MARCH 2018 WOMEN'S FASHION

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAGAZINE

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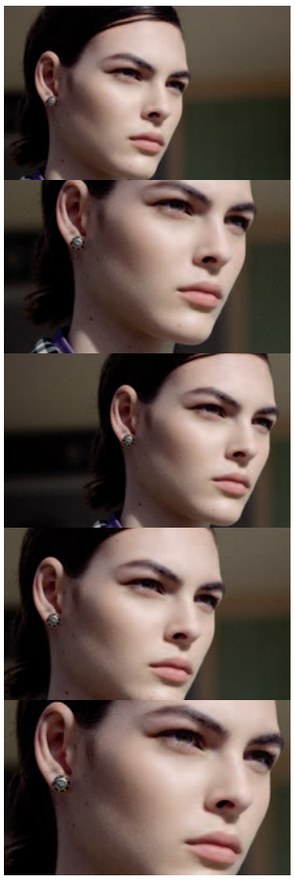

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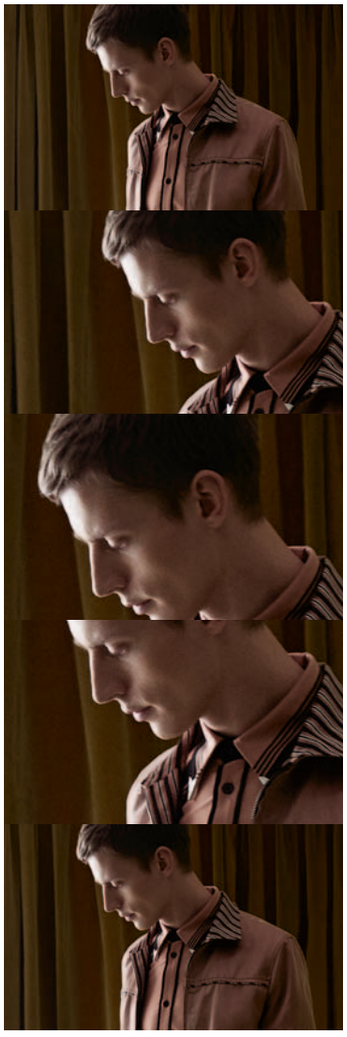

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# WSJ.noted | EVENTS

PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS WORTH NOTING

Sally Hawkins, Frances McDormand

Elizabeth Moss, Samira Wiley

Nick Jonas

Benj Pasek, Justin Paul

Hugh Jackman, Joe Jonas

Leslie Bibb, Sam Rockwell

Édgar Ramírez, Ricky Martin

## FOX & HULU GOLDEN GLOBES CELEBRATION BEVERLY HILLS | 1.7.18

Fox feted its numerous Golden Globe Award–winning and nominated films, television series and stars at a private celebration at the Beverly Hilton. Toasting a total of nine wins—including an outstanding six honors for Fox Searchlight between *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* and *The Shape of Water*, in addition to wins for 20th Century Fox for *The Greatest Showman, FX Networks* and FX Productions for *Fargo* and 20th Century Fox Television for *This Is Us*—plus 39 total nominations for the aforementioned programs along with *The Post, Battle of the Sexes, Ferdinand, The Boss Baby* and *Feud: Bette and Joan*. Hulu was also a show of force, celebrating its multiple wins for *The Handmaid's Tale*.

*Photos by Eric Charbonneau*

## LONDON JEWELERS 9TH ANNUAL WATCH FAIR MANHASSET | 10.21.17

London Jewelers kicked off their annual Watch Fair in a newly renovated and expanded Watch Salon. From Audemars Piguet, Omega, Patek Philippe and Rolex, visitors experienced and previewed the best of bespoke timepieces.

*Photographer: Vladimir Weinstein/BFA.com*

Michael Hopper, Justin Fishman

Zach, Scott, Candy, Randi, and Mark Udell

Danilo Stocco (left)



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**OPRAH'S CIRCLE** Stylist George Cortina (far left) provides final touches for Winfrey. Azzedine Alaïa bodysuit, Brandon Maxwell pants, Deborah Drattell belt, Belperron belt buckle and Harry Winston earrings. For details see Sources, page 181.

ON THE COVER

# OPRAH WINFREY

## The media titan is using her capacity for empathy, honed over decades spent grappling with everyday issues, to seek common ground across national divisions.

**FEW PEOPLE CAN** energize a room like Oprah Winfrey. And the set for this month's cover shoot, led by photographer Mario Sorrenti and stylist George Cortina, was no exception. "Oprah was dancing to music, laughing and getting into it," says *WSJ. Magazine* entertainment director Andrea Oliveri. "It was amazing to see that, after decades of photo shoots, she could still let go and enjoy herself." Since her self-hosted and produced talk show, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, debuted nationally in 1986, Winfrey has proved herself to be a juggernaut, adding author, editor, actress and entrepreneur to her résumé, all the while sharing the fruits of her success as a philanthropist. When Winfrey became the first African-American woman to receive the Hollywood Foreign Press Association's Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globe Awards this January, she seized the opportunity to address themes that have echoed throughout her career, but in a way that felt especially timely. Her speech took listeners back to 1964—to her childhood home in Milwaukee, where as a young girl she watched Sidney Poitier receive an Oscar—then looked to the future by calling for strong leadership from men and women alike on the issue of gender inequality.

"In a time when the country is exceptionally divided, she's a force for civility," says profile writer Julia Reed. "I grew up in Mississippi, where she spent her first six years, and I've always felt a bit of kinship with her. She has this Southern (and totally Oprah) knack for establishing intimacy. But she's also super focused and exudes calm. I think it's why she's so good at moderating those fraught *60 Minutes* conversations."

After her acceptance speech, a frenzy of speculation ensued about the possibility that she might run for office. "I think the Globes was a reminder of how much of an effect Oprah still has on the public at large," says Oliveri. "Her podcasts, her books—it all still resonates. But my personal favorite is her Instagram account. Pictures of her picking vegetables in her garden. No makeup, no special lighting. Just Oprah, in real life, in her happy place." —*Sara Morosi*

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**ON THE COVER** Oprah Winfrey, photographed by Mario Sorrenti and styled by George Cortina. Azzedine Alaïa bodysuit, Brandon Maxwell pants, Deborah Drattell belt, Belperron belt buckle and David Webb earrings. For details see Sources, page 181.

**THIS PAGE** A view of the fountain at Shahnaz Nader's house in Kashan, Iran, photographed by Robert Polidori.

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Clockwise from left: Paco Rabanne jumpsuit, Annina Vogel necklaces, Eye M by Ileana Makri earring (at right), Roberto Coin earring (at left), Falke tights, Gianvito Rossi shoes and vintage trench in hand, photographed by Christian MacDonald and styled by George Cortina. For details see Sources, page 181. Pumpkin hummus at Buenos Aires restaurant Fayer, photographed by Luis Ridao. Lucie and Luke Meier of Jil Sander, photographed by Luca Campri.

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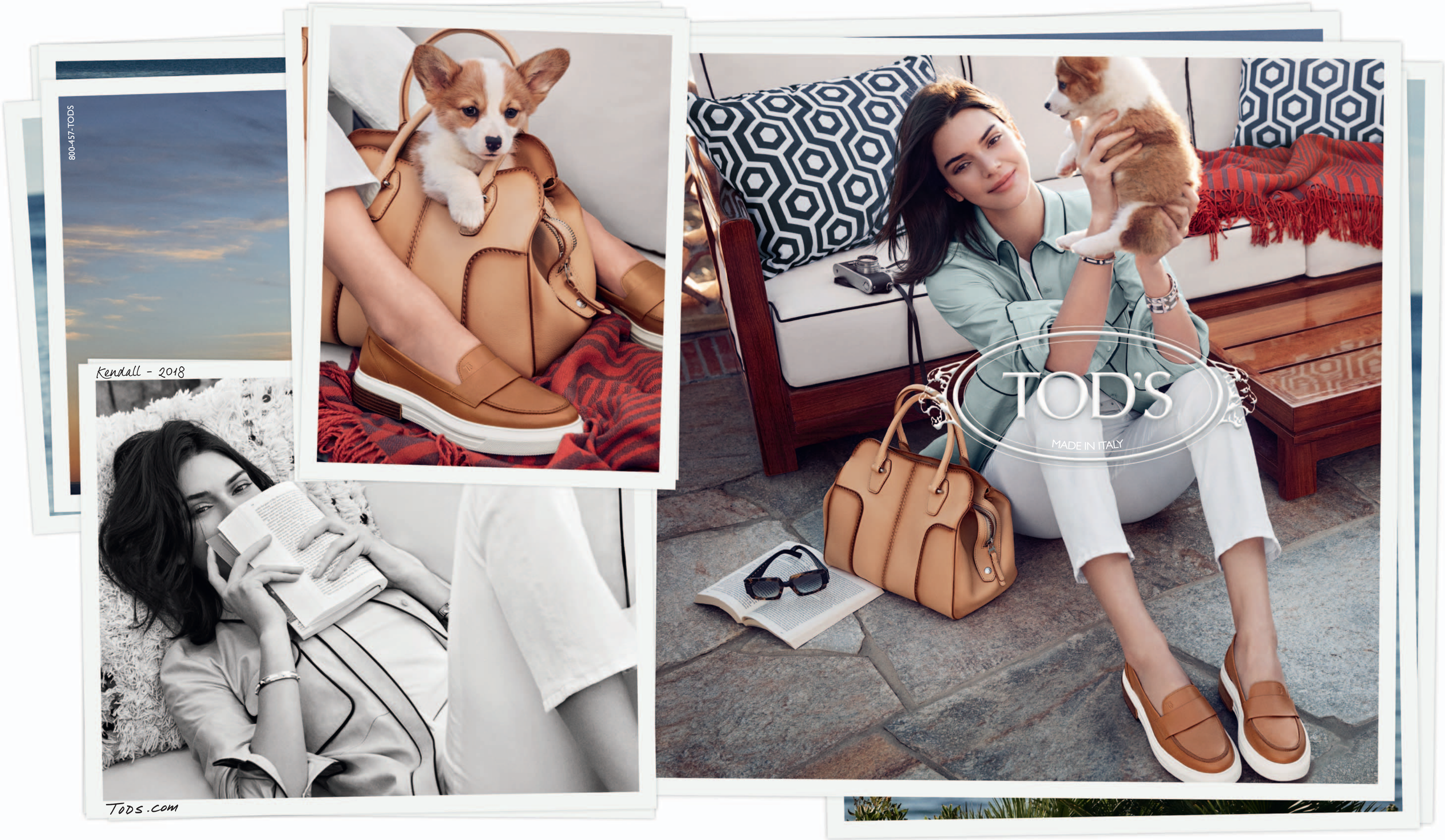
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By Elisa Lipsky-Karasz
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Clockwise from top left: Maison Margiela designed by John Galliano jacket, top and bag, photographed by Paolo Roversi and styled by Alexis Roche. For details see Sources, page 181. Céline bags, photographed by Maciek Pozoga and styled by Julian Ganio. For details see Sources, page 181. An interior from Vicky Charles's weekend house in Millerton, New York, photographed by Stephen Kent Johnson.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

# HIGHER GROUND

**ILLUSTRATION BY ALEJANDRO CARDENAS**

**WALKING ON AIR** Bast and Anubis (both wearing Ralph Lauren Collection) wend their way through the ethereal landscape of *A Wrinkle in Time*.

**SOME CALL IT** getting "Oprah'd." When people encounter the legendary talk-show host, network chief, actress, philanthropist and self-made billionaire in person, a common reaction to the emotional significance of the moment is to burst into tears. As you'll discover in this issue's cover story, it happened to Reese Witherspoon, Oprah's co-star in the new film *A Wrinkle in Time*, when she visited her at home in California. And I'll admit, without a hint of embarrassment, that when I showed up on the set of Oprah's cover shoot, it happened to me, too: The minute I caught sight of her, my eyes started pooling with tears.

I grew up watching Oprah. At times, it felt as though she was a member of our family. The issues she talked about on her show were the same ones we discussed at our dinner table. When I came to *WSJ. Magazine* five years ago, she was the first person I wanted to put on the cover. Although it didn't come to pass then, I could not be more excited to feature her now, at a time when her voice has never felt more essential. In her role as a special contributor to *60 Minutes*, she's working hard to bridge the divisions in our national psyche. And as her rousing speech at the Golden Globes (and the subsequent chants of "Oprah 2020") made clear, she stands for values that can serve as a tonic to the current public discourse: empathy, strength, compassion, empowerment and a more inclusive future.

In this issue, in addition to portfolios showcasing the best of spring fashion, we explore the fast-growing modern art scene in Iran, where contemporary artists are creating works that react to some of the country's strict mores as well as to the region's rich visual heritage, which stretches back millennia. And in our profile of John Galliano, we recount the visionary designer's rise in the fashion world, his precipitous fall and his current reign at Maison Margiela, where his creativity is informed by a new sense of rawness. "When you are driven by perfection," he says, "you miss out on something beautiful."

