EDITION 2025 — ISSUE 1

Photo by Jesse Suarez

Do go on

(and on, and on) . . .

Patterns and motifs... while these two words are not exactly synonyms, together they can communicate or establish a dominant idea. And a motif or pattern can influence all five senses, creating an entire identity from just a few simple rhythms.

Every part of life is made up of these elements. The image of the Taj Mahal is not complete without the understanding that its façade is made up of millions of intricate and intertwined marble motifs that together form a triumphant, unified design visible from a distance.

The collaborators in this issue consider patterns and motifs intrinsic to who they are. Zuri is a clothing company that started with two friends and a simple, elegant, perfectly pocketed dress. The garments they create are objects of beauty and utility made from unique patterned fabrics that marry function with form.

Bonnie Morano is a painter whose precision and use of color rely on iconic motifs and ancient symbolism. She is represented in Los Angeles by gallerist Rhett Baruch. Rhett's motif is born from the collective style of the artists he chooses to represent and the objects of beauty he has curated over the years.

Finally, Lisa Vollmer is a photographer and artist who quietly captures images of culture and self, and whose motif is literal and figural.

Motifs and patterns can and should evolve, lest they become banal. They are more than decorative designs; sometimes becoming the dominant theme in an artist's oeuvre. And that idea is where we start this issue's journey.

Take what you will from the stories and interpret them through your unique lens.

Kim Duval.

Founding Principal

EDITION 2025 Issue 1

MORE is a quarterly publication focused on design, real estate and construction, produced by 41 Studios.

41 Studios provides design and real estate advisory services for residential, corporate and commercial clients across the globe.

All details of this publication, including its design, photographic and written content, is original content, created by 41 Studios, unless credited specifically.

Cover Art: Zuri original fabric pattern 2024.

From Africa with Love

Zuri: A Story of Fabric and Friendship

Cultures worldwide have for centuries used clothing to signify status, history, values, and beliefs. Across the African continent, patterns and fabrics are not only rooted in such traditions, but also have an inherent rhythmic quality that suggests movement via lines, shapes, and repeating motifs. This marriage of energy, beauty, and meaning is what brought together two unlikely partners to found Zuri, a fashion brand that pays respect to cultural traditions while crafting effortlessly cool and modern casual wear.

Sandra Zhao, a history major who started a bakery, and Ashleigh Miller, a law school graduate turned - rug dealer, crossed paths at a wedding when they were both living in Kenya. Ashleigh was smitten by Sandra's dress—"cotton, A-line, perfect for all weather and occasions"—which Sandra had commissioned from a local seamstress, using boldly patterned fabric she had purchased at a Kenyan market.

Sandra gifted her new friend with a dress of her own. "Once I put it on, I felt like I never wanted to take it off," Ashleigh tells me over a Zoom call, from her home office. "I felt very confident. It's cool, but put together."

The two hit it off, and hit the ground running with a new business idea. They named it Zuri, a derivative of the Swahili word mzuri, or "good." Hewing to a philosophy of simplicity and quality, they sourced more fabric, and had the tailor create additional versions of the same universally flattering silhouette—structured through the shoulders and slim through the arms, with a high neck and a relaxed body. Early customers snapped up the initial run.

Now rounding the corner on their eighth year in business, Ashleigh and Sandra, who both live and work out of the New York City area, continue to source most of their fabrics from Kenya, including during annual trips to their favorite markets. Others they commission for rotary printing on fabric milled by Thika Cloth Mills, a famed factory founded in Nairobi in 1958. Several artisan groups contribute their expertise: Ghanaian batiks, Senegalese stitch-resist dyeing, and Indian hand weaving and block printing. Zuri also partners with artists around the world on contemporary designs.

