotten, but the system forgot we were seeds. So, instead of a social death, we've been able to emerge like the phoenix from the ashes, because if they built a fire to consume us, they forgot the owner of the heat.

This is a beautiful struggle when you can reorient your idea and understanding of what it is that you're going through, because instead of you going through something, quite often you're going to *grow* through something, but it has a lot to do with your attitude.

And so for me, *la dolce vita* is to be able to live full, be appreciative, be thankful, be humble, be human, keep your humanity, never allow for the system to turn you into a monster, but do everything with grace and mercy, and always become more better and less bitter.

www.yusefspeaks.com

@dr.yusefsalaam



With an impressive inventory of classic, luxury and exotic vehicles, AutoOne services about 3,000 customized leases in Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver

PHOTOS BY JESSE MILNS



THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

Vehicle leasing is growing in popularity, and AutoOne is making it easier for drivers to maximize value for their on-road experiences

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER**

A new car is one of life's more perplexing big purchases in that you usually lose money on the deal. Unlike other major purchases, such as a home, fine artwork, luxury jewelry or a classic watch, which usually appreciate over time, unless it's a classic collector's edition, your new car depreciates the minute you drive it off the lot.

Automotive leasing may be the solution, and AutoOne Group is one of Canada's largest automotive leasing companies with a vast nationwide inventory that has something for everyone and is answering the growing demand in automotive leasing. In Canada, approximately one in four cars and trucks on the road is leased, and according to Statista.com, that figure was hovering at a steady 30 per cent in the United States before the pandemic, as drivers were waging the war against depreciation.

Depreciation is the largest portion of the annual cost of car ownership. As a quick rule of thumb, a car will lose between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of its value each year, according to Bankrate.com. A car in its second year will be worth 80 per cent to 85 per cent of its first-year value, and a car in its third year will only be worth 80 per cent to 85 per cent of its second-year value.

AutoOne describes itself as a niche player in the field of independent automotive leasing companies, but it is a niche that is becoming increasingly popular with drivers who are realizing the advantages of leasing. Why not drive a new car every two or four years and enjoy the benefits of the rapid advancements in technology drivers are seeing on their dashboards every 24–48 months? Through leasing new cars, drivers have the opportunity to enjoy a new vehicle without worrying about the longer-term issues of car ownership.

AutoOne is part of Corpfinance International Limited (CFI), a boutique investment bank established in Toronto in 1985 and which has raised more than $4 billion in capital and currently has more than $1.25 billion in assets under management on behalf of institutional investors involved in many different industries. CFI is majority owned by its senior management lead, president and CEO Kevin Andrews and executive vice-president Christopher Ball. While both have extensive backgrounds in the world of banking and finance, they can both be classified as "car guys."

"I was part of a car family growing up in Halifax," says Andrews about his fascination with cars. "My grandfather was a master mechanic, always fixing things, and we had a 1933 Buick in our garage we used to work on. I still have a 1966 Ford Mustang and a 1987 Porsche."

"My first car was a Mini that I bought for $350 when I was just 15," says Ball. "Then I worked in a brickyard, where I learned to drive stick shift on an old Ford Truck we'd drive around the yard, and as a junior banker, I bought a new Mini for $4,500, which I think equalled my annual salary that year."

The AutoOne difference in the leasing marketplace is that it is an independent leasing company, rather than the leasing division of one of the big car makers, or a large-fleet leasing company, or even the leasing department you find at car dealerships.

"An independent leasing company is owned by entrepreneurs who can borrow money and buy cars and lease them out and provide more personalized service," says Andrews. "We are servicing a large group of customers with about 3,000 customized leases with our three locations in Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax, and we have built up our inventory. Because we know our customers, we have the car that makes sense for you ready to go. Customers can go to our website and put in four pieces of information to see if they qualify. We have brought everything in-house for an easy-to-use, touchless customer experience."

> "BECAUSE WE KNOW OUR CUSTOMERS, WE HAVE THE CAR THAT MAKES SENSE FOR YOU READY TO GO"
>
> — Kevin Andrews

From luxury and exotic vehicles to commercial trucks and cargo vans, AutoOne offers a broad range of custom in-house leasing options and services, such as used vehicle sales and leasing, and vehicle service and maintenance.

For car or truck enthusiasts, it also offers assistance with the sourcing of distinctive, hard-to-find vehicles. In June, its website contained a vintage 1967 Lincoln Continental convertible. "If somebody has a desire for a certain car and has been looking for it for a while, we'll probably be able to access it for them," says Ball.

Its inventory is equally impressive and includes everything from Porsche, Lexus, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Bentley, Audi, BMW and Land Rovers to Ford cars and trucks, Infiniti, Tesla and Jeep, just to name a few. AutoOne knows its customers and its portfolio includes cars the company's clients want. AutoOne has invested heavily in technology, so customers have a streamlined online experience and prides itself in offering a transparent and respectful shopping experience with the most flexible leasing solutions for every need and financial situation.

AutoOne also offers a 30-day guarantee to ensure customers are happy with their vehicle and are taking advantage of the many reasons leasing is now working for so many drivers. Besides less depreciation on your vehicle, leasing offers predictable, stable payments and considerable tax advantages, as leasing means you only pay taxes on your monthly payments, which can add up to significant savings over paying tax on the full price of a vehicle.

AutoOne also has partnerships with leading insurance companies, which means its customers have excellent insurance options if they need them. Of course, perhaps the No. 1 advantage





While they both have extensive backgrounds in banking and finance, both Ball (left) and Andrews acknowledge themselves as self-confessed car guys

of leasing is that you can upgrade your vehicle sooner, as many of AutoOne's customers simply upgrade their vehicles every two to four years.

At the end of a leasing term, AutoOne also offers additional options for its customers. If they love their car and want to keep it, customers can simply buy the vehicle for the guaranteed residual price. If the customer decides they want a new car, they just trade theirs in, and all of the positive equity in the car can be applied to the new vehicle. Last, if the customer decides they don't want to keep or trade their current car, they simply return it to AutoOne.