KONeill

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# CONTRIBUTORS

## ROBERT POLIDORI & JOSHUA LEVINE

HIDDEN FIGURES P. 154

When writer Joshua Levine (below) went to Iran to report on its burgeoning art scene, it was his first visit to the country. "I'll never forget the trip. You really felt that you had entered another world, much of which is very attractive," says Levine. "It gives me a lot of hope for Iran. It has so much to offer that is not recognized." Meeting gallery directors, curators, collectors and artists, Levine experienced the art world's many dimensions. "I came to the conclusion that it's not something happening on the side—you can understand a great deal about Iran through this particular lens." Photographer Robert Polidori (far left), who drove around the cities of Kashan, Tehran and Isfahan in a minivan toting a sizable Arca-Swiss film camera, was taken with the graciousness of the people he met during each of his three visits to the country. "Iranians are a romantic lot," he says. "They're the most gentle and soft-spoken people I've ever encountered. And they want to live in peace."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ROBERT POLIDORI (JAMEH MOSQUE, ISFAHAN); COURTESY OF JOSHUA LEVINE; COURTESY OF ROBERT POLIDORI

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## LUIS RIDAO & NELL McSHANE WULFHART

HECHO EN ARGENTINA P. 116

Paris-based photographer Luis Ridao (near right) returned to his home country of Argentina to capture the Buenos Aires bartenders, chefs and designers building the city's artisanal scene. "In Argentina, there isn't a great pressure for success," says Ridao. "They have freedom—maybe that's the root of their creativity." Writer Nell McShane Wulfhart (far right), who lives a short ferry ride away from B.A., in Uruguay, also saw the fresh energy in her subjects. "They share a passion for their country's products that is relatively new and completely inspiring," she says. "The challenge was resisting buying too many leather bags."

## BROOMBERG & CHANARIN & ALEX BHATTACHARJI

ALEX GARLAND'S ENEMY WITHIN P. 150

Writer Alex Bhattacharji (near left) met director Alex Garland in the final post-production stretch for his upcoming movie, *Annihilation*, and was struck by his candor. "He didn't hide his frustrations with the film, the process, any of it," Bhattacharji says. The behind-the-scenes controversy over the movie's distribution wasn't reflected in the London townhouse where photography duo Broomberg & Chanarin (far left) shot Garland's portrait. "The room was peaceful and quiet," says Oliver Chanarin. "We mostly chatted, and occasionally the shutter of the old Hasselblad film camera made a satisfying clunking sound."

## GEORGE ETHEREDGE & SARAH MEDFORD

TRACKED: PAOLA PRESTINI P. 113

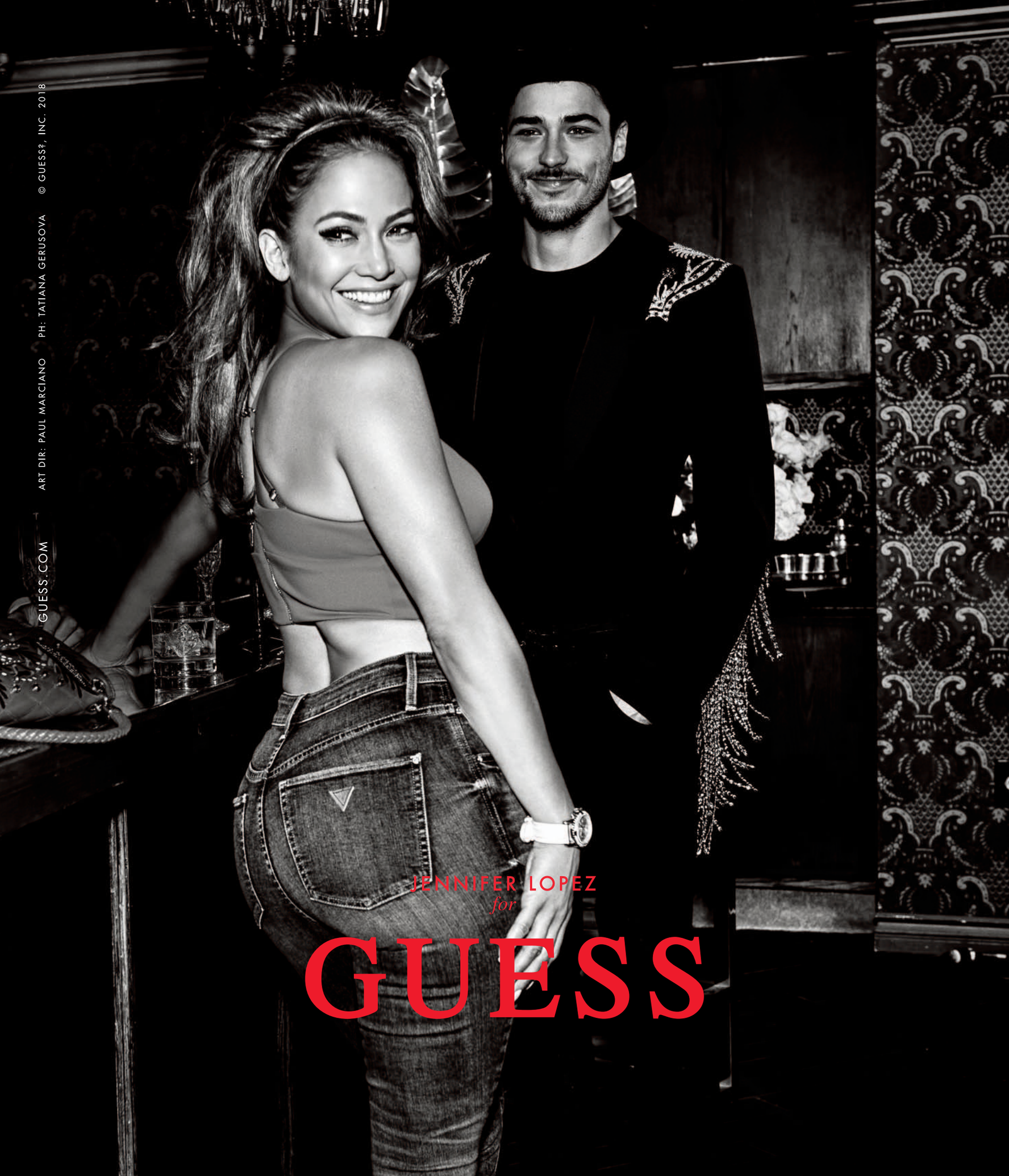
For this issue's Tracked feature, photographer George Etheredge (near right) and writer Sarah Medford (far right) spent a day with Paola Prestini, a composer and the co-founder of Brooklyn arts venue National Sawdust. "She had meetings, a rehearsal and a performance while being followed by a reporter and photographer," says Etheredge. "We can all aspire to her presence and calm." Medford, who also wrote this issue's profile of interior designer Vicky Charles, recalls the moment when Prestini found a run in her tights: "She was texting her husband to bring her a new pair—she was performing in a few hours but had to meet with a potential patron beforehand," Medford says. "She's got nerves of steel."

## PAOLO ROVERSI & ELISA LIPSKY-KARASZ

STEP BY STEP P. 176

*WSJ. Magazine* deputy editor Elisa Lipsky-Karasz (near left) has long reported on the fashion industry, but she still finds elements of surprise. Such was the case when she met with Maison Margiela designer John Galliano, whom she profiled in this issue. "John was much more low-key than I anticipated," Lipsky-Karasz says. "He was extremely frank and open—an interviewer's dream." Photographer Paolo Roversi (far left) took Galliano's portrait at the label's Paris headquarters. "As a fashion fan, it was incredible to witness John doing fittings in the Margiela studio," adds Lipsky-Karasz. "Watching his mind at work is like seeing creative fireworks go off." —*Sara Morosi*

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY OF LUIS RIDAO; COURTESY OF SHANE WULFHART; BROOMBERG & CHANARIN; COURTESY OF ALEX BHATTACHARJI; COURTESY OF GEORGE ETHEREDGE; TAYLOR JEWELL; COURTESY OF PAOLO ROVERSI; COURTESY OF ELISA LIPSKY-KARASZ

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# THE COLUMNISTS

*WSJ.* asks six luminaries to weigh in on a single topic. This month: Admiration.

## MARY CERUTI

"Admiration involves both respect and affection, and mixed in that is this idea of emulation. Worship is different; worship is something that happens at a distance, because when you put someone on a pedestal you're assuming that they have qualities that you're not capable of. But the individuals we admire display qualities that we want to embody. Envy is something I distinguish from admiration, too. Envy shows a lack of independence, a lack of trust in your own convictions. It's ungenerous. It doesn't convey the same respect and affection as admiration. There are certainly circumstances in which one may stop admiring someone else. Especially in this current moment—people you thought were on the right side, and then you find out that they don't have the integrity you thought they did. It comes down to respect."

*Ceruti is executive director and chief curator of the Sculpture-Center in New York City.*

## CLAUS MEYER

"There are two qualities that I admire in a person. The first is extreme skill within a certain field. The other quality is complete compassion and empathy. Rarely do you find both qualities in a single person, because in my experience the first type of person lives fully in their professional world—they tend to get a little rough around the edges. It's not easy to find people who embody both, but they're out there. When I was 20, before I found myself immersed in the culinary world, I took a gap year in France, ending up on a recreational stay with a pastry chef and his wife in southwest France. He was a fourth-generation baker who opened up this whole world of food and cooking to me. He became like a father. I so admired his demeanor, his craftsmanship, his undisputed integrity, passion and generosity."

*Meyer is a culinary entrepreneur, restaurateur and cookbook author.*

## KIM DEAL

"When I find myself admiring something, I'm always braced for the other shoe to drop. It's very cynical, I know. I may admire a song, only to find out that the singer is a total racist. It gets me thinking about how the state of admiration is fleeting, how elusive it is. It doesn't happen for me much, because I'm such a hyper-critic. The rare times I'm in that state, it feels almost like a narcotic. Often I find myself admiring someone's talent. I've been listening to audiobooks lately; right now it's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Patricia Highsmith has this line where she says Tom Ripley 'hurled' a smile across the table. I so admire that—having the perfect word choice. But admiration requires me to let the channels flow clear and not be in a critical state."

*Deal is a musician and a member of the Breeders. The band's new album,* All Nerve, *will be released on March 2.*

## UZODINMA IWEALA

"In college you're in these creative writing classes where everyone is so angsty and self-important, and you find people writing in the style of writers they admire. That type of imitation is an essential part of development as a creative person. I went through a phase where I was so enamored of Samuel Beckett. I found myself profoundly impacted by the fractured nature of his prose. I thought, Oh, my God, I want to do this. The danger is that you get locked into and frustrated by one particular style. But people grow out of it. It's similar to the way a young person may try to emulate the behaviors of people they admire, like their parents or a sports figure. Eventually your whole worldview will crack the mold of mimicry. You break out, into what is your own self—highly influenced by all the predecessors you've admired but fundamentally your own."

*Iweala is an author. His new novel,* Speak No Evil, *is out March 6.*

## ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

"My great-aunt Antonietta is one of the first people I remember admiring. She broke the conventions of her day. She was married and had children, but she ran away with her kids to Australia and asked for a divorce—of course, women could not file for divorce in Italy at the time. When the dispute with her husband was settled, she returned and became a race-car driver. There's this photo of her in a race-car hat and big glasses that must have been very controversial. Antonietta was just very simpatico—full of energy, fun, and she loved animals, which I think is something genetic in our family! She shaped for me this idea of 'Why not?' I wouldn't say that I'm courageous, but I have always been guided by this question, 'Why not?' When I went back to university at 60 for my master's degree in animal behavior, I thought of my great-aunt."

*Rossellini is an actress, filmmaker and philanthropist. Her book* My Chickens and I *publishes March 13.*

## CAL RIPKEN JR.

"When you're successful in baseball, or almost any other sport, you may become a source of admiration for others. It's definitely an adjustment, and I've seen people react to it in different ways. It may go to one's head and breed arrogance, for instance. But I've always tried to maintain perspective—I think that was part of my dad's influence on me. The ability to hit or catch or run is just another skill, and we all have skills, but it doesn't make you better than anyone else. Brooks Robinson is one of my favorite baseball players, and one thing that struck me about him was that he always seemed to have time for everyone. Sure, you want to be a good baseball player, but you also must remember to be a good person. And just as it's important to maintain perspective as someone in my position, it's also important to maintain perspective when admiring someone else—because they're just a person, too."

*Ripken is a philanthropist and a former professional baseball player.*

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# THE WSJ. FIVE

Play around with the season's most sought-after accessories, which flash back to a more colorful era.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MACIEK POZOGA
STYLING BY JULIAN GANIO

1. THE BAGS
Pick up a purse to please every palate. Céline bags, coats and earrings.

2. THE EARRINGS
Hoop dreams come true in a big way. Balenciaga earrings, cardigans, tops and pants.

STUART WEITZMAN
STUARTWEITZMAN.COM

3. THE SCARVES
Max out with archival prints from a gilded age. Versace scarves, corset top, pants, belt, necklace and bracelet.