Story by Robin Catalano

Photo by Tobin Jones


WHEELER

Photo by Natasha Sweeney

Photo by Ashleigh Miller

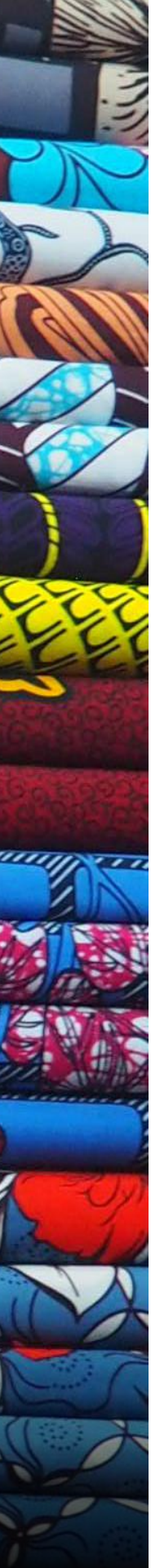


Photo by Benedetta Kithanga

We make really
great-quality
clothing
that you
never have
a reason
to throw
away.

When asked whether they select from this embarrassment of textile riches based on the need for a specific color or motif, Ashleigh lets out a chuckle and shakes her head. “We’re getting better at this,” she says. “We are not planners at all. In the past we’ve sort of just picked what we’ve liked from the fabrics our vendors send us, and tried to make it seasonal—heavier colors for fall, for example. [We’ve evolved our business] to be more intentional about what we’re buying, what product it’s going to be for, and what time of year we’re going to release it.”

In contrast, they’ve been very intentional about their materials since day one: 100 percent cotton for their patterns and a classic linen/cotton blend for their solids. But not all suppliers are transparent in their labeling. Sandra and Ashleigh would pack a lighter on market visits and request one-inch fabric samples; if a scrap melted upon burning, they knew it was a poly blend to avoid.

This is, they tell me, just one of Zuri’s nods to sustainability. “Both of us are people who like clothes that last. We’re not shoppers,” says Sandra, a soothing presence on the screen in an autumnal print topped with a rust-colored fuzzy fleece vest. “I just want a shirt, and I want it to last. I don’t want to buy it again, or have to find something else. We knew we wanted to make really great-quality clothing that you would never have a reason to throw away.”

The pair are also careful to choose partners that minimize their environmental impact. Soko Kenya, for example, is about 70 percent solar powered, and collects rainwater for use in pre-washing fabrics, which are hung to dry in the sun. They also collect their fabric offcuts, which are fashioned into tote bags, aprons, and even a jaw-dropping jacket made entirely of diminutive scraps. “Whatever you can patchwork, we’ve thought of it and tried to make it,” Sandra says.

