

IMORE

EDITION 2026 — ISSUE 1

MAKING IT

Excellence takes time. The path to success as a creative is not always linear. More often than not it is built on a sometimes messy, meandering path filled with moments of pause and self-reflection. It requires discipline, patience, a bit of insanity—and grit.

In this issue I explore what it takes to achieve greatness by sharing the journeys of **Matthew Ames**, former fashion designer turned gallerist; **Diana McBride**, publisher of Modern Luxury's **Riviera Magazine**; and **Sam Kozhaya**, executive producer and executive vice president at **Legendary Entertainment**.

Messy, chaotic, impossible—and, yet, somehow, beautiful. The product of years of the grind paired with destiny and decision-making. Read it all as it unfolds in the stories and images that follow. I hope you leave this issue feeling as inspired as I do.

Kim Duval.

Founding Principal



Photo by Jesse Suarez.

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MATTHEW AIMES

CREATES INTENTIONALLY

IEW





Matthew Ames is moving a bench when we begin talking, although “moving” is not exactly the right word. He is placing it, then stepping back, then adjusting it again by inches—the way someone does when the object in question carries more than its own weight. The gallery is not yet open, but it already feels arranged around a point of view he has been carrying for years, something internal now made physical.

A shipment had arrived that morning from a furniture maker in Vermont. He turns his laptop toward the window to show me a Shaker-style L-shaped wooden bench positioned in the light. The wood is stained matte black, the spindles hand-carved, the seat gently shaped in a way that suggests the human body without insisting on it. He runs his hand across the surface almost unconsciously.

“It’s exquisite,” he says, and there is no performance in the word.

From Southern California, I watch him walk through the space over video, sunlight cutting across the old floors he uncovered himself during renovation. His voice carries a note I recognize immediately—a combination of disbelief and gratitude that tends to appear when people find themselves, against expectation, inside the life they once imagined privately.

“I feel so lucky that people have trusted me to create this space and show their work.”

The gallery is, in one sense, a second act. In another, it is simply the continuation of an argument he began decades earlier: that intention matters more than speed, that permanence matters more than novelty, that objects made carefully possess a moral weight absent from those made quickly.

He built his career first in New York, after studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and moving east immediately after graduation with the singular goal of working in fashion. In 2004, at twenty-five, he was selected for the **Hyères International Festival of Fashion** and Photography in the south of France.







*(Above) Fall / Winter 2009 Collection. (At right) Spring / Summer Collection 2008.
Photos by Cybille Walter.*



“It changed the course of my life,” he says of the moment when possibility becomes tangible.

After winning, he began showing collections in Paris, where he found audiences more receptive to his sensibility. Paris, for a young American designer, offered something New York did not: a willingness to look slowly, to consider unfamiliar ideas without immediately categorizing them. His work was never built around trend cycles. It centered instead on construction, fabric, drape—garments intended to endure both physically and aesthetically. He drafted his own patterns, draped by hand, remained closely involved in production.

“The clothes I made were not trendy,” he says. “I’ve never really been interested in trends. I’m drawn to a timeless aesthetic.”

By 2011, however, the industry had shifted in ways that felt structural rather than temporary. Retail calendars accelerated. Buyers demanded four collections per year instead of two. The internet collapsed the distance between runway and consumer into seconds. Shows that had once functioned primarily as professional presentations became global content events, photographed and disseminated instantly.

“Fashion was being gobbled up right away and spit back out,” he says.

For someone committed to deliberateness, the pace began to feel not merely exhausting but incompatible with his values. He had always wanted to make things slowly, thoughtfully. After nearly a decade moving at what he describes as relentless speed, he stepped away. He did not know whether he would return. He only knew he needed distance.

Distance led first to teaching. He accepted a professorship in Savannah, mentoring students for two years before returning to Chicago to teach at his alma mater. Teaching offered something the industry had not: time to think. Space to reconsider what creation might mean outside commercial pressure. Meanwhile, fashion itself moved further toward celebrity spectacle—an evolution that felt increasingly disconnected from his original motivations.