# WHAT THE ROAD DEMANDS, THE GS DELIVERS.

While you may think of the road as a series of curves and straights, the Lexus GS takes a more detailed approach. Continually analyzing the road's contours and composition, the GS reacts to its ever-changing circumstances with lightning-fast shifts and an exceptionally agile suspension. Available in F SPORT, the GS 300, GS 350 and GS 350 AWD are ready for just about anything the road sends your way.

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Options shown. ©2017 Lexus

4. THE SHOES
Partyworthy pumps make an entrance. Calvin Klein 205W39NYC shoes and coats.

5. THE SUNGLASSES
A jolt of neon has an electrifying effect. Prada sunglasses and dresses. Models, Manon Leloup at IMG Models and Tyvanni Osaheni Ebuehi at CODE Model Management; hair, Yuji Okuda; makeup, Anna Sadamori; prop styling, Sophie Durham. For details see Sources, page 181.

marni.com

# WHAT'S NEWS.

## PAIR GAME

Fashion designers Lucie and Luke Meier have been married for a decade—and now they are reinvigorating the house of Jil Sander.

BY FLORENCE KANE PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCA CAMPRI

**FASHION DESIGNER** Lucie Meier grew up in the Swiss Alps town of Zermatt, where her parents had settled after a nomadic life of working in hotels, her father as a chef, her mother waiting tables. There, in the shadow of the Matterhorn, world-class skiing and hiking were easily accessible. But high fashion? Not so much, she remembers. "I was up there on my alp, very far removed," says Meier, 35, who would go on to top roles at brands like Louis Vuitton and Balenciaga. "But my mother had a good sense of fashion." On family day trips to shop on Milan's upscale Via Montenapoleone, her mother would buy only Jil Sander, which was experiencing a heyday under its namesake founder during the '80s and '90s. "For me, this was the best you could get," Meier says.

So strong was Lucie Meier's connection to the brand that when her husband, Luke Meier, 42, was approached last spring about the creative director position (Rodolfo Paglialunga departed after three years of lukewarm reviews), it became obvious that the Meiers should go for it as a duo. Lucie was just off a stint at Dior, where she headed up the design studios for Raf Simons and then filled in as co-creative director after his tenure ended. Luke had spent eight years as head of design for streetwear phenomenon Supreme before launching his own menswear line, OAMC, in 2014.

> "WE HAVE TO BUILD AWARENESS WITH A LOT OF YOUNGER PEOPLE."
> —LUKE MEIER

The Meiers were hired, moving from Paris to Milan and presenting their first collection in fall 2017. It riffed on Jil Sander classics: Shirting appeared as white dresses and striped coats, while minimalist tailoring for men and women was mixed with oversize knits and anoraks.

Their contrasting skills and approaches are symbiotic, they say. "Lucie's very intuitive: She reacts naturally without overthinking anything," says Luke, who hails from Vancouver and met Lucie in 2001 when they were students at the Polimoda fashion school in Florence. "Luke is more analytical," Lucie chimes in. "It's the perfect combination."

But how do they plan on breathing life into a 50-year-old brand that has seen its share of ups and downs, frequently changing management and designers? (The current owners, Japanese conglomerate Onward Holdings, bought the fashion house in 2008 for $244 million, while Sander herself left and returned twice before her final exit in 2013.) After so much upheaval, "the biggest challenge was to give back a believable identity to the brand," said Jil Sander's CEO, Alessandra Bettari, by email.

"It has been totally off the radar," Lucie says. "We have to build awareness with a lot of younger people," says Luke, who is a longtime fan of the brand's imagery. Signature ad campaigns include minimalist photos from the '90s by Craig McDean and David Sims featuring models Amber Valletta and Stella Tennant. "Jil Sander always represented a strong universe," he adds. "It's a lot more than just clothing."

He and Lucie have worked to develop their own visual language, tapping photographer Larry Fink to shoot behind-the-scenes images during their first show, which they used for social media. For this spring's print ads, they asked German director Wim Wenders to create a five-part series called *Paused by* (which was posted on YouTube) and used stills for publication. Interpretation Project, a series of collaborations they've launched, debuted in December with T-shirts featuring Mario Sorrenti photographs; the images were also posted on the brand's Instagram feed.

As for the clothes, "it's things that you can do your daily routine in," Luke explains. "I try all the [women's] stuff on myself," says Lucie. For pre-fall 2018, this meant a soft-edged collection of suiting, wrap coats and stretchy materials, punctuated by bright upholstery-style florals. "Reality is not so positive. It was really to make people feel good—comfort clothes," she adds. And the fall 2018 collection will continue the theme, but transported to outer space. "Not that it's going to be all astronauts," Lucie says, laughing. "More like the feeling of technology in our lives, and an airiness to make everything feel light."

The Meiers are trying not to worry about what fans of the original Jil Sander line might think; as for Sander herself, "when we met her, she was very encouraging," says Lucie. "She said, 'It's not easy, but you have to really believe in what you do, and you have to push it through.'"

**CLEAN LINES** From top: Samples being developed for the fall 2018 collection hang in the Jil Sander design studio in Milan; crisp shirting for both women and men from the spring 2018 fashion show.

## FRAME OF MIND

Nix the oversize shades this summer for these sleek and slim '90s throwbacks.

For details see Sources, page 181.

FIRSTVIEW (RUNWAY); DAVID CHOW, STYLING BY JILL TELESNICKI (GLASSES)

SAMEDELMAN.COM
Sam Edelman

THE DOWNLOAD

# MARTHA HUNT

The North Carolina-bred model, Victoria's Secret Angel and scoliosis activist, who has an Instagram following of 2.8 million, shares what's on her phone.

**Number of unread emails**
This is embarrassing. I doubt anyone has me beat on this one! 66,436.

**When do you feel compelled to charge your phone?**
I get that dying-phone-induced anxiety once my battery is at less than 20 percent. I had a case that charged my phone but it got ruined. Now I'm just living on the edge.

**Most-used app**
Twitter. I like how instantly I can find out about news or an emergency happening in real time.

**Are there times you stay off your phone entirely?**
I like to leave my phone in the room while I'm out all day during a vacation. Recently over the holidays I deleted Instagram and Twitter for about five days. I felt liberated.

**Most-essential app while traveling**
Headspace, for guided meditation anywhere. I last used it in Miami.

**Person you FaceTime most often**
My sister and two nephews.

**Most-recent Uber trip**
$70.52, home from LaGuardia Airport.

**Favorite podcast**
*Fresh Air.* I love Terry Gross's interviews! She asks all the right questions.

**Cities listed in weather app and world clock app**
New York; Aspen, Colorado; Barcelona; Milan; Las Vegas; Havana; Sydney; São Paulo; Shanghai; Paris; London; Miami; Los Angeles; Accra, Ghana; Istanbul.

**Craziest place you ever left your phone**
Probably in the kitchen of a restaurant in Aspen. I plugged in my phone to DJ the party and left it there.

**Favorite emoji**
🤓

**Favorite fitness/workout app**
MindBody. I use it when I want to try a new class or work out in my neighborhood. It also features wellness and beauty services.

**Favorite food-related app**
Velocity.

**Funniest text message of the week**
My mom was watching my dog when one of my interviews came on TV, and she texted, "I held Bear up to see if she would recognize your voice but she did not."

# BROAD STROKES

Art-inspired prints and vivid hues add a painterly note to this year's spring fashions.

**BRUSH HOUR** Clockwise from top left: Carolina Herrera dress, Hermès scarf, Valentino Garavani bag, Calvin Klein 205W39NYC shoe, Oscar de la Renta jacket, No. 21 x Linda Farrow sunglasses. For details see Sources, page 181.

ALESSANDRA OLANOW/THE ILLUSTRATION DIVISION (PHONE ILLUSTRATION); MAGNIA/SHUTTERSTOCK (BACKGROUND); FIRSTVIEW (RUNWAY); F. MARTIN RAMIN, STYLING BY JILL TELESNICKI (SHOE, JACKET, BAG); F. MARTIN RAMIN, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS (SCARF, DRESS, GLASSES)

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## CZECH PLEASE

THREE RETREATS OFFER A CHANCE FOR VISITORS TO GO BEYOND PRAGUE AND DISCOVER LESSER-KNOWN, SCENIC REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

**TO THE EAST OF PRAGUE**, a trio of stylish new hotels has cropped up among the dense forests and mountains topped by castle ruins, pristine châteaux and medieval towns of the Czech countryside. Mezi Plutky (shown above), which opened in August, is nestled in the Beskid range in east Moravia. Occupying a restored country cottage, the tranquil property's four spacious suites are done in pale woods and old stone with views to the inviting garden, the valley and the majestic peaks beyond. In the historic city of Olomouc, Prague-based designer Denisa Strmiskova has completed Long Story Short, a high-end hostel situated in a fortress dating to the 17th century. The hip escape, which includes private en suite rooms and cozy common areas, balances a black-and-white palette with pastels, and custom-made furnishings with carefully selected modernist pieces. Farther south, in Mikulov, one of the Czech Republic's most popular wine towns, a house originally built in the 16th century is reborn as Štajnhaus, an airy, light-filled guesthouse that opened in July. Set at the foot of Mikulov Castle, the five-room hotel features a minimalist interior with furniture by local craftsmen, Moroccan tiling and views to bordering Austria and the surrounding vineyards. *meziplutky.cz; longstoryshort.cz; stajnhaus.cz.*
*—Joann Plockova*

**WORK THE ROOM**
Clockwise from top left: A look from Tory Burch's 2018 spring show; David Hicks's scrapbook; Burch wearing a Hicks-inspired print; another spring look; a Hicks sketch.

THE INSPIRATION

## FRESH PRINTS

"[David Hicks] thought even the most ordinary objects should be arranged with style. He would buy soap to complement the color of the powder room," says Tory Burch, speaking about the late interior designer who was her spring 2018 muse. Hicks's son, Ashley, lent Burch his father's scrapbooks (some of which were recently published in facsimile by Vendome Press) to interpret freely in her new collection. The results include flower necklaces; an octagonal design that appears on swimwear, shirts and dresses; and the *pièce de résistance*, a print assembled from a panoply of patterns and motifs from the scrapbooks, adorning a blouse-and-pants set that Burch wore to her own show. "Ashley loved it, but he said it would probably be his dad's nightmare," Burch says with a laugh. "Because it looked like I couldn't make up my mind." *toryburch.com.*
*—Christine Whitney*

GOOD JEANS

**Giorgio Armani, synonymous with sharp Italian tailoring worn in boardrooms worldwide, is now offering a weekend wardrobe to match. This month he launches a luxury denim collection for men and women, ranging from indigo selvage pieces to a gossamer-fine take on chambray. A reworked jean jacket and five-pocket trousers come in stone-washed white (right). And never fear, the line even includes a suit, cut in Japanese denim for both him and her.** ***For details see Sources, page 181.***

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: ROMANA BENNET; COURTESY OF TORY BURCH; COURTESY OF THE DAVID HICKS ESTATE, PICTURED: BEVERLEY GOODWAY/ANL/SHUTTERSTOCK; FIRSTVIEW; COURTESY OF TORY BURCH (2); COURTESY OF ARMANI

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**HEARTH AND HOME** John Derian at his new shop on Christopher Street in Manhattan's West Village. For details see Sources, page 181.

THE CULT OF

# JOHN DERIAN

## The New York artist and home-goods retailer expands beyond his trio of Second Street shops with a jewel-box West Village boutique.

**IT'S BEEN 23** years since John Derian, 55, opened his first New York City shop, filling it with his quirky-cool decoupage pieces and antiques. Since then, he's added two neighboring stores—one for furniture, the other for bedding—turning a once-sleepy East Village stretch into a destination for bohemian-chic shopping.

Now, with the March opening of a 500-square-foot West Village shop, he may do the same for a quaint block on Christopher Street. "I've had a crush on that little row of white-painted houses since the '90s," he admits, adding, "I wrote a note to the owner 15 years ago but never heard back." This time it was meant to be: A friend spotted the FOR RENT sign and alerted Derian, who met the broker the next day.

The new space is very on-brand—it's the storefront of a historic two-story home Derian describes as "my 18th-century house on the Cape meets old New York, a bit of 'ye olde' with antique beamed ceilings." It also has bumped-out bay windows and wisteria cascading down the facade.

Entering the store, shoppers will be greeted by a three-tiered table featuring Derian's decoupage designs and artist Livia Cetti's paper flowers; custom cabinetry showcasing Astier de Villatte ceramics will line the room. A back area, covered in Derian's new wallpaper, will house his furniture collection as well as linens by Matteo and Lisa Corti, cushions and rugs.