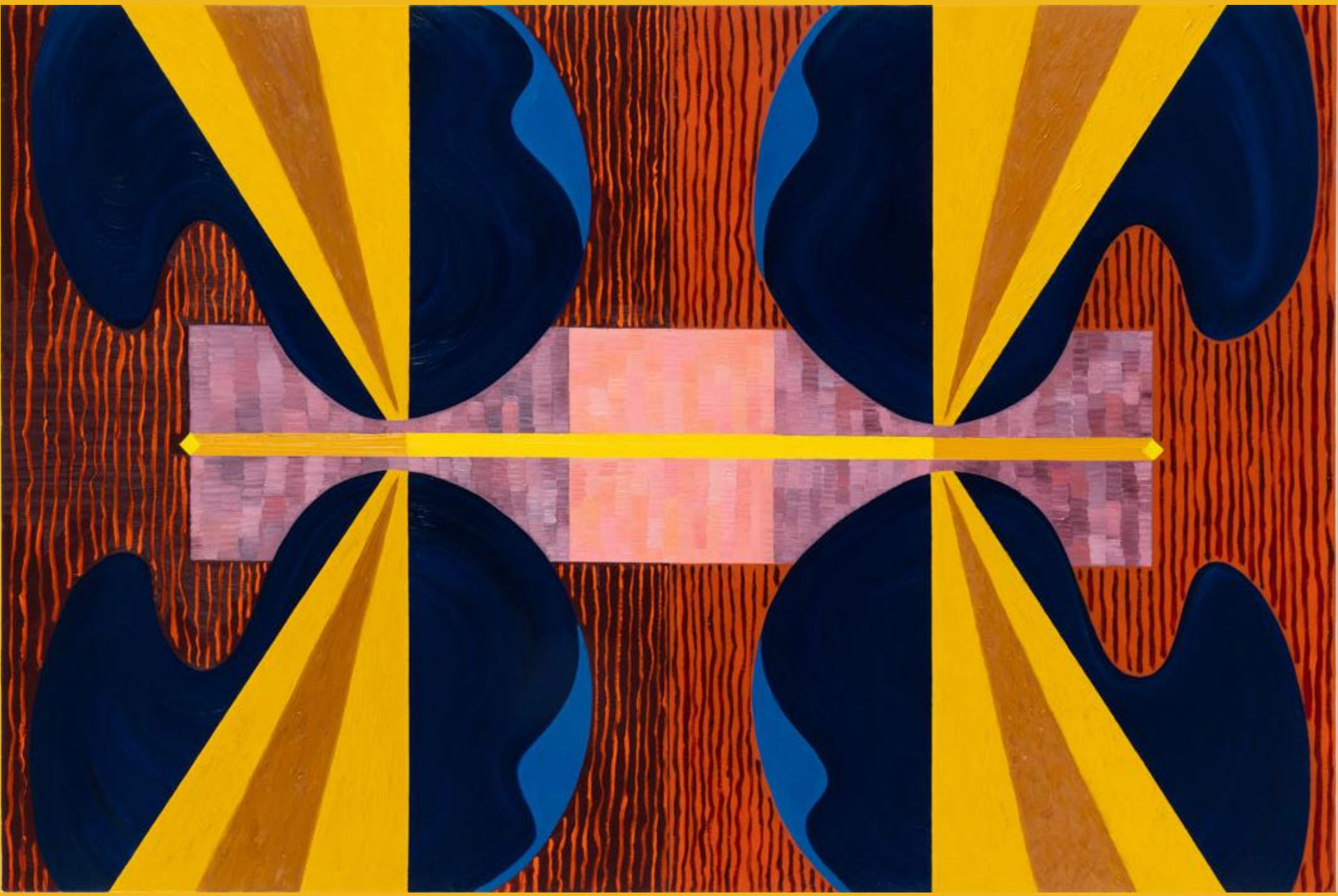
These represent some of Zuri’s newer, beyond-the-A-line items, which also include vibrant button-down and pullover tops, roomy shorts and relaxed tapered-leg pants, and riotously colorful accessories like belts, wraps, tote bags, and dog collars. To enhance the online shopping experience, they stock a tightly edited selection of home goods, such as tea towels, woven African baskets and bags, bright pillowcases, and beeswax candles.

Although their fan base is avid enough to have started a 5,000-member Zuri Clothing – BST & Appreciation Facebook group—a page so selective, my own request for entry has gone unapproved—both Ashleigh and Sandra shrug off the labels of “designers” or “artists.” Instead, they see themselves as owners of an affordable luxury brand with a deep reverence for the traditions they draw from, and for making diverse women feel chic, confident, and comfortable.

“We’re very much aware of our place as Americans in the larger narrative of working with these textiles that are so deeply rooted in a place and history,” they write via email a day after their interview. “We’re always trying to make sure that we’re approaching what we do with respect and thoughtfulness. . . . And we feel so lucky to be in a community of people whose respect for the culture, traditions, and producers (as well as for each other!) is so meaningful.”

Photo by Natasha Sweeney

Set Me Free, Oil On Canvas, 2022



Jewels

Bonnie Morano's Precise and Colorful Paintings

“I’m really good at math,” says abstract painter Bonnie Morano, who may just well be the most creative mathematician in Brooklyn. “I’m constantly using my calculator when I’m making art. My love of math shows up no matter what I do.”

Bonnie jumped the fence after seven years as director of a nonprofit to feed her creative side, receiving an MFA in painting in 2023. The transition was successful in large part because the organizational skills and structuring she used in her corporate stint are what she leans on as an artist.