“I always want to be intentional about what I’m putting into the world,” he says. “And fashion started moving away from those values.”

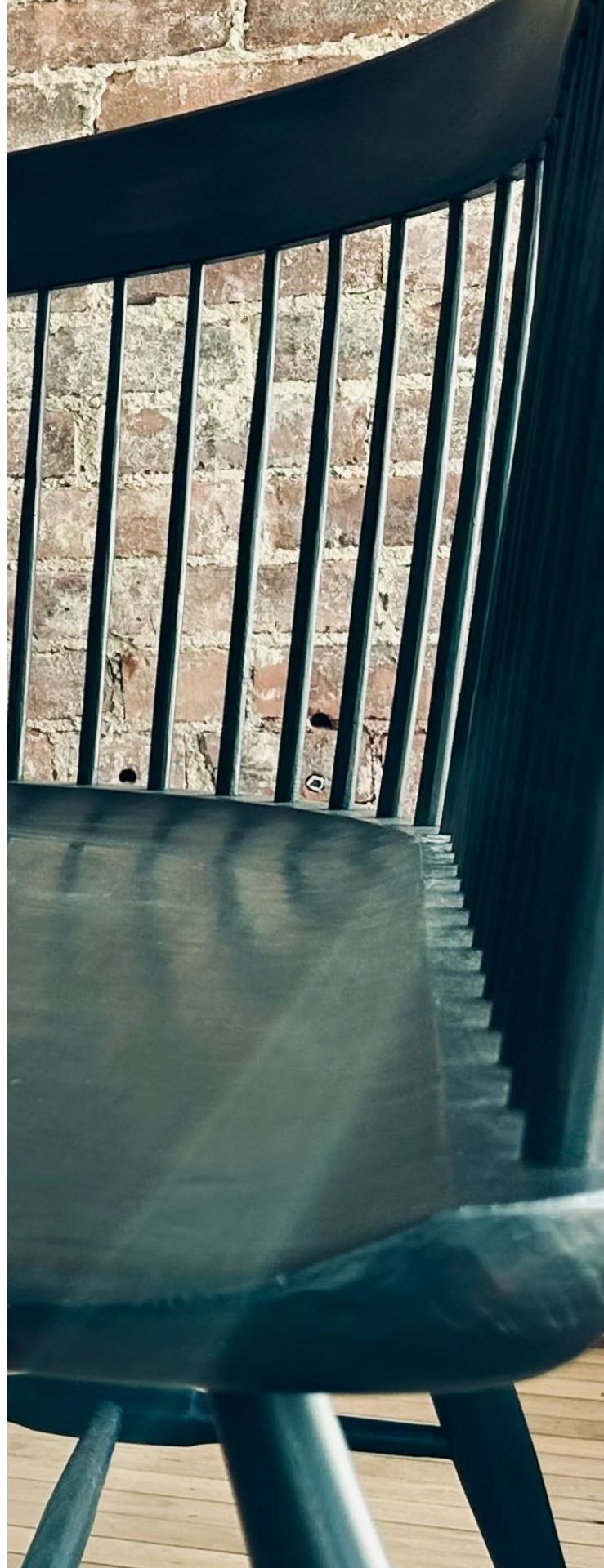
Interiors, which had long existed as a private interest, began to take on greater significance. His home had always functioned as a kind of laboratory—furniture rearranged, materials tested, objects collected and reconsidered. After teaching, he collaborated with established design companies and a Chicago gallery, gradually accepting residential projects. The work expanded organically, though a larger question surfaced as he moved into his mid-forties: what did he want the next decades of his life to look like?

“My core values have stayed consistent,” he says. “They’ve evolved, but the through line is timelessness—things that last.”

Purity, simplicity, function, longevity. The words recur throughout our conversation, less as branding language than as a framework he has internalized. In fashion, he had asked what resources went into making a garment and whether its existence contributed something positive. Now he asks the same questions of furniture, ceramics, textiles, the objects that structure daily life.