Being in its position, AutoOne keeps a close eye on current trends and developments in the automotive world. For example, with the explosion in home deliveries during the current pandemic, it is almost impossible to get your hands on a delivery van. "We keep up with the changing marketplace," says Ball. "In 15 years, electric vehicles may represent up to 40 per cent of the marketplace, and we expect cars will be more tech savvy, and artificial intelligence will have a much larger presence in vehicle technology."

On its website, AutoOne has a blog with updated information about its activities and the industry in general. "There's so many things going on in the automotive industry, and our blog is to share our fun about cars and share some car experiences," says Andrews. "We live in North America, and you've got to have a car to go somewhere, and with COVID-19, more people now want a car, not fewer people. A car is going to be part of your life experience, and we like to write about our experiences with cars."

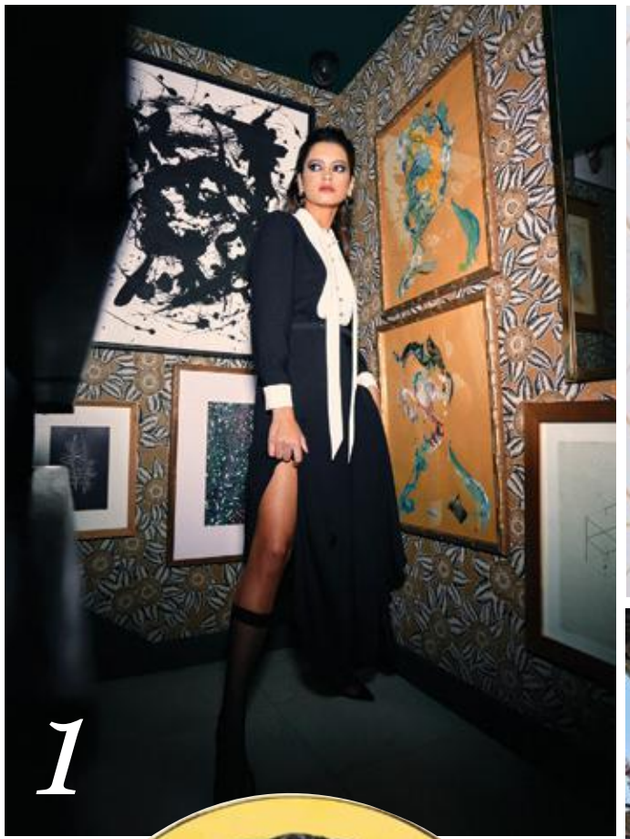
Andrews and Ball have built a successful partnership with AutoOne, and the genesis of that success goes far beyond their shared passion for cars. "What makes it work is, No. 1, we both have backgrounds in fiduciary responsibility, which comes from being in the banking world," says Ball. "So, we both understand what true trust is, and we live by that. It's important to bring that forward with integrity to our clients and to all of our staff, and we have a 20-year track record of doing that. It's a simple path, which doesn't have to be complicated."

If someone said to you that piece of fine art you just purchased would lose some of its value the minute you walked out of the gallery, you would probably think twice about engaging in that transaction. That's the exact same type of scenario drivers now are rethinking when it comes to cars or trucks. With AutoOne's inventory and seamless customer experience, leasing is becoming an increasingly popular option that makes real financial sense.

autoone.ca
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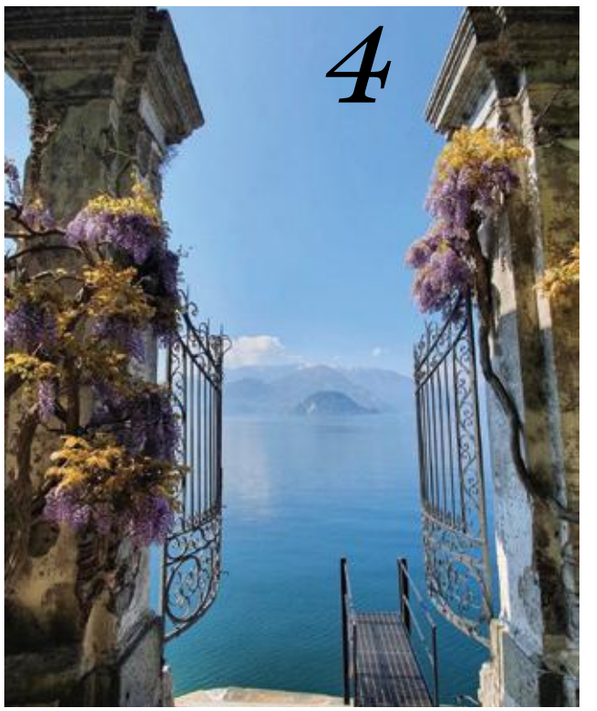
OBJECTS *of*

Time to dress up, not only your wardrobe, but also your lifestyle, travel and home with these fanciful finds TEXT BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**











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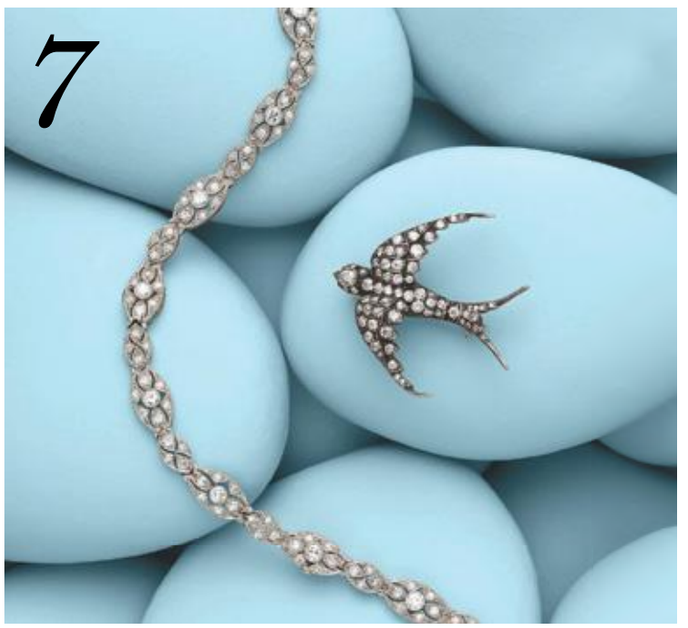
2 ROCK 'N' (EYE) ROLL: Add a cheeky touch to any space in your home with this Piero Fornasetti calendar porcelain plate for the year 1994, featuring renowned soprano vocalist Lina Cavalieri—a symbolic figure featured throughout all of Fornasetti's collections. | www.pamono.com