“She’s a painter you need to know,” says Los Angelese gallerist Rhett Baruch. “Her work explores organic and geometric form affected by symmetry and repetition, a way to emulate the meticulous craftsmanship seen in luxury goods. Her compositions are highly organized and structured as a metaphor of order, stability, and hierarchy.”

Her faith, she says, is the constant connection, the heart of her work. As an Orthodox Jewish woman, Bonnie had to find an indirect way to represent her spirituality. She links iconography and symmetry – the latter represents the nature of the divine with a certain decadence, through regal metallic hues and rich fabrics like ikat and brocade. Unlike medieval art’s heavy-handed approach to religious messaging, her work relies on symbols to elevate the spiritual and the divine.

“It's not so orthodox to be a painter in my community, in my role. It’s not my intention to proselytize.”

Bonnie’s work is abstract, but it’s not total abstraction like Jackson Pollock. Her forms are, by design, vaguely familiar and an active observation reveals the meaning behind the symbols. At first glance, her work reminded me of a kaleidoscope: bold bursts of color poised to turn into new color and shapes. But when Bonnie compares the turning of a kaleidoscope to the turning of a dreidel, my mind opens to new meanings, new outlooks - a freedom in interpretation.

“Artists are supposed to be in the freedom business,” she wrote during her post-graduate program studies in 2022. She finds these musings even truer now that she is working outside the limits of academia. Instead of feeling the need to make something new with every canvas, Bonnie takes the time to meditate on a particular form or palette. Almost like Monet’s 250-plus versions of the water lilies in his backyard pond, Bonnie’s paintings focus on arranging and rearranging. “My diptychs are the same paintings with things shuffled around, forcing viewers to think about how rearranging changes the painting, how it would change their life.”

Story by Laura Mars
Original Art by Bonnie Morano

Photo by Jenny Gorman

In a recent body of work, Bonnie experimented with using sports images to expand her religious metaphor into something concrete and familiar. She explains that there is a certain fanaticism, or spectator culture, in sports and many of the structural elements, such as winners, losers, referees, goals, can be related to religion. She extends the metaphor to boxing, which is ostensibly about fighting an opponent. But in Bonnie's interpretation, it can also be about fighting one's instinct to act on their faith. Her baseball painting compares the 'batter up' call to a Jewish prayer thanking God for the opportunity to wake up every morning. "Are we going to hit it out of the park today? I had fun trying to make those connections with that body of work."

Bonnie's paintings are heavily inspired by the art nouveau movement (1890 to 1910), when architecture, decorative arts, and fine art focused on symmetry, curvaceous lines, and spirals—motifs that are hard to miss in her work.

It comes as no surprise that the spiral is particularly compelling, given that this decorative motif is based on the golden spiral of mathematics. In geometry, the golden spiral gets wider, farther from its origin, by the golden ratio of 1.618 for every quarter turn it makes. In art and architecture, the spiral is used to represent evolution and connections between human and divine, spiraling from the outer ego to cosmic awareness and enlightenment. The golden ratio is found in seashells and plants, like nautilus shells and sunflowers, and the human body, when comparing the length of the forearm to the length of the hand, for example.