Derian himself seems most excited about the display possibilities. "My shops have always been about being in the shop," he notes. "Here we have a window onto the world." *18 Christopher St.; johnderian.com. —Rima Suqi*

## BREATHE EASY

Whether heels or flats, spring's woven-leather shoes are an airy way to welcome warmer weather.

For details see Sources, page 181.

STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON (PORTRAIT); VIRGINIA JOHNSON (ILLUSTRATION); DAVID CHOW, STYLING BY JILL TELESNICKI (SHOES)

**ROCK THE BOAT**
A jacket and sweater from Ralph Lauren's capsule collection, available this spring.

HOT LINE

# BON VOYAGE

Loosely based around the idea of travel, a new capsule offering from Ralph Lauren uses bright primary colors to complement the label's main blue-and-white-themed spring collection. From pleated skirts to color-blocked sweaters, the pieces often have a sense of romance or nostalgia. A cropped fireman's coat, for example, evokes the golden age of transatlantic sailing with its Deco cruise ship and chic flapper. *For details see Sources, page 181.*

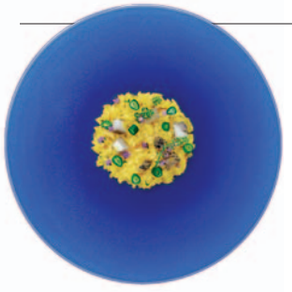
ACCESSORIES REPORT

DESIGNER FABRIZIO VITI HAS FASHIONED A NEW KIND OF DAISY CHAIN FOR ANCIENT GREEK SANDALS: A COLLECTION OF THE FOOTWEAR BRAND'S SIGNATURE STYLES FEATURING DELICATE BLOSSOMS.

$325–$495; ancientgreeksandals.com.

## DUE REGARD

New York's Museum of Arts and Design is honoring the legacy of feminist artist Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015) with *Surface/Depth*, a show opening March 22 that re-examines her idiom—a synthesis of painting and decorative collage—and influence. *madmuseum.org.*



FOOD NETWORK

**In *Tokyo New Wave*, Andrea Fazzari profiles 31 of her adopted hometown's top chefs. Part cookbook, part restaurant guide, the book gives an inside look at the city's most distinctive personalities and dishes, like Daisuke Tsuji and his saffron risotto with abalone (left). —*Howie Kahn***
$40; tenspeedpress.com.

FACTS & STATS

# ZADIE SMITH

The British writer, 42, just released her second collection of essays, *Feel Free* (Penguin Press), on subjects ranging from joy to Jay-Z. Here, a look at her life and work. —*Mark Yarm*

**14** **YEARS OLD**
Age at which Smith changed her first name from Sadie to Zadie, for a "stupid reason": "I was in love with a boy whose name began with *Z*."

**250,000** **POUNDS**
Rumored advance for *White Teeth*. "That's not true," she says. "It was lower than that." She will only reveal that she earned out her advance.

**1K** **WORDS**
Smith's written output on "a very good day.... Everything takes a lot of time," she says.

**5** **NOVELS**
Smith's first, *White Teeth* (2000), was published to near-instant acclaim when she was just 24. "I was a bit mortified by the whole thing," she says of her sudden fame.

**2** **CHILDREN**
With husband Nick Laird, the Northern Irish poet and novelist, whom she met through the Cambridge University literary scene and married in 2004.

**19th** **CENTURY**
Her next novel, *The Fraud*, takes place in the 1840s and 1870s; it will be her first set entirely in the past. She hasn't written a word yet because she's immersed in the research stage.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: F. MARTIN RAMIN, STYLING BY JILL TELESNICKI; DAVID CHOW, STYLING BY JILL TELESNICKI; JANETTE PELLEGRINI/STRINGER/GETTY IMAGES; MIRIAM SCHAPIRO, *FLYING CARPET*, 1972, ACRYLIC, FABRIC ON CANVAS, 60 IN. X 50 IN., © MIRIAM SCHAPIRO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK; COURTESY OF TEN SPEED PRESS

JEWELRY BOX

# BRIGHT SPARKS

A diamond necklace from De Beers channels the Deco splendor of a historic London power plant.

**On the south bank of the Thames River in London stands the Battersea Power Station, a decommissioned electrical plant with a distinctive Deco-era silhouette. In the process of being restored as a residential and retail complex, the building regained its iconic concrete chimneys last year when exact replicas of the demolished originals were installed. Taking inspiration from the structure's geometric design, De Beers created a fine-jewelry necklace that combines horizontal and vertical pavé bezel-set diamonds; the emerald-cut, nearly 11-carat diamond pendant recalls the reconstructed industrial spires. For details see Sources, page 181.**

***—Sara Morosi***

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRISTA LEONARD
STYLING BY DAVID DE QUEVEDO

# LOEWE

**Amber and Grey Calf Gate Bag with Caramel Knotted Strap,** 2018

**Shop LOEWE.com**

**MAJOR MOTIFS**
Top, from left: Versace jacket, shirt, skirt and shoes and Prounis earrings and ring (both worn throughout); Hermès shirt and pants. Middle, from left: Joseph blazer, Sharon Wauchob top and pants and The Row shoes; Céline top, skirt and belt and The Row shoes.

TREND REPORT

# PRINTED MATTER

Classic scarves in graphic abstractions or elegant florals inspire this spring's relaxed pantsuits and dresses.

**PATTERN PLAY**
Bottom, from left: Marisa Witkin shirt, Christian Wijnants scarf (worn as belt) and Etro pants; Christian Wijnants coat, dress and scarf. Model, Bhumika Arora at the Society Management; hair, Junya Nakashima; makeup, Chichi Saito. For details see Sources, page 181.

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY NADINE IJEWERE**
**FASHION EDITOR LAURA STOLOFF**

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# SUNNY FUTURE

After the cotton-candy sweetness of millennial pink, look for the lemon-drop zing of Generation Z yellow. —*Mieke ten Have*

**GOLD RUSH**
Clockwise from left: Richard Ginori plate; Ralph Lauren skirt; Etro clutch; Original BTC lamp; Voutsa wallpaper. For details see Sources, page 181.

**LIGHT BRIGHT**
Clockwise from right: KGBL sofa; Domeau & Pérès x Pharrell Williams leather bicycle; Glossier Invisible Shield sunscreen.

MATERIAL WORLD

**Carla Sersale of Le Sirenuse Positano captures the spirit of her family's Amalfi Coast property with her clothing designs, as illustrated by her latest resort-collection swimwear, done in intricate prints. For her spring/summer line, available in March, she was dreaming of Mesopotamia, she says, of "ancient civilizations with fantasy animals"—a whimsical vision that carries over into a 10-piece capsule collection for matchesfashion.com, debuting in April. —*C.W.***

*emporiosirenuse.com.*

THE BEAUTY OF

# POLLUTION PROTECTION

A recent wave of skin-care products targets a growing problem.

**ROUGHLY ONE THIRD** of all Americans live somewhere with unhealthy air, and while the problem is more severe in cities, no one is immune. "Pollution is mobile," notes German skin specialist Barbara Sturm. In fact, a NASA study showed that 43 percent of ozone pollution in western U.S. states emanates from China. And airborne pollutants, Sturm adds, interfere not only with the function of our skin barrier, accelerating aging and leading to hyperpigmentation, but also with our DNA, contributing to everything from eczema to skin cancer.

So, what to do? "Ozone pollution oxidizes the skin's lipids, creating an unhealthy skin-lipid balance," says Craig Teller, a Houston dermatologist who works with skin-care brand SkinCeuticals. "Protecting skin with a topical antioxidant like vitamin C and repairing barrier damage with moisturizers that have the right lipid ratio make a big difference." Finish with a broad-spectrum sunscreen. "Since UV and pollution work synergistically to amplify their damaging effects, it's critical," adds L.A. dermatologist Sonia Batra. —*Fiorella Valdesolo*

**DR. BARBARA STURM Anti-Pollution Drops**
A booster that can be added to any product, containing pollution fighters like a new marine microbe that reduces free-radical damage. *$145*

**TATCHA The Silk Canvas**
Part skin care, part foundation, this smooth balm masks imperfections and fine lines while increasing pollution-blocking barrier function; think of it as a second skin. *$52*

**ALLIES OF SKIN 1A All-Day Pollution Repair Mask**
A topical shield against pollution, updated to also protect against the blue HEV light emitted by electronic devices. *$89*

SUNNY FUTURE: KATYA ZLOBINA/SHUTTERSTOCK (BACKGROUND); F. MARTIN RAMIN (SKIRT, SUNSCREEN); FIRSTVIEW (RUNWAY); COURTESY OF ORIGINAL BTC (LAMP); COURTESY OF VOUTSA (WALLPAPER); COURTESY OF RICHARD GINORI (PLATE); ALAN TANSEY (SOFA); COURTESY OF DOMEAU & PÉRÈS (BICYCLE). POLLUTION PROTECTION: NOMOCO (ILLUSTRATION); F. MARTIN RAMIN (PRODUCTS). MATERIAL WORLD: F. MARTIN RAMIN

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# Q&A
WITH WSJ.

Designers and dealers who work with handmade textiles have a rich sense of the possibilities of craft. Here, three specialists in the field discuss techniques, tools of the trade, travel and other pleasures of their fabric-focused lives. —*Christopher Ross*

## GREGORY PARKINSON

For two decades, Gregory Parkinson, 54, ran a namesake fashion brand, gaining recognition as a CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund finalist and dressing the likes of Michelle Obama. About four years ago, on his first sourcing trip to India, he realized that the craftsmanship and materials available there would allow him to create a new home-goods line he'd been considering, based on designs he'd created for his own space. "It was a slow but logical transition," says the England-born, L.A.-based designer of the shift from fashion to the domestic realm. Gregory Parkinson Surround launches this spring with a collection of handmade throws, cushions and table linens; it also offers custom fabrics for clients like design firm Commune. On regular visits to Kolkata, Parkinson works side by side with block printers, finding new applications for historic techniques. "The core inspiration for every one of my fashion collections was textiles. I see this as a continuation of the work I've always done," he says. *gregoryparkinson.com.* >

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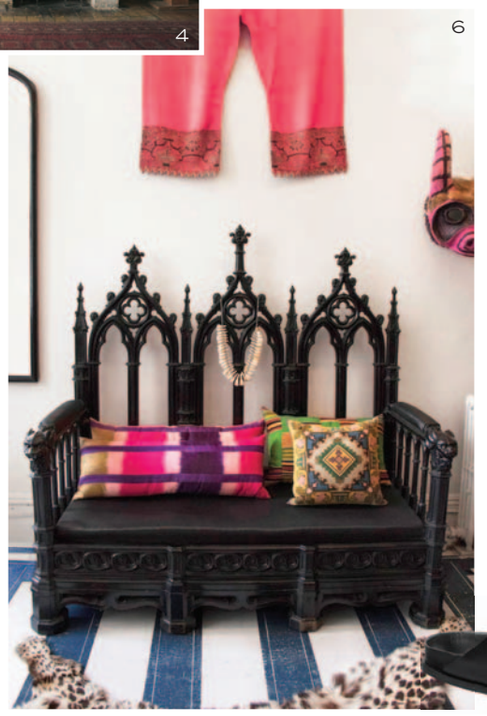
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**1. What's your favorite city?**
London, Paris and New York are all great walking cities. Kolkata [shown] is definitely a favorite too.

**2. What's your signature accessory?**
My LFrank bangle.

**3. What tool is essential for your job?**
Japanese fabric shears.

**4. What museums do you like to visit?**
Kettle's Yard in Cambridge [U.K.; shown, top], which was once the home of a former Tate curator, has such a personal, eclectic selection. The Fondation Cartier in Paris [shown, bottom] is the most beautiful building, with charming gardens.

**5. What's on your reading list?**
Most books from Virago, a '70s feminist press. Molly Keane and Barbara Comyns are a couple of favorite authors.

**6. What's your favorite shop?**
Xenomania in New York [which carries Parkinson's line] has the most incredible textile treasures.