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5 MODERN MEDUSA: Borrowing from the baroque world filled with fantasy, this contemporary crystal sculpture by Geraldine Gonzalez captures the artist's incredible imagination by turning sea-like creatures into beautiful art. | www.1stdibs.com, www.geraldinegonzalez.com













6 MEET ME IN MIAMI: Situated in the heart of Millionaire's Row, Fontainebleau Miami Beach features signature restaurants by award-winning chefs, two nightlife venues and a magnificent two-storey spa. | www.fontainebleau.com

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10 ENTRYWAY ENVY: When an entrance to a space looks this good, you'll always be happy to come home. Designed by Ramyalaa Interiors, the striking black chandelier only adds to its uber-chic design. | www.bocadolobo.com

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DESIRE

WINNIE HARLOW:
A most exceptional woman

From being a contestant on *America's Next Top Model*, to gracing the cover of many prestigious magazines, Canadian model Winnie Harlow has become one of the biggest names in fashion, having propelled her way to the top through her inner-confidence and self-worth

WRITTEN BY **JAN JANSSEN** AND **CECE M. SCOTT**

Few supermodels have had a more interesting climb to the top than Winnie Harlow. Growing up in Toronto, she was an enthusiastic child who quickly learned that she would have to contend with the kind of relentless bullying that can ruin young people's lives. But in her case, the level of abuse she faced in school was of a particularly cruel and brutal kind. At the age of four, Harlow — whose real name is Chantelle Brown-Young and who is the daughter of Jamaican-Canadian parents — was stricken with vitiligo, a rare skin condition involving a lack of pigmentation that results in the formation of pale white patches on one's face and body. It is not hard to imagine how the constant name-calling from her classmates took its toll on her: "I remember sitting by my window, wishing upon the stars that my skin condition would go away," she would later remark about that challenging time in her life.

But Harlow chose to fight back and ultimately embrace everything that is beautiful about her striking appearance. Today, she is one of the world's leading supermodels and currently serving as a judge alongside Heidi Klum and Jeremy Scott on season 2 of Amazon Prime's hit series *Making the Cut*, which invites aspiring fashion designers to compete for a million-dollar prize and have their collection sold on Amazon's online fashion store.

"Jeremy Scott and Heidi Klum are so near and dear to me, they're good friends," said Harlow prior to the July première of the show. "They are people I look up to. I've walked many times for Moschino [Scott is its creative director], and I've guest-judged on *Germany's Next Top Model* [which Klum hosted] twice before that Heidi's asked me to do. So, it was something that was kind of natural."

It's an interesting twist of fate for Harlow, whose first big break as a model came with her appearance on Tyra Banks's *America's Next Top Model* (ANTM) show in 2014. That led to her being contacted by legendary British photographer Nick Knight, whom she describes as her "fashion godfather." Explains Harlow:

"I wouldn't have a career without him. Nick Knight was my first big gig as a 'real' model. Prior to, and during ANTM, I never actually called myself a model, because I always viewed it as a hobby. Then, I received an email directly from Nick, and we made arrangements to work together in London. I was 19, and that shoot ...



Harlow made her television debut on cycle 21 of *America's Next Top Model* when she was 19 years old. Years later, she's returning to television as a judge on season 2 of *Making the Cut* alongside Jeremy Scott and Heidi Klum

PHOTO BY MAX PAPENDIECK



As a supermodel, and self-esteem advocate, Harlow has become one of the biggest names in fashion, which has landed her collaborations with mega-brands like PrettyLittleThing



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRETTYLITTLETHING

> “TO SEE MYSELF ON A *VOGUE* COVER ... IS SO SURREAL AND SO HUMBLING. IT’S SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT WOULD HAPPEN”

was a magical experience. It’s the reason I’m still modelling today.”

Having turned 27 in July, Harlow is the most successful Black supermodel of her generation and follows in the footsteps of Pat Cleveland, Grace Jones, Alek Wek, Iman, Naomi Campbell, Beverly Johnson and Tyra Banks. Winnie’s highlight reel includes strutting the runway for Victoria’s Secret, Fendi and Marc Jacobs, serving as a campaign spokesmodel for Diesel and MAC cosmetics, appearing in music videos for Beyoncé, Calvin Harris and Sam Smith and landing the covers of *Elle* and *Vogue*. Harlow ranks the Victoria’s Secret gig and *Vogue* covers as two of her greatest achievements.

“Accomplishing things like that, it’s kind of like, ‘What’s the point in making a list anymore?’ It just takes hard work, sacrifice and dedication to make more things happen. I mean, walking Victoria’s Secret was incredible. My first and second *Vogue* covers are now out, and I’m honoured,” she says.

“Growing up, I couldn’t see myself on *Vogue*. Modelling was never a dream of mine. It was never something I saw in my future. I never thought anyone like me could be on *Vogue* covers. So, it wasn’t doubt in myself. It was more about doubt in the industry. But, to see myself on a *Vogue* cover ... is so surreal and so humbling. It’s something I never thought would happen.”

Walking the runway for Victoria’s Secret (VS) was a top-tier priority for Harlow, who achieved that goal in 2018, when she modelled at the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show.

In a 2018 interview with Alyssa Hardy of *teenVogue*, Harlow shared her thoughts on what it was like to model for Victoria’s Secret and what the significance of it meant to people with non-traditional looks.

“Being the first model with vitiligo to walk in the show was a huge honor for me, and a big step in the right direction for VS. Any step toward a truly equal and diverse modeling industry is great, but for a huge brand like Victoria’s Secret to include models with skin conditions like vitiligo is a huge step to normalizing it in the entire industry. I hope that there’s many more in the future. We need to work toward diversity, not for the sake of it, but to make it the norm. And I hope that this is a big step toward that.”[1]

Harlow’s success is all the more remarkable in that the fashion industry, perhaps more than any other field, values conventional notions of cosmetic beauty above everything else. But, instead of viewing her vitigilo as an impediment, Harlow chooses to regard it as an attribute that sets her apart and gives her an individual identity within the industry. She has also resisted attempts to identify her with her skin, or otherwise turn her into the poster child for those stricken with the condition.