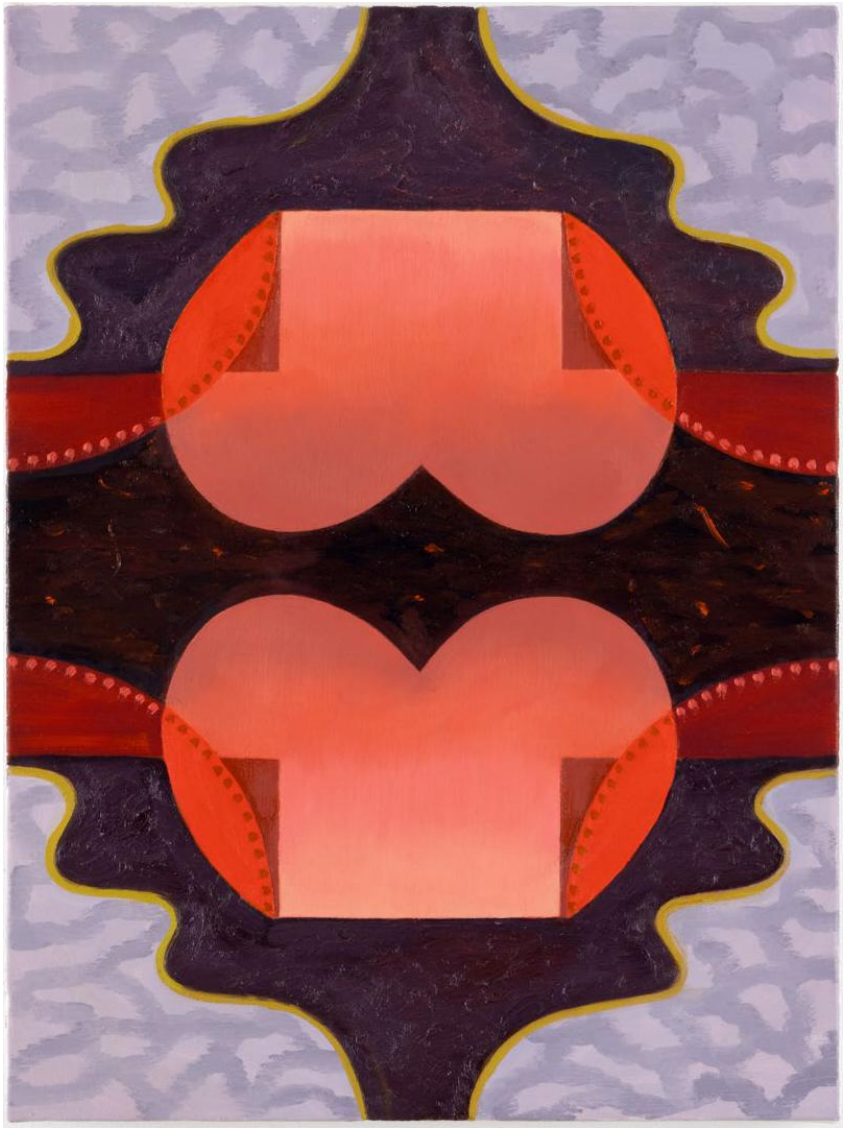
"It's so interesting that something so decorative is really an underpinning of nature," Bonnie says. "If you start looking, you'll find that mathematical proportion everywhere. It's easy to go down that rabbit hole."

Yet Bonnie uses art to be free from the rules. Her studio, which she leases in a community called Treasure Island Art Studios, with about 100 other working artists, in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, is the ultimate freedom: it has no rules, set hours, or hierarchy. "Deeper than that is the abstraction," she says. "It's only through abstraction that I feel completely autonomous. I find myself erasing all the calculations in my head and think only this: 'I believe in myself and in abstraction 100 percent.'"

What's next for Bonnie Morano is more abstraction. More bold colors and repetitive shapes. More motifs that capture the essence of the divine, of her faith, of gratitude. More spirals! She opened a new show on March 6 at One River School in Allendale, NJ, and will exhibit again at Rhett Baruch Gallery in Los Angeles later in the year.

Bonnie also teaches painting at The Well, a community-based women's learning center in Brooklyn. When her figure painting students complain that their work doesn't look exactly like the model, she tells them that if that's what they are looking for, take a picture and call it a day. "Figuration you can play with," she says. "Abstraction is so much harder because I'm making it up, there is no reference to anything concrete. It's very much a feeling in my head. What do I want to convey with this line? How can I express joy through geometric form? Me making it up, that's autonomy."

If you
can connect
what's in
your mind
to what's happening
with your hands,
then
your intention
will
come through.



Above: Sink Back Into the Ocean II, Oil on Canvas, 2023
At left: Crazy Eights, Oil On Canvas, 2022

Collecting

Rhett Baruch Shares His Taste with the World

Within jewelry designer Sonia Boyajian's eponymous showroom in Los Angeles sits Rhett Baruch's current temporary activation for the artist Richard Shapiro. As a collaboration between Rhett and his partner Patty, this couple has taken on high art, while remaining decidedly low-key.