**7. What's a recent discovery?**
A printing technique that utilizes both sides of the fabric. It's become my signature.

**8. What are your travel essentials?**
At least 10 white T-shirts, Birkenstocks and oversize canvas bags for purchases.

8

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: TIERNEY GEARON; ROBERTHARDING/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF LFRANK; COURTESY OF VIRAGO; MARK FITTON; COURTESY OF BIRKENSTOCK; © LINDSAY GEORGE, COURTESY OF GREGORY PARKINSON; ARCAID IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF HORNE; PAUL ALLITT

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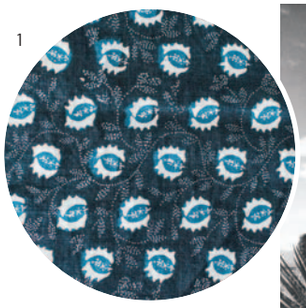
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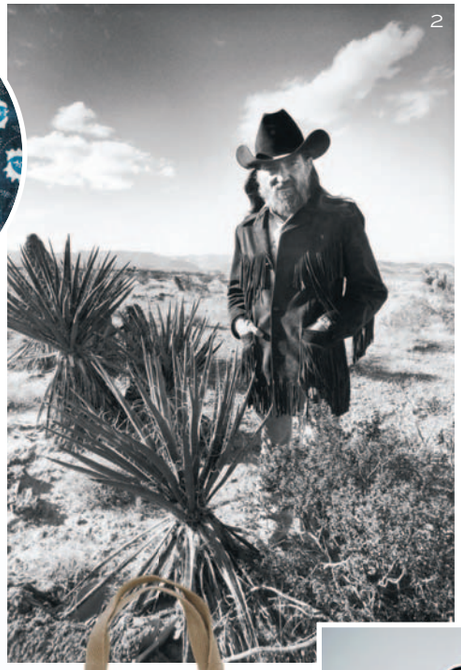
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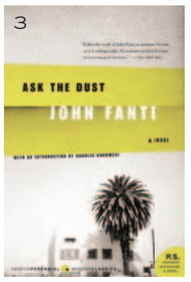
# BARBARA PISCH

At age 7, Barbara Pisch became a political refugee, fleeing communist Slovakia with her family and resettling around Asbury Park, New Jersey, in the mid-1980s. Teenage trips back to her homeland inspired a new hobby: collecting antiques. "It was a way of reclaiming my culture," says Pisch, now 39. In particular, she began hoarding antique, hand-woven hemp and linen textiles, produced up until the 1950s, used by locals for everything from grain sacks to sheets. As the materials became scarcer and more expensive, Pisch started repurposing from her collection, first creating a tote bag in her 20s. After stints in the fashion industry and at design galleries, and with a graduate degree in the history of decorative arts under her belt, Pisch landed back in Asbury Park, where she made wholesaling and custom work with the antique linens a full-time job. In 2016 she opened a storefront, Patriae, offering runners, bags and apparel fashioned from her homespun heritage. "They're kind of primal, raw," says Pisch. "It's about letting the textiles speak through the design." *patriae.com.*



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**1. What historic textiles do you love?**
Antique Slovak block-printed indigo textiles. There was a rich tradition of indigo dyeing in Slovakia from the early 18th to the mid-20th centuries.

**2. What music do you listen to while you work?**
I'm a lifelong Deadhead, so I usually have the Grateful Dead [shown, near left] or Jerry Garcia Band playing, along with Jonathan Richman, Willie Nelson [shown, middle left] and old bluegrass.

**3. Who's your favorite author?**
I love John Fante's style and candor, and I can relate to his stories of growing up in an immigrant family.

**4. What are your grooming essentials?**
I'm constantly using coconut oil and Acure's Quick Fix Correcting Balm on my dry skin.

**5. What are your three travel essentials?**
A large Patriae tote bag, a knitting project and a big cashmere scarf. I always look forward to knitting for an entire flight.

**6. What's your favorite restaurant?**
Talula's in Asbury Park [shown] and Littleneck in Brooklyn.

**7. What's your favorite indulgence?**
Escaping from East Coast winters to tropical beaches as often as possible. (Round House in Bathsheba, Barbados, is my top place to stay anywhere in the world.) And antique jewelry!

**8. What's a recent investment piece?**
Vintage Carl Auböck brass objects.

**9. What are your favorite design objects?**
Furniture by Axel Einar Hjorth [shown] and Richard Riemerschmid.

**10. What's your favorite design movement?**
The Wiener Werkstätte.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: CHRISTINA LILLY (2); SHELLY KATZ/THE LIFE IMAGES COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES; RIC CARTER/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF ECCO; COURTESY OF ACURE; SARA STADTMILLER; COURTESY OF ISTDIBS; IMAGNO/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF ISTDIBS; CLEMENTE DO ROSARIO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF BARBARA PISCH

**1. What's a recent piece you discovered?**
A *pañon* from northern Peru, an ikat textile with an intricate macramé border, used as a shawl or to carry small children. I traveled six hours by car through the mountains of Peru to reach a small village where a cooperative of women makes them.

**2. What museums do you like to visit?**
The Guggenheim in New York.

**3. What are your three travel essentials?**
An Intiearth shawl, Perfumera Curandera healing perfume and a cotton bandanna.

**4. What tools are essential to your job?**
WhatsApp, a large desk or table and a computer.

**5. What's your signature accessory?**
Rose-gold stud earrings by Wendy Nichol.

**6. What's your favorite hotel?**
Titilaka on Laka Titicaca in Peru. It's a small lodge on a private peninsula, and it blends modern design with Andean culture.

**7. What's your favorite recent discovery?**
Native cotton, dating back 5,000 years in Peru, is colored naturally. Many farmers are now growing these organic crops again. And the new Saipua store [shown] in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

**8. What's your favorite place to visit?**
The Amazon jungle. It reminds me how important it is to have a symbiotic relationship with nature.

**9. What's your favorite book?**
*Planting: A New Perspective*, by Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury.

**10. What are your three grooming essentials?**
A Mason Pearson hairbrush, Tata Harper face oil and rose-water spray.

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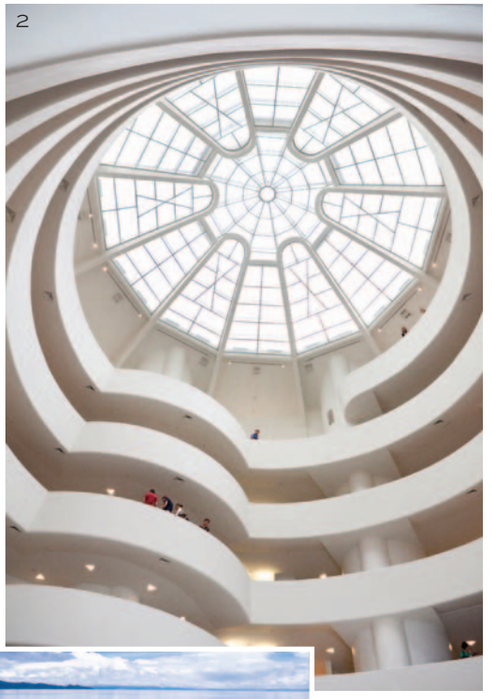
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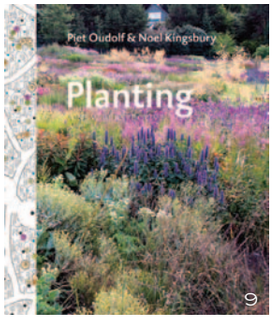

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# JENNI LI

Raised in the Atlanta suburbs by her American mother, Jenni Li, 44, didn't feel much of a personal connection with Peru, her father's homeland and country of residence. But when he died in 2007 and she returned to help settle his affairs, "it became a journey for me, a way to understand where I came from," says Li, who was born in Lima. While working as a stylist in Miami and then in Brooklyn, she revisited Peru frequently, inspired by artisans whose textiles were steeped in history and incorporated the country's indigenous resources. The weavers and other craftspeople she met still sheared their wool from flocks of sheep, made natural dyes from plants and insects and used age-old tools like backstrap looms. "There's a mystery about Peru," says Li, whose four-year-old company, Intiearth, grew out of parties she threw at her home where friends could purchase one-of-a-kind Peruvian textiles that she sourced. "It has a lot of magical qualities for people," she notes. All of Intiearth's wares are handmade in Peru, including vintage *frazadas* from the Andes Mountains, indigo ikat throws and wool ponchos. "Textiles are imperfect," says Li. "They touch an emotional core in people." *intiearth.com.* •

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR RIGHT: HANS GISSINGER, COURTESY OF JENNI LI; COURTESY OF MASON PEARSON; ROBERTHARDING/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF TIMBER PRESS, PHOTO BY PIET OUDOLF; COURTESY OF SAIPUA; COURTESY OF TITILAKA; UKKI STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK; HANS GISSINGER, COURTESY OF JENNI LI; PICTURE PARTNERS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; LUTSINA TATIANA/SHUTTERSTOCK; COURTESY OF WENDY NICHOL

# FEARLESS FASHION

*How digital printing helps designers take creative chances.*

*Sketches from Candice Cuoco's collection for Epson's Digital Couture Project.*
*Opposite page: Fabric swatch designed by Cuoco and printed on an Epson dye-sublimation printer.*

*Special Advertising Feature*

There's no stopping Candice Cuoco. The up-and-coming fashion designer is taking her eponymous label — and love for leather — from her Los Angeles studio to New York, where she'll show on Epson's Digital Couture Project runway for the first time.

"Operating a small business on a limited budget is challenging," Cuoco says, grateful for the opportunity to strut her luxe stuff on such a grand scale. "I have to be thoughtful about the textiles I create," she adds, noting two massive tables in her studio piled high with fabric from past seasons.

Excess material can be a costly problem for a young designer like Cuoco, but that's quickly become a nonissue thanks to the fabric printing technology offered by Epson dye-sublimation printers. "Now I can print two dresses or 200,000," Cuoco says. "That means I don't have to order tons of fabric that may or may not sell, and end up sitting on money that can't be used — crucial for a young designer like me."

Gabi Asfour, co-founder of fashion house threeASFOUR, agrees. Digital printing frees him from costly minimum orders and allows him to compete with bigger brands in a way that he couldn't when using traditional, labor-intensive silkscreen techniques.

"Last year, we created 34 digital prints in one season," he says of his company's couture expressions of fractals and sacred geometry. How many would he have created otherwise?

"Six, max."

For Asfour, digital printing also affords hard-to-come-by color differentiation. "Imagine you want to use one thousand colors in an image," he says. Silkscreening requires a separate screen for each color, so you would need one thousand screens. Digital printing bypasses this weighty restriction.

"The creative possibilities are endless," Asfour says, whose capsule collection for Epson boasts cymatic images — water vibrations in response to sound — captured by photographer and collaborator Linden Gledhill.

Mark Radogna, strategic marketing manager at Epson, understands the impact digital printing can have on a designer. "Digital printing technology has changed every industry it's touched," he says. "And now, the all-new Epson SureColor F9370 digital fabric printer is disrupting the fashion industry by offering designers faster and more economical ways to produce their polyester-based fabrics."

"To be able to create exactly what I want and need allows me to be fearless," Cuoco says. "I can create garments with more character. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't. I can move on with no regrets."

Another digital-printing plus? You get to stay local.

"I'm a hands-on designer," Cuoco says. "I like to see everything from start to finish. You can't do that when your garments are created overseas."

Quality control can also be an issue when products are being produced thousands of miles away.

"In 2012, we had a collection that required us to outsource about 10 pieces. It was a complete disaster," Asfour says, noting that working with vendors anywhere can be problematic. But using local vendors makes it easier to minimize error.

Cost is another outsourcing issue. Cuoco says that you might think it's inexpensive, but you have to order in bulk, which gets back to the potential for waste she wants to avoid.

Shipping prices fluctuate as well, Asfour says. "You might get a bill that's higher than what you were told."

What's more, the turnaround time is not quick. "Sometimes orders are delayed in customs because the paperwork was not done properly," Asfour explains.

"It's easier to communicate your wants and needs in the U.S. Shipping is reliable and fast, and you can count on the quoted price of printing and shipping."

Cost savings and creativity boosts aside, Cuoco says that for her, the biggest benefit to working locally is supporting small businesses like her own. "You're keeping jobs in your community."

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# MARKET REPORT.

**FIRST BLUSH**
Layer translucent pieces with sweet pastels. From left: Max Mara jumpsuit, bodysuit and shoes and We Love Colors tights (worn throughout, except where noted). Proenza Schouler tunic, top, skirt and shoes. Missoni shirt, bodysuit and skirt, Fendi bra and Tibi shoes.

## CHASING RAINBOWS

With this season's vibrant palette of offerings, happiness is finding an ensemble in every hue.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT LLOYD
STYLING BY ONDINE AZOULAY

**PINK LADIES**
Bright tights are the key to freshening up a look. From left: Sportmax dress and Max Mara shoes. Oscar de la Renta jacket and skirt, Max Mara top and Emporio Armani shoes. Christopher Kane dress, Missoni socks and Nina Ricci shoes. Gucci dress and Tibi shoes. Dolce & Gabbana jacket, waistcoat, pants and shoes.

**DOMINO EFFECT**
Pick a pretty pattern to mix things up. From left: Prada dress, shirt and sweater and Sportmax shoes. Dior bodysuit, skirt and shoes. Céline shirt, waistcoat, skirt and shoes. Louis Vuitton top, pants and shoes. Marni dress, Max Mara top and Proenza Schouler shoes.

**ACID TEST**
Add zest with tangy yellows and limes. From left: Maryam Nassir Zadeh shirt, top and skirt and Nina Ricci shoes. Pringle of Scotland dress and Manolo Blahnik shoes. Balenciaga sweater, top, skirt, earrings and shoes. Tibi dress and belt and Manolo Blahnik shoes. Gucci jumpsuit and belt and Emporio Armani shoes.