The furniture
we sit on, the
dishes we eat
from... They're
conscious
choices about
how we live.





Corner Bench by George Sawyer of Sawyer Made.

“The furniture we sit on, the dishes we eat from, the jacket we put on—they’re conscious choices about how we live.”

The gallery he imagined would reflect that belief: fewer objects, but better ones. Pieces made with intention, meant to endure across generations. He acknowledges that such objects are not financially accessible to everyone, but he is clear that their cost reflects labor, skill, and time.

“These pieces will outlive my lifetime,” he says.

The project nearly began in northern Michigan, where he had relocated with the intention of opening in Leelanau County. The region’s seasonal economy eventually complicated the plan. Instead, he felt drawn to the Berkshires in Western Massachusetts: culturally active, geographically positioned between New York and Boston, layered with artistic history. In early 2025, he purchased a building more than a century old, once a dry goods store altered repeatedly over decades.

Rather than impose something new, he chose excavation.

“I wanted to strip everything back, remove the layers that didn’t make sense and respect the building’s history,” he says. “Let the architecture guide me.”

Pressed tin ceilings reappeared. Brick walls resurfaced. Original floors returned. The process mirrored something internal: uncovering what was already present rather than inventing something entirely new.

During our conversation, he is dressed in what he jokingly calls a “Canadian tuxedo”—denim on denim—layered with a Patagonia

puffer jacket. His clothing choices mirror his philosophy: durability, restraint, practicality. Time spent outside major cities has deepened his relationship with landscape and seasonality, influences now embedded in his curatorial eye.

Looking back, he identifies the highest point of his fashion career not as awards or press attention but as autonomy, the moment he could realize his vision without compromise. Now he has found that freedom again. Not through garments, but through objects, space, collaboration.

“I started in fashion,” he says, “but I’ve always been interested in art, design objects, collecting, curating. It’s all connected.”

As opening day approaches in May, he remains calm, almost contemplative. The gallery is not simply a retail environment. It is an argument for living more deliberately, buying thoughtfully, surrounding oneself with objects made by human hands, valuing longevity over immediacy.

In this sense, the project is less a departure from fashion than a return to its underlying premise: shaping how people move through the world, how they feel inside their environments, how identity is expressed through material choices. Only now the pace is slower, the intention clearer, the alignment complete.

“Life is short,” he says. “You never know what lies ahead. I just want to be intentional about how I’m living.”



WALKER
STREET
MARKET

2026

WALKERSTREETMARKET

WA
ST
MA

FURNITURE
ANTIQUES
CERAMICS
JEWELRY

DIANA MICBRII

SETS THE STANDARD

DE



Golden Fox
AWARDS
— 2019



Photo by Joe Katchka.

MODERN LUXURY

RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY



LIKE
MINDED
THE TOP 100
CONTENT
CREATORS

SOCIAL
BUTTERFLIES
O.C.'S
INFLUENCERS
TO FOLLOW
NOW

Olivia Culpo

The Multihyphenate
Beauty Takes the Helm

People often associate Orange County, California with a lifestyle: glitz, glamour, smiling beautiful people driving fancy expensive cars. Places where seemingly nobody works and everyone is on permanent vacation. The sun never stops shining and the beach and the palm trees kiss the beautiful blue sky every day of the year. They're not wrong. Coastal California, and Orange County in particular, is special in a way so different than every other part of America.

The region possesses a cultivated aesthetic coherence that distinguishes it from most American regions, an environment where presentation carries meaning and beauty is treated as infrastructure.

For nearly two decades, Diana McBride has helped translate that environment into narrative.

As publisher of **Riviera Magazine**, the Orange County edition of *Modern Luxury*, she occupies a role that is part strategist, part producer, part cultural interpreter. The magazine functions not simply as a publication but as a platform, connecting brands, institutions, philanthropies, and audiences within one of the country's most concentrated luxury markets.