Rhett ventured into the art world nine years ago, with an unusual arrangement: his home, an anonymous storefront a few blocks from their current show, became the display of his finds. Both self-taught collectors, he and Patty worked their exquisite taste into a unique collection of objects from sources like estate sales, social media, and personal shopping trips. The 1920 Apartment Gallery as it's referred to is something of a speakeasy destination where designers and collectors can find collectible design objects as well as fine art. On a day the shop is open, visitors might be curious what is art and what are the remnants of a very personal life, suddenly on display because the blending of life and business is so complete.

And this is kind of who they are in real life. I initially met Rhett at another temporary exhibit this past summer – also a unique venue, where the producer, Ivana Rose, had taken a storied Los Angeles apartment and opened it as an art show, mixing function with form, with important pieces hung above a vintage tub and art in a galley kitchen. The space had been cleared of furniture, but its original purpose was clear, and the juxtaposition of the various artists' works hung from the walls added to the whimsy.

Rhett approaches his curation in a similar yet totally different way. And the presentation of pieces amongst his and Patty's real life gained enough attention to get them featured in the *New York Times* and high art magazines like *Sixty Six* and *VoyageLA*.

Months ago, he and Patty wanted to go big. They were introduced to jewelry designer Sonia Boyajian, who invited them to install their nomadic gallery at the rear of her own showroom – really a creative workspace as much as a retail shop. Rhett and Patty conceived the show, handled all the logistics, and made the entire production shine. Richard's pieces are set upon tall white walls, with exposed wood rafters high above. The pieces are not identified like in a museum, but rather set as if in a house. Should a client care to learn more, Rhett and Patty pull out their laptops to share details on the specific piece. The entire venture is very nouveau, and very LA – in a good way. Rhett strikes me as an old soul with Patty a splash of neon pink and a warm smile. Their energy as a team is just divine.

The show's opening foretold its success: several hundred people attended the launch in their new space. Rhett and Patty are excited for what they will produce next, with the energy and eye to make it outstanding and unique. Rhett tells me on my visit that they are collaborating on a number of projects across LA, including a restaurant concept where art will be one of the stars of the show, and residential projects with other important designers like Garance Rousseau and Electric Bowery.

This power couple has employed trial by fire to weave an incredible story of success. Masters of production, their natural talent is why they will continue to rise in the art and design world.

Above: Photo by Claire Esparros
Previous page: Photo by Claire Esparros
Next page: Photo by Chris Hanke

Snow on Mount Koya

Lisa Vollmer Captures a Moment

Snow is falling as I sit in the Great Barrington, Massachusetts, gallery that photographer and artist Lisa Vollmer co-owns with her mother Sabine von Falken, also a prominent photographer.

Lisa is telling me a story about how she captured one of the mesmerizing images in her self-portrait series.

It's snowing in the story, too.

Lisa has travelled solo to the Okunoin Cemetery in the mountain village of Koyasan, Wakayama, Japan to participate in a ceremony of morning chants performed by the monks of the Torodo Temple. She is setting up her gear, checking light meters and timers to ensure the equipment is synchronized to take a series of images where she ascends a set of stairs away from the camera. Suddenly, snow begins to fall; unexpected for this time of year, and oddly perfect for the moment. Lisa looks around. She now needs help keeping the camera shielded from the frozen water droplets. A kind stranger is in exactly the right place and time to help. This stranger, a new found friend, holds an umbrella over her equipment, and Lisa readies herself for action. With a few quick motions, she leaves the camera and walks away. The images capture moments of remarkable solitude. The snow adds a layer of peace that could not be predicted or controlled and makes the images light yet deeply heavy. In a bright red dress she uses specifically for this series of images, the weight of Lisa's presence against the snow-laden trees is oddly calming. You can hear the softness. You can feel the crisp air. It is an intoxicating scene, remarkable because it not only expresses a unique moment, in a unique place, but is a series of self-discovery that only Lisa can capture as she does.