**SHEER BLISS**
Light fabrics make a sweep of spring evenings. From left: Salvatore Ferragamo dress, Calzedonia tights and Jimmy Choo shoes. Bottega Veneta dress, Tibi belt, Calzedonia tights and Manolo Blahnik shoes. Dries Van Noten dress and shoes and Emilio Cavallini tights.

**SKY HIGH**
Baby blues make for ensembles straight from cloud nine. From left: Emporio Armani dress and Paco Rabanne shoes. Loewe dress and Manolo Blahnik for Carolina Herrera shoes. Carolina Herrera top, Michael Kors Collection skirt and Maryam Nassir Zadeh shoes.

**LUCKY RAYS**
Lighten up daytime dressing with head-to-toe monochrome. From left: Veronique Leroy dress, Burberry skirt and Manolo Blahnik shoes. No. 21 top, shirt and pants and Maryam Nassir Zadeh shoes. Nina Ricci bodysuit and dress and Manolo Blahnik shoes. Sies Marjan shirt and skirt and Nina Ricci shoes.

**BETTER RED**
Spice up beige with crimson stripes and plaid. Clockwise from left: Chloé dress and Tibi shoes. Fendi dress, bra, socks and shoes. Tod's jacket and skirt. Nina Ricci dress, bodysuit, belt and shoes. Hermès dress and Manolo Blahnik shoes. Models, Adela Stenberg, Betty Adewole, Molly Smith and Elizabeth Ayodele at IMG Models, and Celine Bouly at Storm Management; hair, Gary Gill; makeup, Nami Yoshida; set design, Thomas Bird. For details see Sources, page 181.

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# THE EXCHANGE.

**IN FULL BLOOM**
Prestini at National Sawdust's offices in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

TRACKED

## PAOLA PRESTINI

The composer and arts visionary is shepherding a new wave of experimental music.

**BY SARAH MEDFORD PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEORGE ETHEREDGE**

**PAOLA PRESTINI** isn't your typical music industry impresario. Beyond the fact that female impresarios are few and far between, she operates in an ecosphere that her fellow producers, talent scouts, fundraisers and promoters might not recognize. On almost any given night at National Sawdust, the upstart Brooklyn concert hall and arts incubator Prestini co-founded in 2015, music lovers gather to listen to innovative jazz, hip-hop, pop, opera, live film scoring or spoken word. Prestini, 42, gets behind all of it with equal intensity and a gift for building young audiences. Though superstars like Renée Fleming, Philip Glass and James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem serve on the organization's artistic advisory board, it's the emerging composers and performers in residence whom Prestini relates to day to day, artists who see the nonprofit as a lifeline and Prestini as a mentor. "We're a small venue, but a big deal for artists," she says of the 13,000-square-foot building, a former sawdust factory on the Williamsburg waterfront featuring state-of-the-art acoustics and an in-house restaurant that's gotten a Michelin nod.

Born in Trento, Italy, and raised in Arizona by a single mother, Prestini was one of only three women in her composition class of 50 at Juilliard, where her taste for experimental opera and large-scale multimedia works put her at odds with the school's more conservative teaching. In 1999, while she was still a student and thinking ahead to staging her own pieces after graduation, she co-founded the scrappy production company VisionIntoArt; its ups and downs gave her a real-world education in getting music in front of an audience. A decade ago, Prestini met Kevin Dolan, a Washington, D.C., tax lawyer and arts patron looking to launch a venue for emerging talent. Seven years and $16 million later, National Sawdust opened its doors. Today it boasts a staff of 16 (10 of them women) and hosts seven diverse performances a week. Prestini dreams of opening satellites in London and Tokyo.

In addition to leading National Sawdust, Prestini maintains an active career as a composer; she acknowledges the parallels between her two lives. "The thing about writing music is that you're making something from nothing," she says. Recently her composing career has taken flight: She and avant-garde icon Robert Wilson have co-written an opera titled *The Old Man and the Sea*, based on Hemingway's novel, and they've been workshopping it at Wilson's Watermill Center in New York's Hamptons. Her time away hasn't been lonely, though. Her husband, former Kronos Quartet cellist Jeffrey Zeigler, is part of the production, and their 9-year-old son, Tommaso, has sat in on a few rehearsals. A departure from their daily routine in Brooklyn, but Prestini cherishes the variety. "I never imagined doing all this," she says. "But I'm figuring it out." >

## 9:01 a.m.

In between dropping off her son at school and heading to work, Prestini takes some time at home to play the piano.

## 10:35 a.m.

She walks to the office through Williamsburg.

## 12:12 p.m.

Prestini meets with musician John Zorn—one of her mentors—to review an upcoming series of performances he is curating.

## 1:20 p.m.

Lunch with Evon Peter, who produced the film *We Breathe Again*, which Prestini scored.

## 3:17 p.m.

She practices ahead of her performance at Sawdust that evening.

## 7:00 p.m.

Prestini performs the score of *We Breathe Again* at Sawdust.

## 6:30 p.m.

Dinner with National Sawdust co-founder Kevin Dolan, its senior director Courtenay Casey and a prospective patron.

**12**
years old
The age at which Prestini directed her first large-scale performance: a production of *West Side Story* at her Arizona middle school.

**28**
hours
Time spent composing each week.

**147,526**
tickets
The number sold for performances at Sawdust since its opening in October 2015.

**1**
round-trip ferry
Prestini's weekly ride from Brooklyn to Manhattan and back, for fundraising and sponsorship meetings.

**4**
languages
The number her 9-year-old son, Tommaso, speaks: English, French, Spanish and Italian, Prestini's native language.

**12**
programs
The annual residencies at Sawdust that assist emerging artists with everything from networking to recording demos.

**2**
shows
The number of Sawdust performances by Inuit throat-singer Tanya Tagaq, whom Prestini met in 2006.

**180**
minutes
The time she spends boxing each week to stay in shape.

**500**
acoustical springs
The number used to support Sawdust's floors, walls and ceilings for maximal sound fidelity. ●

# SO SUBTLY SWEET

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**CARRY ON** A woven-leather bag in the private-apartment showroom of Las Cabrera, one of the many artisanal brands that have surfaced in Buenos Aires in the wake of Argentina's economic instability.

WORTH THE TRIP

# HECHO EN ARGENTINA

The creative community in Buenos Aires is making the most of a changing economy by tapping the country's abundant resources and rich history.

**BY NELL McSHANE WULFHART**
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS RIDAO**

**STEPPING INTO** designer Maria Zolezzi's Buenos Aires apartment, on the eighth floor of an elegant midcentury building overlooking a park, means entering her showroom. The neat living room, with its polished wood floors, bookshelves and dining table, also features a rack of intricately knitted sweaters, scarves and throws made from organic merino, llama and baby alpaca. After 15 years in Paris working for brands such as Sonia Rykiel and Hermès, Zolezzi returned to Argentina in 2012 and started her own line, which she titled after her nickname, Maydi, in 2014. "When I decided to come back, I thought about the best thing to do in my country and that was to use our fabrics. In terms of merino, for example, we have the best; it's called white gold."

Local craftspeople, most of them between 55 and 70 years old, hand knit the chunky pullovers, soft as cashmere, and weave the oversize shawls on traditional looms. Dyes made from tara and guayacan trees in the country's northwestern province of Salta are used to color the products in soft lavenders, greens and browns. Zolezzi's aim is to create fresh pieces that speak to Argentina's present as well as its past. "Here we often value foreign designers more than our own," she says. "This is why I decided to use the organic fabrics we have, to make knitwear with the excellent artisans we have, but in a contemporary way." Production is small, around 45 styles a season, but Zolezzi has fostered a strong base of customers, including many in Japan, who appreciate her label's exquisite craftsmanship.

Argentina's changeable economy and the high inflation rate of the past couple of years have encouraged its creative community to look inward, starting small businesses with local products and taking inspiration from Argentina's history and culture rather than seeking ideas from abroad. As a result, Buenos Aires, always a creative hub, is now bursting with >

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energetic *porteños*, like Zolezzi, who are making their mark. Designers often sell from their own homes, avoiding hefty overheads and cultivating an in-the-know clientele; cocktail bars hype local producers and spin old-fashioned Italian-inspired *aperitivos* into modern creations; and everything from men's leather shoes to gourmet sausages is being made by hand.

The founders of accessories label Le Bas, Lucila De Paula and Dolores Mouriño, started out designing clothes but changed to leather bags and minimalist canvas backpacks in 2012 after the government imposed extremely strict currency regulations. "[It] was good for us," says Mouriño. "The government made it hard to bring things in, in order to protect national industries. Imports were stuck in customs. Since not many fabrics were produced here, we completely switched at that point." De Paula adds, "I went to Italy and realized that our Argentine leathers were amazing." Le Bas's rectangular cross-body bags and deep leather totes are made in small batches from vegetable-tanned leather, sewn by families of artisans who work in the formerly industrial Villa Crespo neighborhood. These days, the country has made it easier to import to Argentina—and theoretically, for multinational brands to open stores there, but Mouriño and De Paula feel that the market for their products is strong. "Even if H&M comes here," says De Paula, "we're not competing with them."

Helena Cabrera, who with her two sisters started the Las Cabrera line of handbags in 2016, says the three were inspired by their childhood memories of time spent on a farm in Sampacho, Córdoba, in the country's interior. "We wanted to do something related to our roots," she says. "We used to see gauchos making their own bridles, knives, belts, all by hand. We decided to do the same thing, but in the city." Their collections, also sold out of an apartment, rely not just on the country's famous leather but also on handwoven raffia from the Argentine littoral.

Terrible Enfant, a line of men's dress shoes from husband-and-wife team Hache Caillaud and Luz Bauzá, taps into the country's long history of Italian immigrant cobblers. Assembled in an 11-person workshop in the city's working-class Boedo neighborhood, the footwear is stitched almost entirely by hand, lined in goat leather and playfully adorned with denim, cork and removable silver sheaths. The couple—he was formerly an investment banker and she is a designer—launched Terrible Enfant in late 2011 and have two shops already. Caillaud credits some of their success to a growing interest in Argentine-made products that he compares to Peru's successful embrace of its own culinary heritage, a willingness to appreciate what's domestic rather than what's imported—plus, he says, an increasing sense of adventure when it comes to men's shoes that aren't plain brown or black.

At cocktail bar Doppelgänger, owner Guillermo Federico Blumenkamp leans heavily on Argentina's long-held love for bitters and vermouths, once a common post-work libation for laborers, many of Italian descent. Yet, rather than serve a glass of vermouth with a siphon of sparkling water, the way it would have been presented half a century ago, Blumenkamp adds smoked Tabasco, flambéed grapefruit peel or cider-and-cinnamon syrup, turning a worker's drink into something for today's more worldly porteños. The bar's concoctions also boast Cynar, Fernet-Branca, Hesperidina and Gancia Spritz—a sort of antiquated who's who of spirits that Blumenkamp showcases in his very modern cocktails.

Buenos Aires has more than 70 *bares notables*, landmarked all-day cafe-bar-restaurants, most of which date to the early 20th century and remain little changed from when they opened. In 2015, restaurateur Julián Díaz relaunched one such spot from 1930, Los Galgos, making significant improvements to the offerings (he added negronis on tap) while ensuring that the mirrored bar and window frames were left as is. "We upgraded the kitchen and the bathrooms, but otherwise it looks exactly the same," he notes, but cautions against nostalgia for nostalgia's sake: "You can't live only with the romantic idea. You need good products, good service, good standards if you want to fight a war against Starbucks and international chains." In the high-ceilinged restaurant, which seems to be full all day, patrons nibble on croissants, slices of tongue in vinaigrette, and *milanesas*, a breaded steak that Díaz calls "the national passion."

Another classic Argentine dish, the humble *choripán*, is the country's ultimate street food: At its most basic, it's a sizzling sausage on a roll, one that makes an appearance at every barbecue and birthday party. Chori, a bright-yellow shop front in trendy Palermo Soho, has been doling out handmade choripán sandwiches and elevated gin and tonics, made with local Príncipe de los Apóstoles gin, since it opened in late 2016. Co-owner Pedro Peña makes the sausage from pork from Córdoba and the occasional wild boar; cabbage slaw, orange zest and cucumber-yogurt sauce bring the sandwich to the next level. He calls the choripán the emblematic sandwich of Argentina. "We need to reassess it," he says. "We need to cultivate our own."

What is Argentine and what isn't has become a big question in the city's culinary scene. "We have this big argument. When we say Argentinian identity, we say it's the *parrilla* [grill], it's the ingredients from the north, from the Andes. But it's also the heritage of immigration: Jewish cuisine is part of that, and Chinese and Peruvian," says Tomas Kalika, co-owner of Fayer, which opened in 2017. The restaurant, in the Palermo neighborhood, combines Argentina's deep love for cooking over fire with Middle Eastern recipes: Think Israeli-style roasted cauliflower or sweetbreads straight off the grill and served with a tahini sauce. "Thirty years ago, if you came to B.A., we had French restaurants, Italian restaurants, Spanish restaurants. To be a good restaurateur meant French dining."