"We're really a media company," she says. "Not just a magazine."

Over the past twenty-five years the brand has expanded far beyond print into events, digital campaigns, influencer collaborations, video production, and immersive brand experiences that often resemble small-scale productions.

The work requires constant orchestration. For a recent campaign in partnership with **Land Rover**, Diana recalls being in the metaphorical and physical driver's seat. As part of the overall production team, Diana and some other *Modern Luxury* publishers were pulled in to drive the cars

while drones provided videography overhead.

"A client like Land Rover will come to us and say, 'Here are our goals for this particular target.' My team will come up with the concept, often several things married together: video print, digital campaign, social media. We will put together this package and present it to them and say, 'You know, here's an idea, here's the exposure you will get.' And then we make it happen."

Diana's approach to leadership reflects both creative instinct and operational discipline, and is born from the winding path that led her here. Before Diana was a publisher, she was successful in the high-end furnishings industry, and before that she had dreams of becoming an interior designer.

Reflecting on the curves of her career, Diana notes the serendipity of her transitions. In 2008, everything was crashing, and *Riviera Magazine*, whom she'd been advertising with for years on the furniture side of the business, gave her a call. "I met the publisher of *Riviera* at a South Coast Plaza event. He and I really hit it off and he said, 'You should really come work for us.' We met and sat for two hours and just talked. I love telling the story because I lied through that entire interview; I knew I had to get that job!"

Diana speaks about projects in terms of collaboration—identifying opportunities where multiple partners benefit simultaneously. In this framework, revenue, a natural and critical driver in any business, becomes the outcome of alignment rather than the starting objective. "If you create something compelling enough," she says, "people want to be part of it."

That philosophy has allowed the magazine to increase its relevance during a period when print media has faced an incredible amount

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RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY

THE TRAVEL AWARDS

Explore the World's Most Incredible Destinations



Cartier's High Jewelry Springs to Life

GROWING Up GWEN

THE ANAHEIM
NATIVE SOUNDS
OFF ON THE TOWN
THAT BUILT HER

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RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY

Value
Proposition
Investing in
Your Passions

+

Talking Shop
The New Boutiques
& Restaurants Calling
Orange County Home

FORTUNE *Favors* the BOLD

ACCLAIMED ACTRESS JULIANNE MOORE
DAZZLES ONCE AGAIN THIS SEASON IN THE
NEW HIGH-STAKES THRILLER *SHARPER*



Land Rover advertising campaign featuring Diana McBride. Videography by Keith Black.



of disruption. Diana notes that the seventeen regions under the Modern Luxury brand each have their own specialties. **Hamptons Magazine**, for instance, excels in events. The magazine is published seasonally, and in the peak of summer it hosts white parties, among other gatherings. “They really enjoy the social parties and they do very well with it.”

While the physical publication remains the “calling card,” as Diana describes it, much of the business now occurs across platforms. Technology has accelerated the pace. Artificial intelligence tools assist with proposal

drafting, research, and messaging refinement, compressing timelines that once required days into hours. Yet she emphasizes that the core of the business remains unchanged.

“Our business is relationship based,” she says. “People do business with people they like.”

That relational foundation extends deeply into the Orange County community itself. As a native, Diana understands the region’s social architecture—its networks of philanthropy, commerce, and influence—from the inside. She remembers visiting **Fashion Island**, a notable

If you create
something
compelling,
people want to
be a part of it.

shopping destination in Newport Beach, as a child and being captivated by its scale and beauty. Today she collaborates professionally with many of the same institutions, a continuity that reflects how closely her personal and professional worlds intersect.

“We’re in a bubble,” she says, though the word carries affection. “And I’m very protective of that bubble.”

In Orange County, the bubble represents more than affluence. It is aesthetic intentionality—a series of environments designed to feel harmonious and aspirational, having been converted by the **Irvine Company**, a regional and now national developer, from orange groves and open land to cities and towns through a series of deliberate planning moves on a scale nearly unrivaled in the United States.