Lisa's self-portrait series includes other similar stories from her journeys; she started this line of imagery in 1998 as an ongoing investigation into identity as performance. She has traveled all over the world solo to capture her deeply personal subject of self. In another vignette, under the blazing Athens sun, Lisa sets up her camera hundreds of feet from the ruins of the Parthenon. She plans for another red dress shot, but to fully capture the ruins in the shot, she must move her gear farther and farther away. In the moment, a pair of also tourists offer to stand guard and ensure her costly equipment does not get stolen. She is grateful. The ability to take this type of photo in this type of environment is very rare – not unlike the photographers who capture athletes inside the Louvre.

The image comes out perfectly. The crispness of the red dress against the giant restored stones evokes feelings of struggle and sameness. The dress in all of these images is important not only because it's bold color becomes such a striking contrast to the backgrounds Lisa has chosen to photograph, but because it is a dress from her native Germany: a traditional garment called a dirndl, and one Lisa uses to both embrace and critique heritage, exploring the expectations and limitations that come with cultural symbols.

Even if not for her self-portrait series, Lisa often travels solo, inserting herself into landscapes as both participant and outsider and capturing deeply cultural scenes that by the virtue of the medium, may never happen exactly the same way, if ever, again.

Lisa was born in Berlin, Germany, and grew up in the United States, returning as a child and briefly again for graduate studies, but landing permanently in the western portion of Massachusetts known as the Berkshires. She and her mother joined to found her gallery in 2016. Her earliest memories involve watching her mother create magic in her black and white darkroom, an experience that shaped Lisa's perception of photography as an artistic and transformative process.

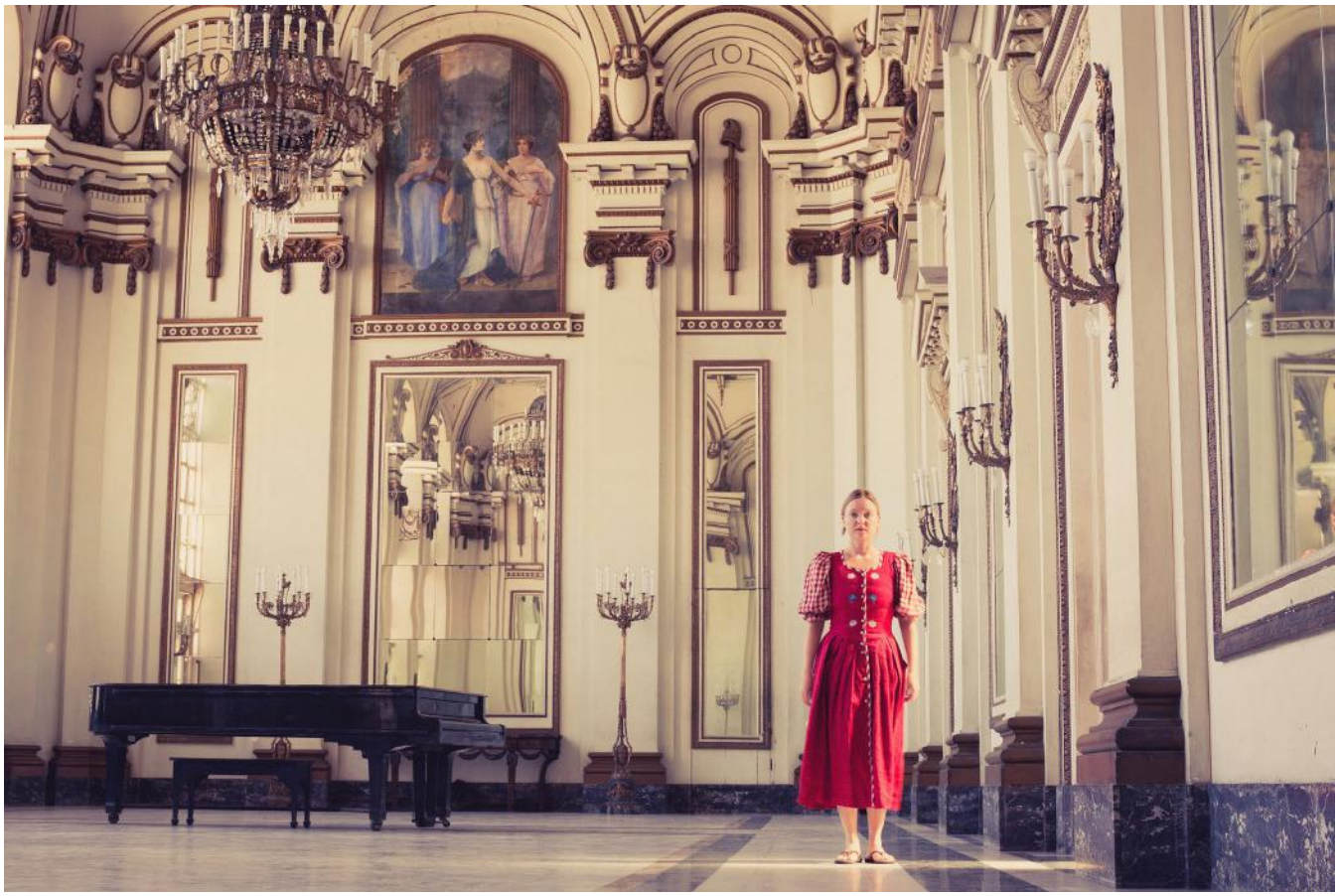
For Lisa, photography is less about documenting reality and much more about constructing an image. She studied at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, where another self-portrait photographer Cindy Sherman, heavily influenced her approach to self-portraiture, with photography functioning as both performance and critique.