"YOU CAN'T LIVE ONLY WITH THE ROMANTIC IDEA. YOU NEED GOOD PRODUCTS, GOOD SERVICE, GOOD STANDARDS." –JULIÁN DÍAZ

Now Fayer and its sister restaurant, Mishiguene, are championing a newly sophisticated mix of immigrant cuisine and homegrown traditions.

Argentine identity can be experienced through other senses, too. Fueguia 1833 is a perfume company that has developed an international following for its fragrances inspired by Argentine painters, places and animals. Founder Julian Bedel says the scents, with names like Cactus, El Mono de la Tinta and Jacarandá, "are very related to how Argentinians see the world." The small boutique in tony Recoleta could be mistaken for a jewelry store, with the bottles gleaming in the dim light. Editions are always limited, based on the scarcity of the natural botanicals, including mountain cypress and coigue that Bedel sources from Patagonia.

Speakeasy Florería Atlántico is hidden underneath a flower shop, although it's hardly a secret anymore: It's one of the city's best-known bars. Co-owner Renato Giovannoni and head bartender Ivo Chiodo are, like Blumenkamp, laser-focused on Argentine products, and their particular mission is to find small producers from around the country. The most recent iteration of their cocktail list reflects their discoveries in drinks like the Equeco, which features an Argentine corn spirit and a three-corn chicha, both from the northwestern province of Jujuy. Giovannoni's own gin, Príncipe de los Apóstoles (the same used at Chori), is infused with yerba mate, the earthy tea he sources from the Misiones province. "When we launched Apóstoles, five years ago, there was an idea 'It's Argentinian, so it won't be good,'" he says. "Now Argentine people are more open to local products, and we're finding new things to work with every month, every year." From cactus-flower honey to lemon verbena vinegar, the menu reflects Argentina's immense variety of climates and cultures. "We have a beautiful country," says Giovannoni, "and I want to be able to show people that." ●

**LOCAL COLOR**
Left: Bright bouquets next to a shelf of Argentine wine and spirits at Florería Atlántico. Right: Fueguia 1833's perfumes on display at the brand's boutique.

**PAST FORWARD**
Left: Beet hummus at Fayer. Above: A poster of tango legend Carlos Gardel watches over wooden lasts at the leather-footwear shop Terrible Enfant.

**SWEET SPOTS** Left, from top: The downstairs speakeasy at Florería Atlántico; Los Galgos, one of the city's *bares notables*, remains much as it was when it opened in 1930.

**CRAFT CULTURE**
Left: The interior of designer Maria Zolezzi's apartment, which doubles as a showroom for Maydi, her line of knit shawls, sweaters and other soft goods. Below: The cocktail bar Doppelgänger.

DESIGNER BRIEF

# IMPROVISED GRACE

After a decade overseeing Soho House's signature look, Vicky Charles has launched her own design and decorating business.

BY SARAH MEDFORD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON

**OVER COFFEE** in her white-brick kitchen, Vicky Charles apologizes that her house isn't more "put together." It's a little unclear what she means, given the neat column of glass spice jars lining the shelves, the blackened-steel counter that looks like a tonal drip painting and the sink's covetable brass taps. She mentions the master bedroom: One corner is a patchwork of floor-stain samples, the tub by the picture window still unscreened from passing cars two years after she and her family moved in. "Joe is very creative, and really frustrated that his wife doesn't concentrate more on this when she's at home," says Charles, an interior designer by trade (her husband is a marketing executive; they have two children, 8 and 6). "It's the shoemaker and the shoes, of course."

It's also a fact that Charles is trained in the art of making pleasingly imperfect interiors, signs of which are everywhere in this upstate weekend house in Millerton, New York. She's remade it almost from scratch: reconfiguring the ground floor to enlarge the kitchen and add a mudroom and guest suite; building a new bedroom wing upstairs; and sidestepping her way into a relaxed, quasi Scandi/Japanese décor that strikes a balance between easygoing refuge from their Manhattan apartment and B&B for a constant flow of weekend guests.

The high-comfort, high-function strategy is one that Charles, 42, developed at Soho House, the champagne-soaked members' club and hotel based in London. She spent 18 years there, starting as a waitress at the club's Cafe Boheme in Oxfordshire in 1998 and working her way up, eventually helping to establish its style of worn-in glamour under the tutelage of founder Nick Jones. For the last 10 years, she served as the brand's head of design. Charles and her 90-member team were responsible for the look and feel and maintenance of all the clubs—some 18 around the world, over half of which she had a hand in creating—as well as product design (Soho House makes and sells many of its own furnishings) along with occasional residential jobs for members. When she departed in November 2016 to launch her own business, Charles established herself quickly in the decorating world. Within a few months, she'd hired staff in New York, Los Angeles and London, and she currently caters to a client list (partly inherited from Soho House) that includes Amal and George Clooney, Victoria and David Beckham, Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher, and chef Gordon Ramsay, among others.

"I love the fact that Vicky's become a designer purely through on-the-job training, which I really believe in," says Jones, who has long played the role of mentor and friend—though her career isn't quite as serendipitous as he makes it sound. Raised in Gloucestershire, Charles graduated from college with a fine arts degree and took a job with a graphic design firm right out of school before chucking it for a gig as a waitress to pay off her student loans.

At Soho House, she soon became the liaison for consulting interior designers Ilse Crawford and Martin Brudnizki; both turned out influential early projects for the brand, and Charles says that the lessons she absorbed were invaluable. From Crawford, she learned to evaluate the emotional and sensual potential of space and to make as many design decisions as possible not by studying a plan, but by experiencing what it feels like to stand at a certain window, for instance, or sit in a particular chair. From Brudnizki, she mastered the rigors of making detailed preparatory drawings and working efficiently with builders. Jones, for his part, shared his romantic obsession with English country-house style—and taught her to put function first. "Nick has an amazing ability to see everything as a guest would," Charles says. "I learned completely practical things from him."

Primary among them was how to think on her feet. "When we did [Soho House] West Hollywood, in 2010, we were missing some bar lights at the last minute—they hadn't arrived," Charles says. "We needed 14 matching lights, each no more than 14 inches high, that afternoon for a party. I went to Liz's Antique Hardware with our electrician and built one out of old chandelier parts, with the ceiling rose as the base. They are still there."

**FRESH START** At her house in Millerton, New York, Charles pairs an oak and marble table with vintage Scandinavian chairs and a corner cupboard.

Achieving just the right degree of "put together" for Soho House meant traveling every few weeks from her base in New York, where Charles relocated in 2003 to help open the first U.S. outpost. She oversaw the installation of wall murals and etched-glass mirrors for the bar of the Istanbul club, in a restored 19th-century *palazzo*; she arranged bookcases and chintz-covered armchairs in guest rooms of Miami's Soho Beach House. At any one time there might be 25 projects in play, each a distinct distillation of the brand's signature bonhomie and hotel-grade service.

Charles knew it was time to move on when it all started to feel routine ("reinventing the same things for the same person," as she puts it). Residential projects became a creative lifeline—and, gradually, the foundation of a new solo business. Jones encouraged her to make the move and continues to be supportive.

"This company is far from a start-up, in a way," says Julia Corden, who was introduced to Charles by Nick Jones in 2012 and is now her business partner in Charles & Co. The former nonprofit executive handles new business development, strategy and logistics from a satellite office in L.A., where she and her husband, the entertainer James Corden, are based.

"We've always realized we've got different skill sets," Corden explains of her collaboration with Charles. "My role is to be efficient on the business side, to give Vicky room to be creative." They speak on the phone daily and recently completed a gut renovation of the Cordens' house—pale colors, patterned wallpapers and a Shaker-style kitchen ("traditional elements but simplified to make it more Californian and suitable for her young family," Charles says). "What informs my aesthetic is the location, the building and the architecture. And who's using it," Charles explains. "My look is fluid."

Her malleability has been useful for the Clooneys: Last spring, she turned out three nurseries in as many countries for their twins. Over the summer, she designed a pop-up shop for Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop in Amagansett, Long Island, delivering on the cottagey vibe that Paltrow had requested. And this past winter, just days before the Beckhams moved into their compound of stone barns in Oxfordshire, Charles was busy mounting a lavish Christmas for the couple, down to shaggy fir garlands, stockings hung by the fireplace.

"It's been really interesting," she says of the past year. "The first thing clients say to me is, 'I don't want Soho House.' They like that feeling, that attention to detail, that warmth—but they want it in a different aesthetic. Which is great." •

**EASY DOES IT** Clockwise from near right: Charles in her kitchen; the farmhouse dates from the 1860s; vintage Afghan blankets and a cast-iron bed in a guest suite; a newly designed staircase and shelving.

"VICKY'S BECOME A DESIGNER PURELY THROUGH ON-THE-JOB TRAINING."
—NICK JONES

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAGAZINE

## THE POWER OF OPRAH

# The Gospel According to Oprah

Whether or not she ever runs for office,
Oprah Winfrey is on a mission to make America listen again.

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**BY JULIA REED**
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIO SORRENTI STYLING BY GEORGE CORTINA**

**BOTH SIDES NOW**
Winfrey has "an innate, indescribable ability to find common ground among people who would otherwise kill each other," says pollster Frank Luntz, who has worked with Winfrey in her role as a special contributor to *60 Minutes*. "I see her as the antidote for what ails the country." Opposite page: Gucci dress and Stephen Russell earrings. Previous page: Versace dress and Sidney Garber earrings.

**MINDFUL CHOICES**
"She does not have to tolerate what does not nourish her," says Ava DuVernay, who directed Winfrey in the movie adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time*, opening March 9. Azzedine Alaïa bodysuit, Brandon Maxwell pants, Deborah Drattell belt, Belperron belt buckle and David Webb earrings. Following spread, pages 128–129, clockwise from top left: Azzedine Alaïa dress and Belperron earrings; Versace dress and Sidney Garber earrings; Brandon Maxwell dress and Mikimoto earrings; next three images: Azzedine Alaïa dress and Belperron earrings; Versace dress and Sidney Garber earrings; Mikimoto earrings.

**OPRAH IS LEANING IN**, but not in the Sheryl Sandberg sense. At this stage of the game, Oprah Winfrey—network chief, magazine publisher, talk-show legend, philanthropist, actress and self-made billionaire—hardly needs to practice projecting confidence or making herself heard. Rather, she is literally leaning into the man seated to her right at a table in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The occasion is Winfrey's first segment as special contributor to *60 Minutes*, and she is moderating a discussion, organized by pollster Frank Luntz, of seven voters who supported Trump and seven who didn't, eight months into Trump's presidency. Executive producer Jeff Fager, who announced last January that Winfrey was joining the show, later described her brief at CBS as no less than bridging the country's deep ideological divide. But for the moment, at least, the gap in the room is a tall enough order. Her seatmate, a Trump supporter named Jeff, is extremely agitated about the Russia investigation—as well as, it appears, his placement next to Winfrey at the table.

"I could feel him tense up. I decided not to take on his tension, but to do the opposite, which was to lean in," Winfrey says a few weeks after the show aired in late September. "This is the problem as I see it in public discourse: People become hysterical because you try and meet their energy, but you have to be bigger than that. You have to try and transcend—you can't go toe-to-toe. I'm leaning in on this guy, I can feel that he is uncomfortable as hell, and I just stay on him. Every time I feel him bristle, I turn and say, 'Tell me what you think, what do you say about that?' That is how you hear people."

Winfrey has been listening hard for her entire career, most notably, of course, for 25 years as host of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and now as host of *Super Soul Sunday*, the series of inspirational "conversations" that airs weekly on OWN, the network she launched in 2011 with Discovery Communications. There are also the *60 Minutes* segments, which will air four or five times a year. "It's her superpower," says Reese Witherspoon, her friend and co-star in *A Wrinkle in Time*, the adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's young adult novel directed by another Winfrey pal, Ava DuVernay, which opens in March. "She really listens, and she is genuinely interested at a time when the great majority of our politicians have stopped listening to their constituents."

Luntz goes further. "I don't know anyone in America who can do what she does, and that is not an exaggeration," he says. "I've been doing this for 25 years, and when I hosted a similar focus group two days before the election, I lost control. She has an innate, indescribable ability to find common ground among people who would otherwise kill each other."

She also hangs in. After three tense hours around the table, the group's discussion continued spontaneously in a nearby restaurant—with Winfrey herself choosing to join. "You know what that shows?" says Luntz. "Respect. That is what the average American is looking for from their leaders, from the media, you name it. I don't think I share her politics, but it's not about ideology. It's about confidence in the future and respect towards each other. She provides both. I see her as the antidote for what ails this country."