“I’m not my skin. People make it such a thing where it’s like, ‘Oh, my gosh, she is the

The supermodel shot the campaign for her collaboration with PrettyLittleThing in the Bahamas, which was released in late June 2021



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRETTYLITTLETHING

> PEOPLE WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK, BUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ISN'T WHAT'S GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY IN YOUR LIFE, AND IT'S YOUR LIFE TO LIVE

spokesperson.' No, I'm not a spokesperson. I happen to have vitiligo and I'm proud of it, but I'm also not a spokesperson for it just because you want me to be, or just because I have a skin condition."

Adds Harlow: "I don't think that's my job just because I have a skin condition. It's not that I'm ashamed of having vitiligo, or that I don't like it, or that I use it to get to where I am and now I'm trying to get away from it. There's no getting away from it, it is a part of me. But, it isn't who I am, it doesn't define me."

This is the kind of tough-minded attitude that Winnie Harlow — she took her stage name from Winnie the Pooh and 1930s Hollywood screen star Jean Harlow — was forced to adopt ever since she was a young girl who was bullied relentlessly in middle and high school. The abuse reached such terrific proportions that she was eventually forced to drop out. She still regards that as a decisive moment in her life.

"[Dropping out of high school] was possibly the best thing that could have happened, because I found a rejuvenated sense of self. I learned to love who I am, despite what anyone would say about or to me. This gave me the courage to really stand up to anyone or any obstacle in my life," she says.

"People worry too much about what other people think, but what other people think isn't what's going to make you happy in your life, and it's your life to live."

In the meantime, Harlow has found love in the time of the pandemic. Having previously dated Formula One racing champion Lewis Hamilton and rapper Wiz Khalifa, she has spent the past year living in Los Angeles with Kyle Kuzma, a forward for the Los Angeles Lakers. Apart from posting cute selfies of each other on Instagram, Harlow has thrown her support behind Kuzma's creation of a line of T-shirts that are being sold to raise money for Black Lives Matter charities.

"That was really inspiring to me as well, as I'm up here with him. It's definitely a topic of discussion every day. As a Black woman and a Black man, it's very important to us."

More on vitiligo

Dr. Dawn Davis, a dermatology expert at the Mayo Clinic, explained in an email to *Dolce Magazine* what vitiligo is and the impacts of it on people who have this condition.

"Vitiligo is a skin condition where the pigment-producing cells in the skin, the melanocyte, are attacked by the immune system, causing loss of pigment (hypopigmentation and depigmentation)," explains Davis. "Vitiligo can occur in all ages, ethnicities/races and genders. It can be very impactful on an individual's mental health and well-being, particularly in areas of skin where the pigment changes are obvious to others. Patients often experience bullying, disrespectful remarks from others and have concerns it impacts their social activities."

What's next

An ambassador for reinterpreting and reshaping the traditional concepts and norms of traditional beauty, Winnie Harlow is defined by her beauty and singular flair for fashion, rather than any condition that she has.

The supermodel recently partnered with global fashion brand PrettyLittleThing, whose press statement says, "With a specially curated collection consisting of pieces that not only show Winnie's eclectic taste and style, these also encapsulate the individuality and body confidence that Winnie exudes."

PrettyLittleThing's CEO, Umar Kamani, says of the collaboration with Harlow: "I have been following Winnie's career for a very long time now, and she is the ultimate body-positive advocate. I am so delighted we've been able to bring this campaign to life and have had Winnie's involvement from the very start. Having Teyana Taylor creatively direct this campaign and be on set with Winnie really enabled us to bring together two powerful females and capture such a vibrant campaign."

From a young girl who was bullied so badly in high school that she wasn't sure what her purpose in life could possibly be, to a much loved supermodel who counts Nicki Minaj and Heidi Klum in her circle of friends, Winnie Harlow has accomplished what she set out to do from the beginning of her career. She has attained prominent visibility on the covers of the most prestigious fashion magazines in the publishing world; she has walked the runway for Victoria's Secret; and along the way, she has been true to her herself — to that inner level of confidence and self-worth that has propelled her to the top of the fashion industry.

@winnieharlow

[1] *teenVogue*. "Winnie Harlow Thinks Victoria's Secret Should Make Diversity the Norm." December 3, 2018. www.teenvogue.com/gallery/winnie-harlow-victorias-secret-fashion-show-diversity.

MODERN MANNERS

Advice from a modern manners coach and the promising resurgence of etiquette

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

Say "please" and "thank you." Look people in the eye when you speak with them. Put your hand in front of your mouth when you yawn. Don't play with your food. These are some of the lessons our parents taught us as children to help nurture us into upstanding members of society. They are also reminders that the best things in life are free: a simple "hello," holding open a door for an elder or a thoughtful thank you note have the power to make someone else's day. It's sometimes the smallest things — a bit of decorum and respect — that go the longest way.

The term "etiquette" is derived from the French word "*étiquette*," which refers to the signs Louis XIV maintained on the lawns of the Palace of Versailles directing visitors to "Keep off the grass!" While signs of that nature would be extreme by today's standards, sometimes we all need a good reminder of our manners. And that's where Arminé Nielsen Tatosian comes in. Because sometimes common courtesy isn't so common, Tatosian is a modern manners coach who teaches us how to behave in accordance with modern etiquette. As social-distancing restrictions begin to ease, and schedules are filled with dinner parties with family, friends and colleagues, surely everyone could benefit from Tatosian's lessons of how to be a gracious host and a thoughtful guest.

Q: Why do you believe it's important to have a basic understanding of good manners and etiquette in today's world?
A: I think kindness and courtesy are contagious; they just bring out the good in people. Etiquette is being courteous and respectful toward each other. It's being kind to one another and to be respectful to the other person.

Q: Where did you learn your manners and how have you cultivated your etiquette skills? Have you always been interested in the art of etiquette?
A: I actually grew up with it, and it was always an interest of mine as well, and when I was very young, I started reading books on etiquette and manners and all the old classics like Emily Post. I just found it so fascinating to read and understand.