Of course, even within the bubble, there are complexities. Visibility and status signaling exist, amplified by social media. Yet she consistently returns to another defining characteristic: philanthropy. The magazine’s annual charity issue has expanded significantly during her tenure, documenting a culture of giving that she describes as both substantial and often understated.

“Our readers are very philanthropic,” she says. “They donate. They support. And some of the biggest donors don’t want recognition at all.”

This coexistence of visibility alongside generosity reflects what she sees as the region’s dual nature. “You can’t slice something so thin there aren’t two sides,” she says, quoting her grandmother.

Her leadership also involves navigating

shifts in how luxury itself is defined. Younger generations increasingly prioritize experiences over possessions—travel, celebrations, connection—a transformation she observes both professionally and personally. “Generation Z defines luxury very differently,” she says.

Guiding the magazine through this evolution requires balance: honoring tradition while embracing reinvention. The brand must remain aspirational without becoming outdated, contemporary without losing identity.

What sustains her engagement after seventeen years is the creative latitude inherent in the role — the freedom to imagine collaborations, produce events, and shape narratives that influence how a community sees itself.

Diana tells me she is especially proud of the Dynamic Women feature she launched for Riviera several years ago, and which showcases a hand-selected group of successful women entrepreneurs from Orange County each year. She enjoys lifting others up to join her on the podium of success.

While she once imagined designing interiors, now, she designs ecosystems: partnerships, experiences, and networks of influence. The aesthetic instinct remains constant; only the medium has changed.

Careers, like cities, rarely become what we expect. They become what familiarity prepares us for, what opportunity invites, what imagination sustains. Diana pauses briefly when reflecting on the scope of her work. “If you’d told me when I was little that I’d be doing this . . .” She trails off, but the implication is clear. She is not surprised by the world she operates in.

She helped build it.

MODERN LUXURY

RIVIERA

Making History

ETHAN HAWKE
FINDS A WAY
FORWARD BY
LOOKING BACK

**THE GREAT
ESCAPE**
FALL MENSWEAR
CAPTURES THE CARPE
DIEM SPIRIT OF
THE DAY

**DRIVING
FORCE**
ORANGE COUNTY'S
25 MOST
INFLUENTIAL

+
5 QUESTIONS
WITH MILLION
DOLLAR LISTING
STAR FREDRIK
EKLUND

FEATURING INTERIORS
CALIFORNIA INSIDE

MODERN LUXURY

RIVIERA

MARCH 2025

MODERNLUXURY.COM

+
CHARITY & SOCIAL
DATEBOOK 2025

Untamed **BEAUTY**

Adria Arjona Embraces Her Authentic Allure

THE LUXURY BEAUTY AWARDS:
THE PRODUCTS & PROS
TO GET YOU GLOWING

SAM KOZLHAY

GOES BEHIND THE SCENES

YA



Timothée Chalamet and Director Denis Villeneuve on the set of Dune. Photo by Niko Tavernise.



Hollywood is full of famous actors and directors, faces of a powerful industry whose television shows and film in many ways shape the way we see and understand the world.

Behind the glamorous stars and big personalities are the studios that finance and produce each piece of media we digest, whether through traditional film and television, or internet and streaming platforms.

Legendary Entertainment is an industry titan, and as a production studio makes comics, film, and television. Since its inception in 2019, Legendary has produced more than seventy-five movies, including box office hits like **Batman Begins**, **The Hangover**, and the **Dune** series, and has managed over \$20 billion in lifetime box office successes. It's recent partnership with **Paramount** for theatrical releases is major, to say the least.

Behind the scenes of the films and television shows we watch are teams of talented professionals who handle the business side of it all. **Sam Kozhaya** is an executive producer and executive vice president of operations and corporate development at Legendary. As part of this juggernaut, he orchestrates many aspects of the film and television industry that most never see.