I ask Lisa what she thinks about her inclusion in this issue, on the theme of motifs. Does she embrace the label? "Absolutely. Motifs are not just visual repetitions; they are conceptual echoes. In my work, themes and symbols reappear across all of my series."

Lisa has other photography series on display in her European-influenced gallery space. The exhibits rotate, and she is readying rooms for new displays. On a previous visit, I had gravitated toward a series of show chickens against a crumpled parchment background. Called "Chickens: A Shared Curiosity," the work emerged during the pandemic. "A friend was raising chickens, and I became captivated by them—not as subjects for documentation, but as part of an interplay between observation, instinct, and interactions," she says. "The images reflect a shared curiosity: the chickens were fascinated by me, just as I was with them."

This fascination comes through in her human subjects too. I think it must evoke a different emotion in every viewer, but for me Lisa's series on India comes across as deeply human, colorful and rich. Children peer into the camera in elaborate costume, as curious about Lisa as she is of them. She has created meaning out of a simple dialogue between camera and its subject, and it is an extraordinary sight to behold.

Photos by Lisa Vollmer



Above: A Self-Portrait in the Palace of the Revolution, Havana, Cuba, 2012
At left: From the Chickens: A Shared Curiousity Series, 2020
Previous page: A Self-Portrai in Japan, 2019

Above: A Self-Portrait in NYC, 2012
At right: Boy in Parade, India, 2007
Next page: A Self-Portrait with the Berlin Wall, 2012

Photo by Jesse Suarez

Until Next Time...

Four and a half decades into this design-life I have always leaned toward black, white, and navy in my designs. Stripes, plaids, architectural spaces, but with softness. Clean lines, white walls, great art, warm tones, beautiful objects, and patterns. I like spaces to feel like they have been there forever, and are yet modern too. I'm all about timelessness.

I don't dress in all black. I don't push myself into the box of an architect or an interior designer, or any other of those specific labels, because my motif is me. As unique as my DNA.

It's worth looking around and taking stock of your motif too. It is your calling card and its layers and symbolism have been carefully curated by you. Embrace it for all that it is and all that you have made it.

41 Studios, LLC
41studiosdesign.com
@41studiosdesign

41
STUDIOS