Q: Do you believe that proper etiquette is becoming more and more of a lost art?
A: Over the last 40 years, it definitely has been a lost art, but I'm finding there's been a new interest in it. I think people are starting to come back. There are so many etiquette coaches now, and there are more schools now that are teaching etiquette training, other etiquette trainers. And I think it is a new art now, [and] because it has been lost for such a long time, it's making a comeback. It makes me happy to know that so many people are interested in it right now, bettering themselves and becoming a better person, a kinder person and a respectful person. You'd be surprised about how many don't know how to set a table or how many people don't know how to eat, and it's so important, I think, in business and in everyday life to bring out the best in you.

Q: Can you speak on how etiquette goes beyond table manners and how it applies in everyday life?
A: It applies in everyday life, because I think being respectful and kind to each other is etiquette, being respectful to others and having a positive image. To greet people every day, to smile, to say "hello," to look people in the eye, shake hands and thank them, that's what we should be doing. We should be thanking people, looking people right in the eye, saying "Hello" and "How are you?" and showing interest in what other people are doing and how they are. And also to know your boundaries, not to be personal if you don't know someone so well, not to be so personal with them.

Q: What is the recipe for a beautiful thank you card?
A: I find that in our society, right now, there are so many technologies around us: we have Instagram, we have Facebook, we have emails and texts, which they never did in the past. So, I find, if you meet someone for drinks or for coffee, or if you just met a friend at restaurant or for coffee, it's always nice to reach out by text and say, "Thank you so much. It was so nice to see you, and I had a wonderful time. Hope to get together again."

It's always nice to have personalized stationery, but you don't need to. If you want to go the extra length and send them a card or a note, it's always welcome, because people are so bombarded with technology, so it's so nice for them to get something in the mail that's not a bill. It's always nice to have nice stationery at the end of the day. It's nice and tactful.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to make a positive impression as a guest?
A: You should never go into anyone's house without a gift. So, if you're invited for drinks or for dinner, you should never go empty-handed. But don't take flowers, especially uncut flowers without a vase, because that takes time away from the hostess, to take the flowers, to cut them, to arrange them in a vase, which she doesn't have time to do, because she has other guests to attend to.

So, when you go to someone's house, it's OK to take a bottle of wine, but make sure it's in a bag, that it's nicely presented, but do not expect the hostess to serve that wine. It's a gift that you're giving to her, [and] she probably has a wine that she has selected for that day, so she doesn't need to serve that. You could also bring jams, olive oil, soaps and tea towels. Those are lovely gifts to give. It doesn't have to be expensive: it could be a tea towel that you saw for $20, it could be a soap you saw for $10, it could be a jam for $8 — whatever. Just as long as it's a little gift — it could be $20 and under — it doesn't have to be extravagant.

Q: Which customs/manners do you believe are outdated today?
A: In the old days, it was more of an elaborate table setting. I think our lifestyle now is simpler than it used to be, and easier, so we have simplified things now. So, when we sit at a dinner table now, we don't have 10 pieces of cutlery or five to six glasses that are on the table. Now, everything is a lot simpler and easier, so we just have a fork and a knife and a spoon — the basics. We don't always have a fish knife or a fish fork; [we are] using less cutlery and glasses on the tables — simplified.

Q: What would you consider to be the three biggest faux pas when it comes to table etiquette?
A: Wait until everyone is seated and wait until your

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MODERN MANNERS



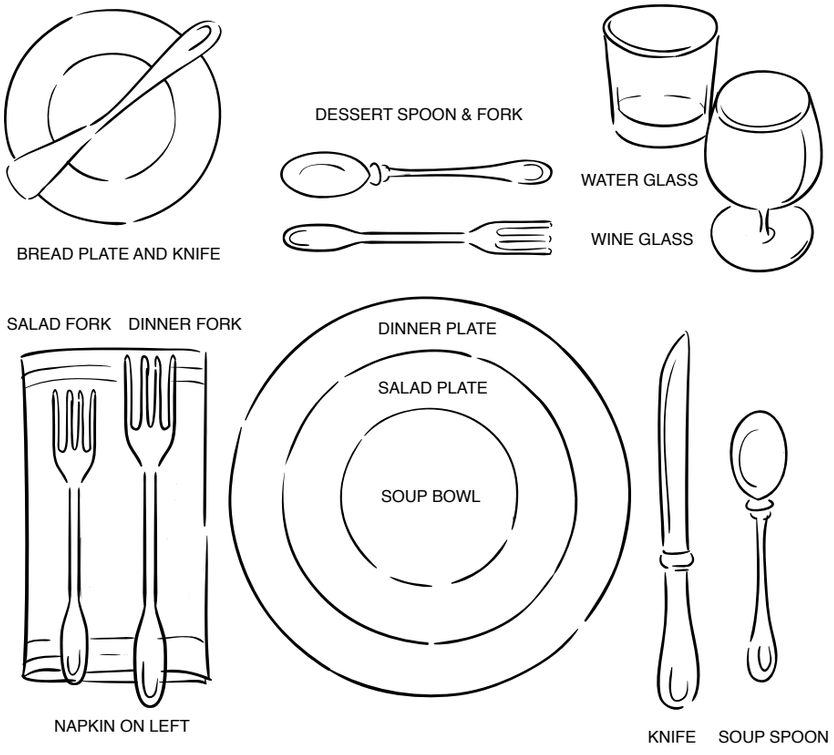
Designing a tablescape is a wonderful way of creating an ambience for your guests. A beautiful presentation doesn't always require flowers. You may already have items in your home, like small decorative objects, that you can use to style your table



A beautiful tablescape starts with a properly set table, beautiful flowers, and polished cutlery

> **“WE SHOULD BE THANKING PEOPLE, LOOKING PEOPLE RIGHT IN THE EYE, SAYING ‘HELLO’ AND ‘HOW ARE YOU?’ AND SHOWING INTEREST IN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING AND HOW THEY ARE”**

SETTING THE TABLE



When it comes to using the proper utensil for each course, you always start from the outside and move your way in. And remember — eat to your left and drink to your right

host or hostess starts eating before you start eating; I think that’s really important. A lot of people, when they receive their food, they start eating. You should not do that; you should wait until everyone is served and you have your lead from your host or hostess and then she starts eating. Then, you follow her. Or if you’re at a restaurant with a friend, make sure you’re both served and then you start eating at the same time. Often, people don’t know what to do with their cutlery when they’re eating, so they don’t know how to rest their cutlery [and] not to talk with their mouth full. My biggest pet peeve is not to talk with your cutlery. When people start talking and moving, they have a fork and knife in their hands and start making movements and start pointing.