Sam sat down with me to share his experiences and shed light on what it has taken to go from early beginnings in law to sharing the stage with star-studded casts and crew.

(KD) Walk me through your path into tv and film production at Legendary, from your origins in law.

(SK) I spent over 10 years as a lawyer in media and entertainment and was exposed to various deal structures and different aspects of the entertainment industry. I learned to appreciate the complexity of IP and all the opportunities it offers to expand and bring stories to life in new and creative ways. As a lawyer, you really get to develop the skill of problem solving, which is essential to producing. Producers need to be equipped to navigate challenges efficiently so that we can make the best version of a project. Having expertise in law and finance provides a strong foundation for these skills.

What fascinates or energizes you about the work you do—and what surprises you about the industry?

I am continuously fascinated by the complexity of the business and the fact that it is always evolving. Each project needs to be approached in a bespoke manner. You need to always find the best partners to work with. You need to identify strong IP, demonstrate to rights holders that you will be a great steward and nurture it—finding ways to honor the original vision while making it engaging for new audiences. Working with such incredible people is the best part and what makes it exciting! Legendary gives me the ability and resources to think outside of the box and continually explore new opportunities.

How do you personally navigate the tension between ambitious creative vision, stakeholder expectations, and the realities of tight production schedules, among other things?

A key part of my role is weaving together bold creative ideas, stakeholder priorities, and production timelines. For each project, particularly with international projects, we aim to identify stories that are authentic to local markets, such as a TV series commissioned with a broadcaster in Germany or Italy, while still having the potential to connect with and resonate with a global audience. These projects open the world to incredible storytelling, but they also then need to feel big. That is where efficient production comes in—creating shows that feel expansive on screen while aligning with various stakeholders.

Tell me more about your role on **Drops of God**. I know it was an important project for you. How did the series come to be? And how did you interface with the various parts and pieces, considering your role?

I've had the privilege of being an executive producer on Drops of God, now in its second season on Apple. This show is especially important because it allowed us to create something wonderful using a different financing approach. We were able to co-produce it alongside Hulu Japan and France TV, which allowed for us to tell the story authentically to French and Japanese audiences, while also making the show resonate with audiences around the world.

What upcoming projects are you most excited for and why?

*In January, Drops of God season two aired to much excitement. We just premiered the second season of the hit series, **Monarch: Legacy of Monsters**, starring Kurt Russell, Wyatt Russell, Anna Sawai, among others. We also have an incredible slate in production including season two of Dune: Prophecy.*

With two seasons now streaming, **Drops of God** is a French-American-Japanese series based on Japanese manga. The show follows an heir to a large wine estate as she competes for her inheritance and her father's legacy. It won the 2024 International Emmy for Best Drama Series, scored 100% on Rotten Tomatoes, and can be found on Apple TV.

Monarch: Legacy of Monsters stars Kurt Russell and is a sci-fi adventure series based on Godzilla. Currently streaming on Apple TV, it received an 82% on Rotten Tomatoes and 7/10 on IMDB.

Dune Prophecy is a series based on the Dune films and follows the origins of the original narrative. Starring **Emma Watson**, this highly rated program currently streams on HBOMax.

Dune Part Three comes out December 18, 2026...and millions can't wait to watch.



Sam and a member of the production crew on the set of Dune. Photo by Niko Tavernise.





Members of the production crew on the set of Drops of God.





Zendaya filmed against the blazing sun for Dune. Photo by Niko Tavernise.






UNTIL NEXT TIME...

My own journey to fulfillment as a creative has not necessarily been linear. It has been at times messy, meandering and filled with moments of pause and self-reflection. It has required discipline, patience, a bit of insanity—and more grit than I thought I could handle.

At times, I have felt unsure. Time and experience clarify, and have helped me trust my intuition. Now I feel a sense of calm because what I'm doing satisfies me—and, thankfully, others.

Life is an ongoing journey. I suppose you never really know if you make it, but if it feels like peace, and gets better day after day, you're probably on the right path.

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