When you eat soup, the spoon moves away from you. And when you have to get the last bit, you tilt the plate that’s in front of you and away from you, and you use the spoon away from you to get that last bit as well. And so, everything is away from you and not toward you. When people set the table, they don’t know that the sharp part of the knife goes toward their plate. When you have a knife, the sharp edge, it faces the plate, it doesn’t face out, it faces in.

When you have to excuse yourself to go to the ladies’ room, you should never have your soiled napkin on the table. Once you use your napkin, that should never go back on the table while everyone’s eating; nobody wants to see your soiled napkin. So, when you have to excuse yourself to go to the bathroom, you should leave it on your chair, and when you come back, you pick it up from your chair and put it back on your lap. And when you finished eating, and everyone’s leaving





To properly welcome your guests, it's always nice to serve a range of appetizers and hors d'oeuvres that can be enjoyed pre-dinner

the table, that's when you put it on the table. It's the little things.

Q: What do you love about tablescaping and what are your tips to improve one's tablescaping skills?
A: I think setting the table correctly: cloth napkins and fresh flowers are always nice. I think flowers make everyone happy, so it's always nice to have fresh flowers on the table. Or, if you don't have flowers, it's so nice to have fresh fruit or fresh vegetables on the table. I love decorating with even herbs, or if you love beautiful things or beautiful objects around your house, you could always bring them to the table and display them for others to see. If you don't have flowers, you could put your decorative objects on books and, you know, things that you love and enjoy; you could just have them on the table as a tablescape.

Q: What does *esthetic* mean to you? If you had to describe your esthetic in three words, what would they be?
A: I would say that esthetics are proportions — balance, colour, composition — and whatever makes you happy and is pleasant to the eye. Whatever pleases your eye, your vision and that makes you happy.

Q: What are the biggest misconceptions when it comes to manners and etiquette?
A: A lot of people associate etiquette with being arrogant or being snobby, [but] it's not the case at all. It's actually the opposite. It's being more courteous and kinder to each other and not stuffy.

Q: Do you believe there's a relationship between etiquette and business ethics?
A: Oh, for sure. I think especially for the young people starting out in their careers, and they're starting to work for companies and they're having business luncheons and dinners, it's very important, because people judge you the way you behave, how you speak, how you eat and how you present yourself. So, I think it's very important for someone who's just starting their career to have good etiquette. And a lot of large corporations actually do hire etiquette coaches to teach their employees: banks do, lawyers do. I do lunch-and-learns with large companies, and they're just an hour long, and it's just to learn the basics: how to give out their business card, how to shake hands and how to have a meal with a new business associate or with a client. So, yes, I think it's very important.

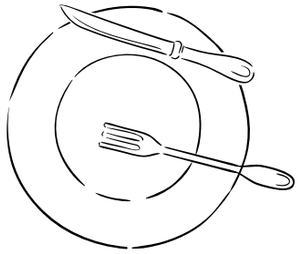
Q: Can manners affect your success in life?
A: Definitely. People don't want to be associated with a person who doesn't carry themselves well or doesn't have a positive attitude about life and about business, and I think that's 100 per cent.

Q: What is the most surprising thing about what you do?
A: It actually really surprises me that a lot of people don't know how to set a table — even waiters at some restaurants. People don't know how to set tables, how to put a knife down, where the spoon goes or where the fork goes — that is a big surprise to me.

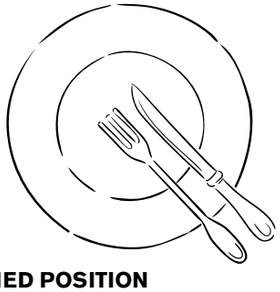
Q: What is your definition of *la dolce vita*/the good life?
A: Getting together with friends and family, laughing and talking, and sharing stories.

www.msmodernmannersyyc.com
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UTENSIL ETIQUETTE



RESTING POSITION
If you need to pause during the meal, place your knife at the top of your plate and your fork in the four o'clock position.



FINISHED POSITION
To signal that you're finished with the course, both utensils should be resting at five o'clock and the tips should be pointing to ten o'clock on your plate.

TEN GOOD MANNERS EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE

1. Smile.
2. Be kind and courteous.
3. Say "hello" and "goodbye."
4. After a meeting or being a guest, always follow up with a thank you note, email, text or card, depending on the occasion.
5. Look at people when they are talking to you.
6. Always be punctual for any meeting, date or event.
7. Know what to do at the table and how to use your flatware, glasses and napkin.
8. Wait until all guests are served and the host begins eating before you eat.
9. Chew your food with your mouth closed.
10. A good guest arrives with a gift. A small gift (could be under $20) is appropriate, or it could be homemade jam or cookies. A bottle of wine is always appreciated. It is not necessary to open the bottle of wine that evening.



The fantastical images appeared in Pei's book *Guo Pei: Couture Beyond* by Howl Collective that was published in 2018 and explored themes of the East and West



Guo Pei, China's most well-known haute couture designer, tells us about where she finds inspiration, her deeply rooted love for Chinese culture and how she considers herself a happy woman

WRITTEN BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

Queen of Couture

From the weight of the clothing, to the height of the shoes, Guo Pei's work represents the strength and confidence of a woman who can bear the weight of the crown of her work — both literally and figuratively. As China's most notable fashion designer, Pei's embellished creations go beyond any fantasist's imagination and reflect the spirit of Pei's deeply rooted love for Chinese history and culture, which to her, are synonymous with beauty.

Pei's work manages to anchor you through the gravitas of unparalleled craftsmanship, ultimately magnifying the beauty that exists in Eastern culture and beyond. For Westerners, Pei is best known for the Yellow Empress gown that Rihanna wore to the Met Gala in 2015 — a gown that took two years to create. Although the Met Gala gown may be the most recognized of Pei's creations, she considers her most representative design to be the Magnificent Gold, a gown that holds the essence of what exists within all of her work. "Some people see China in this work, some see the sun, some see status, some see wealth, some see time and so on. In fact, they are all different. This is the charm of art. Art inspires mankind, so I think these works have gone beyond clothing. It is no longer a piece of clothing, but a carrier of culture, history, human emotions and love."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN



PHOTO COURTESY OF GUO PEI

Pei grew up during China's Cultural Revolution and decided to pursue fashion when it wasn't popular at the time. Today, after being in the Chinese fashion circle for the past 40 years, she has become China's most well-known haute couture designer

Q. Describe your sources of inspiration. Do they come from history, art or nature? How has that influenced your work?

When it comes to sources of inspiration, I have to say that is it not particularly specific. At this time in my life, as I continue to age and my life experiences expand, I feel more and more inspired. It not only comes from history and art, but also sometimes it comes from my responses to them and external influences. In other words, when things on the outside touch my emotions or feelings, or the moment when I feel stirrings in my soul or the embrace of life, I want to share it with all my heart. However, I want to use my language, my own vision and my way, through my presentation of clothing and couture, to share it with the world.

To be honest, this has been a process of evolution. I remember when I was young and I was starting out as a designer, studying fashion design, that when I was creating or designing, I felt that I was looking for inspiration everywhere. Sometimes I deliberately read things, such as history books, and went to museums, as if in an almost forced manner that was the only way I could get inspired. However, with the passing of time and increasing of age, there is an accumulation of life experiences and a deeper understanding of the world. I have found that ideas come to my mind more naturally, spontaneously and organically. This kind of inspiration is neither intentional nor deliberate. There is no overwhelming rush to find out where it originated from.

Q. What was it like to design Rihanna's trailing yellow gown at the 2015 Met Ball?

In 2015, Rihanna put on one of my big yellow robes. All of a sudden, the whole world saw this dress, saw a Chinese designer and saw Chinese design. In fact, this dress is from my work, which was released in 2010 as part of the 1002 Nights series. This piece was from a wider collection, which was designed and based on the classic story of 1,001 Arabian Nights. *Arabian Nights* is the first fairy tale I read when I was very young, and one many children would have seen, and which we translate it into *Tian Fang Ye Tan.*

Rihanna saw a picture of this dress in my series and then she sent an email over to my office to say that she wanted to wear this dress on the red carpet for the Met Gala. I didn't know Rihanna very well at the time, so I didn't expect that the moment she wore this dress on the red carpet that it would attract the whole world's attention. It appeared in *The New York Times* and on the cover of major magazines, newspapers and related media internationally. Such a global coverage is perhaps why everyone has their own understanding of my work, and many people think it is very Chinese.

Q. How many hours does it take to design and create one of your designs?

How long it takes to create one of my designs has no definite answer. Sometimes I'm not in a rush and I just want to focus on the process, so I don't restrict myself about timing. I might do it for a year or two, and some of my works have taken at least two years, with some of my unpublished works taking three or five years to finish. I think many designers, if they had a choice, are not in a hurry to release, so I just want to complete it and do it slowly. Of course, some works have a time limitation, such as the couture shows in Paris being twice a year in July or January. It has a schedule, so I must finish it within this schedule. For such projects, I will plan.

I have never thought about the time regarding completing work. In the past or in various parts of the world, many artists might have spent a lifetime or decades to complete a good work. For the movie *Avatar*, the director took seven years. I think good artwork requires time polished. I sometimes feel that the work is never truly finished. I have always felt that it is not in the best or the most perfect end state. If given more time, I can continue to refine work and continue to labour over it to complete it. This is the same feeling shared by many artists. They believe that some works will never be finished. Because you are growing and improving as an artist, creator and person, you are also changing through time. So, it's inevitable to want to make changes on your works with constant adjustments and improvements. In short, it's hard to tell how long it takes to complete a work.

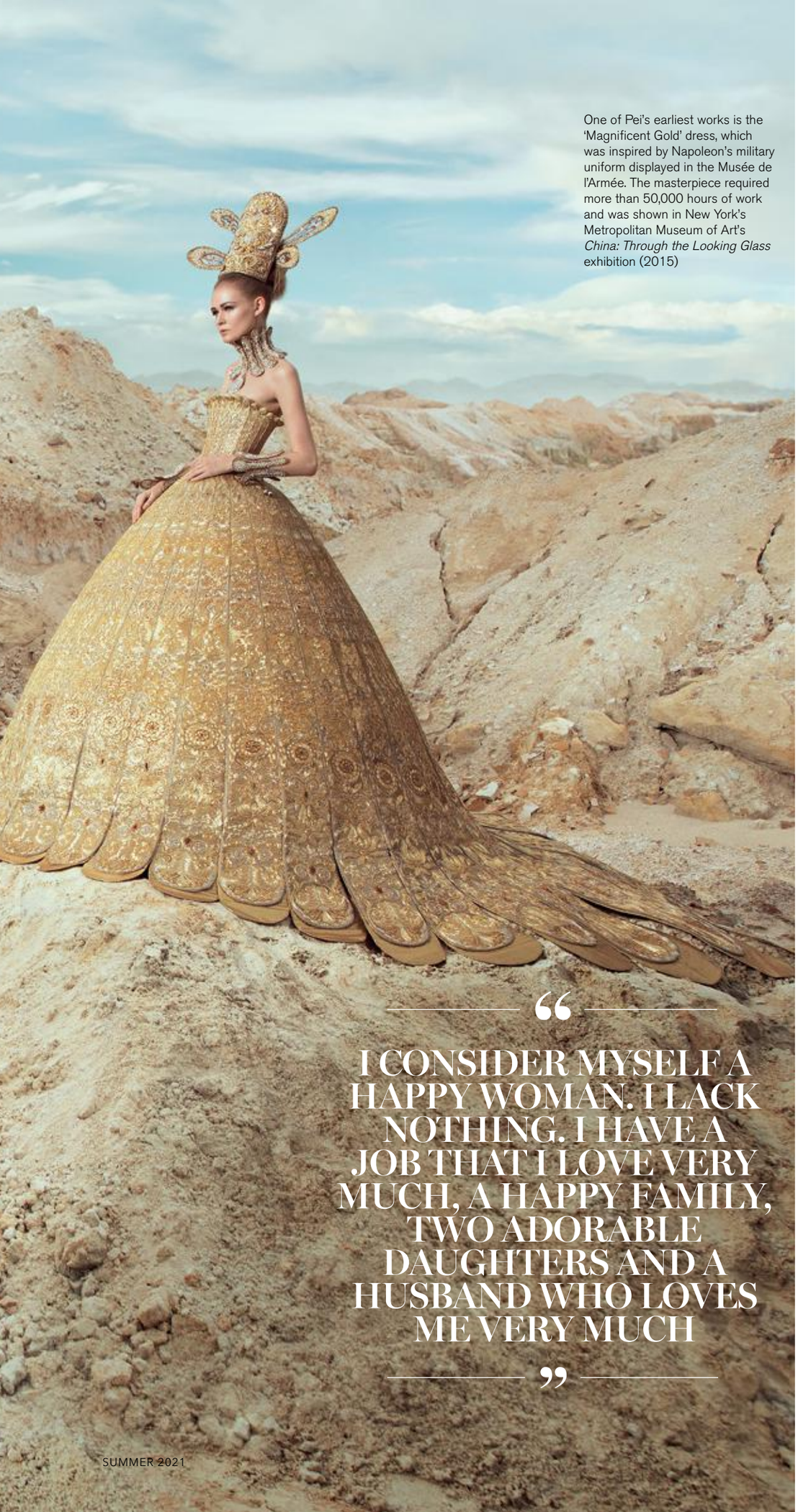
Q. Who do you admire in your industry?

There are actually many people I admire in the industry. Among the designers all over the world, most of the designers I admire are perhaps not surprisingly haute couture designers. For example, the designer Cristóbal Balenciaga is a designer whom I particularly adore. When I went to Spain to see his exhibition, I thought he was



Weighing 25 kilograms, Pei's canary yellow floor-length masterpiece was worn by Rihanna for the 2015 Met Gala and took two years to make





One of Pei's earliest works is the 'Magnificent Gold' dress, which was inspired by Napoleon's military uniform displayed in the Musée de l'Armée. The masterpiece required more than 50,000 hours of work and was shown in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art's *China: Through the Looking Glass* exhibition (2015)

particularly talented with a sense of uniqueness and incredible life experiences that shaped his work.

Of course, I also like designers, such as Alexander McQueen and Alber Elbaz from Lanvin. I adore John Galliano, as well. Because of their wisdom and their way of manipulating materials, I particularly appreciate them. I especially admire people who love life, appreciate life, express life and have artistic creativity.

There are such names as Yves Saint Laurent, Mr. Dior and Ms. Chanel. I have always admired them since I was young and see them all as pioneers. For me, becoming a fashion designer is because of their brilliance. Although, I liked to make clothes and fashion designs when I was young, the moment I really understood what design meant, and how to design, was when my attention was captivated by their works. I always believe that they are my role models.

Q. What do you find most challenging when designing a collection?

When designing a collection, the most challenging aspect is the craftsmanship that is required. Craftsmanship is the foundation of creation and carries creative ideas through the construction process to the final piece. Therefore, if the craftsmanship is not in place, it will be the biggest limitation in realizing that idea.

Q. How would you describe your style?

I don't give too much thought to describing or choosing my own style. I think style is a process that takes a long period of time and persistence for it to emerge and gradually be formed. It is usually a kind of discernment of others toward you. Sometimes, designers or the creators themselves don't even get ahold or grasp of it, and in my case, I don't want to restrict myself with the idea of "style"nor care too much about one single style.

To be honest, I don't think this is something I can control. Therefore, if there is a style that is formed in the minds of people and they can recognize it as being representative of me, then it is actually a good thing, and this style will become genuine. If I define or choose it by myself, then this style may change at a certain time or in a certain environment. So, I never thought about what style I belong to, and, answering this question now, it is also difficult for me to describe. Maybe many people say that my style is embroidery and handwork, but I don't agree completely.

Q. What can you tell us about your family and your personal life?

I consider myself a happy woman. I lack nothing. I have a job that I love very much, a happy family, two adorable daughters and a husband who loves me very much. In so many ways my life is complete — a full circle, you might say. I think life is best when you are able to not miss a piece of all the important parts or elements. Some

"I CONSIDER MYSELF A HAPPY WOMAN. I LACK NOTHING. I HAVE A JOB THAT I LOVE VERY MUCH, A HAPPY FAMILY, TWO ADORABLE DAUGHTERS AND A HUSBAND WHO LOVES ME VERY MUCH"

Pei often incorporates ancient Chinese symbols in her designs, including motifs that were frequently used on the hems of royal court robes



Pei is well-known for incorporating Eastern intricate detailing on her garments, which inform her Chinese roots and sometimes take years to complete

people may choose a career, and some people will choose a family, and I realize I am very fortunate to have so much. In fact, 10 or 20 years ago, I was often asked by the media: "If I were to make a choice between my family or career, what would I choose?" At that time, I didn't understand it, why they would ask this, and I replied: "Why should I choose? Why not let me have it all?" I believed then, and still do, that everyone's life and family are two different parts of a whole, and it's a matter of balance. With anything in balance, one cannot put too much emphasis on one part or one side. For equilibrium, you must work hard to balance your family and career, so that your life can be fulfilled.

Q. What are some things you like to do when you are not working?
When I am not working, I like to organize the house and spend time gardening. I like to create a beautiful environment for my family, whether that is decorating spaces, building and creating homes, interior decorating or gardening.

Q. What is the best gift you have ever received?
I have received so many wonderful gifts, and many of them might be called "best." However, a year ago, before the pandemic hit, I received a very meaningful gift. It was a necklace that had been worn by Ms. Chanel during her lifetime. A good friend from New York, who is the CEO of a modelling company, gave it to me personally. He mentioned that Ms. Chanel had originally given the necklace to her favourite model, Pedi. When Pedi quit the fashion industry, she passed the necklace to him. He felt that the necklace would hold greater significance and be more meaningful to me. He gave it to me knowing I would treasure it and look after it, and then, one day, I will give this necklace to my favourite person and pass it on.

Q. What does *La Dolce Vita* mean to you?
To me, a sweet life means beauty and fulfilment. It also implies eternity, continuity and inheritance.

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