**FOR SOMEONE BESTOWED** with such a heavy mantle, Winfrey is astonishingly lighthearted. "I am probably one of the most content, peaceful people you will ever meet," she says during a conversation in Los Angeles, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from her home in Montecito, a wealthy, tight-knit community of almost 9,000. Part of that contentment clearly stems from the fact that since 2011, when Winfrey shut down the show that made her fame and much of her fortune, she's been released from the 15-hour schedule that defined her days for decades and is free to choose her projects. "The thing about her being so powerful is that she doesn't have to tolerate what does not nourish her," says DuVernay, who, in addition to being Winfrey's director on *Wrinkle* and 2014's *Selma*, developed the breakout television drama *Queen Sugar* for OWN. "She has the power and the ability to practice ultimate discretion. Whatever she wants to do she does. Whatever she doesn't want to do she does not."

One of Winfrey's first moves was to leave Chicago, which had been home for almost 30 years, and settle into her 65-acre West Coast digs. Aptly dubbed the Promised Land, the property features a view of the Pacific, a lavish rose garden and a teahouse where she reads the Sunday papers and, typically, three books a week. The first time Witherspoon visited Winfrey at the oasis she created, the actress burst into tears: "I said, 'You did this,'" Witherspoon says. "You have to remember, she comes from nothing. She doesn't take anything for granted."

In addition to the *60 Minutes* gig and the new *Wrinkle* film (in which she plays the wise, celestial being Mrs. Which), Winfrey's book *The Wisdom of Sundays*, based on her *Super Soul Sunday* conversations, debuted in October and immediately topped the *New York Times* bestseller list. In December, Discovery Communications paid $70 million to increase its stake in OWN, a top cable network for African-American women and one of the fastest growing networks for women in general. Winfrey's Harpo Inc. will retain a significant minority interest in the media property, and she will continue in her role as CEO. By the time Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture opened in 2016, she had given $21 million, the largest gift to the museum by a single donor, and last year the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, the boarding school in South Africa to which she has contributed more than $150 million, celebrated its 10th anniversary. In March she will be presented with the Museum of Modern Art's David Rockefeller Award, given to an individual who "exemplifies enlightened generosity" and who is an advocate of cultural and civic endeavors. She is often mentioned as a potential presidential candidate—and speculation about a possible run reached levels of near hysteria after her acceptance speech at January's Golden Globes ceremony (where she received the Cecil B. DeMille Award). Still, as recently as October, she said, "No way," adding that it's not something she thinks she'd be good at. "I do a few things really well. But I don't want to manage. I don't want to spend my days and nights creating policy. I want to continue to be involved with stories that allow people to see the best of themselves, to find a higher good."

As for her current stress-free state, she says, "What a nice thing to come to. What if I'd been pissed off, if I'd left the show and been upset, trying to figure out the whys of life?" Clearly, she's gotten something of a handle on the latter, though there were a few bumps in the road.

Early on, she says, she realized she was absorbing the emotions of her guests on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to an unhealthy degree. "It wasn't just a show for me. It really was me being part of the human exchange, the whole human array of functions and dysfunctions," she says. "I'd go home, and I'd be overwhelmed. I was getting sick. I had to learn how to put up just a little bit of a shield but also to be fully present through that veil." In her 50s (she is now 64), Winfrey had a different kind of health scare when a thyroid issue went undiagnosed. "I thought I was dying every night, because I had heart palpitations," she says. "I went to five different doctors, and each of them gave me a prescription for a different kind of heart medication, and it turned out I didn't have a heart problem at all."

Her 50s also turned out to be the beginning of her current chapter. She refers often to what her late friend Maya Angelou said about the 50s being the decade when you become who you were meant to be. "There's a quickening that happens, and your body, your hormones, everything is saying, 'Hey, you don't have as much time as you once had—let's get on with it!'" she says. "You get to step into your true beauty, your true value, your true worth, without everyone else's opinions and judgments of what you should be."

She was 57 when she stopped broadcasting *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and 62 when she shuttered Harpo Studios. Recently bulldozed to make way for McDonald's global headquarters, the building had become something of a landmark in Chicago, a city she never truly got to know. "I'd get picked up at 5:30 in the morning in my apartment building's garage, and then I'd be picked up at the studio at 8:30 at night," she says. Weekends were spent in a nearby country house in Indiana, until, in 2001, while on a photo shoot, she discovered the place in Montecito (a town recently in the news for twin tragedies, the Thomas fire that destroyed scores of houses and the subsequent devastating mudslides that claimed at least 20 lives).

Originally, she had looked at plantation houses in her native South. Having spent her early childhood poor in Kosciusko, Mississippi, she says, "I thought it would be the ultimate comeuppance, the ultimate finger. Like, 'Look who's in the big house now.'" But after an exhaustive search of antebellum real estate in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana, she decided against it. "What you realize is that no matter how much money you have, you can't get rid of the bugs and the humidity. I was just thinking about the live oaks and the summers. And then I happened on the place in Montecito, which is like a plantation, only there's no humidity, and you've got the ocean and the mountains." There is also no shortage of oaks. "I have thousands of them," she says, adding that the property "really is a parkland," one that also includes hundreds of avocado trees. "I'd better never see a store-bought avocado in my kitchen!"

**INNER PEACE**
"I am probably one of the most content, peaceful people you will ever meet," Winfrey says. Versace dress. Previous spread, page 130: Versace dress; page 131: Belperron earrings. Hair, Derrick Rutledge; makeup, Nicole Mangrum; manicure, Honey. For details see Sources, page 181.

**THESE DAYS** she relishes the sanctuary of her home and the free time she spends there, but, she says, it took three years for her to decompress. "For 25 years I had a schedule and a contract. Now the best thing ever is letting your body wake up when it wants to," she says. Still, once she was awake, it took her "a long while to figure out what to do" with her day, to convince herself that she wasn't a "loser" because she wasn't overscheduled, that making time for herself "is actually a good thing"—though she hasn't exactly turned into a slacker.

On a typical day, she "does the business of the business," making calls and conducting meetings by teleconference, all usually by 1 p.m. to accommodate East Coast schedules. Though she has financial advisers, she still signs her own checks. "I need to know what my electric bill is. I think it keeps you grounded and aware of what's coming in and what's going out," she says. "I sit in on the boring tax meetings; I handle the money wiring. I have never liked surprises."

For an hour each day, she alternates yoga with a workout called Resistance Flexibility with a trainer who comes to her house, followed by a half hour on the treadmill. And at least three times a week, she has people for lunch, which is prepared by her personal chef, primarily with ingredients from her expansive vegetable gardens. "I do a lot of business at the house," she says.

Afternoons, she says, are mostly for herself. She takes great pleasure driving the six blocks to the local bookstore, Tecolote, and browsing the stacks on the tables. She occasionally turns up at meetings of the local rose society, called the Rose Buddies, though she has yet to host an event herself.

Her household includes five dogs—two springer spaniels, one golden spaniel and two older golden retrievers—and houseguests are something of a constant. At Thanksgiving, in addition to her longtime partner, Stedman Graham, the crowd included 22 graduates of her academy (they are now in the States attending college or working and, when they visit, stay in guest accommodations Winfrey built for them on her property) and DuVernay, a frequent guest with whom she brainstormed *Queen Sugar* on her front porch. "I had to have a front porch," she says, and now it has become a metaphor for the worthiness of potential projects. "Only if something is stimulating enough or inspiring enough will I be forced off the porch."

**IN 2016**, when she heard DuVernay was filming *Wrinkle* in New Zealand, she all but leapt off the porch—but not necessarily to act. "She called me and said, 'I hear you are filming in New Zealand, and I want to come hang out,'" DuVernay says. "I said, 'That's good because I was going to ask you to be in it.'" Winfrey, it should be noted, received an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress in the first film in which she acted, *The Color Purple*, despite the fact that she'd never had formal training. "As an actor she has great empathy," says DuVernay. "True actors, the best actors, actually become another person. Through the run of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*...she was practicing her craft, trying to walk in the shoes of another."

Though the director says Winfrey gets offered "everything to do with a woman of a certain age, black, white or otherwise," she feels that acting is part of the Winfrey pantheon of talents that is most often overlooked. "When you think about her empire, you think of the show and all that," DuVernay says, "but the acting would have been enough to have made her mark."

As in all things, Winfrey is mindful of her choices. "Her discernment in what characters she wants to lend herself to is very precise—Deborah Lacks, for example," DuVernay says. (In *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Winfrey plays the daughter of an African-American woman whose cancer cells were taken from her without her knowledge or consent and have been used for important medical research ever since.) "That role really resonated with women in the black community, which is what her intention was."

With *Wrinkle*, her aim was to have a good time, and by all accounts she achieved it. "I can't remember the last time I had that much fun," Winfrey says. "We were fired up. We were alive in that trailer every morning. Reese was the DJ, playing all this old Southern blues music. We listened to more Sam Cooke than I've heard since I was a kid." Not only did she adore New Zealand ("It resonated with me.... There's a heightened sense of color there that feels like another vibration," she says), she had a blast with the cast. Witherspoon—who hails from Nashville, where Winfrey moved when she was 14 ("I think Southern girls have a thing," Winfrey says)—first met her co-star when she was promoting the 2005 film *Walk the Line* on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. "She completely Oprah-Showed me! I burst into tears talking about my high school English teacher," Witherspoon says.

During the shoot, the two forged a different bond. "We had at least four hours doing hair and makeup every day, and Oprah could have had her own trailer," the actress says. "But she decided she wanted to do it with Mindy [Kaling] and myself. She really is like your best friend. She's relatable, she loves to have a good time, she loves to drink a margarita."

She is also big on sharing good times with others. Among her favorite roles of late is party-giver. To celebrate the release of *The Wisdom of Sundays* (proceeds of which go to causes dear to her, including the Leadership Academy), she threw a gospel brunch at the Promised Land with guests ranging from Julia Roberts, Shonda Rhimes and Lin-Manuel Miranda to Jeff Bezos, Diane von Furstenberg and Barry Diller. An hour-long gospel concert was led by BeBe Winans, while the extensive menu featured such Southern comfort food as fried chicken and waffles, collard greens, biscuits and gravy, and macaroni and cheese.

"There is nothing like an Oprah party. Every single thing you experience is curated by her," DuVernay says. "That's her joy, designing experiences for people. From the moment you arrive, you feel her touch everywhere—from what the man who parks your car is wearing to the position of the plate. Her heart is in the details, her love of every little piece of a thing. You also experience that with her as a friend. She's so good at tracking what is really going on in your life."

Currently she is indulging in her love of details by building two new houses on her existing vacation properties in Hawaii and Telluride, Colorado, where she is an avid skier. Though her houses are safe havens, she does occasionally venture out to restaurants—despite the fact that "the selfie thing" has made it harder. She insists on posing for every photo fans ask for and has little patience for celebrities who complain about the imposition. "If you don't want to be a parade, then don't go to the parade," she says. "I try to be kind to people because people have been so kind to me, and I know it's the only moment that they are going to have."

In addition to reading, she makes time for TV, but, she says, staying on top of OWN's content fills up most of those hours. She watched *The Handmaid's Tale* last year and says she's a huge fan of *Big Little Lies*. Winfrey keeps up with both sides of the national political debate by reading *Politico*, *Red State*, three newspapers (*The Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*) and *The Atlantic*. "I want to see what the right side is saying and what the left side is saying," she says, adding that what she doesn't do much is watch the news. "I limit my intake," she says. "All these commentators are on, and they're just yakety-yaking. Everybody is talking to themselves. Nobody is listening to anybody. They're there to make their point and make their moment, and we're actually getting nowhere. So I turn it off."

The principle behind her *60 Minutes* segments, on the other hand, is to get people to sit down long enough that everyone can be heard, and no one talks over each other. "Once you feel heard, you are willing to hear other people," says Winfrey. After the first segment in Michigan, she told Luntz that she felt it was a "beginning" for the group around the table, that they would continue the conversation. He was convinced they'd never see each other again, but Winfrey turned out to be right. Participants on opposite sides of the issues have ended up cooking dinner for each other.

"What I learned from all those conversations that I had for all those years is that everybody thinks they're right, and it's not my job to prove them right or wrong but to give them the opportunity to voice [their opinions], and we can have a constructive conversation," she says. "Listen, I've looked in the eyes of murderers and child molesters and all kinds of people who have done terrible things. I can definitely listen to somebody who has a different political view." In her current discussion groups, she works hard to find subjects about which even the most dug-in opponents can agree—keeping one's family safe, for example—but she feels that most politicians tend to do the opposite by fomenting dissent. "We're gonna go down a really dark path for a while because of it," she says.

Darkness—and the necessity of transcending it—is a subject much on her mind. "One of the reasons I love *A Wrinkle in Time* is because I get to play this grand, wise, angelic creature, and one of the things she says is, 'The darkness is spreading so fast these days; the only thing that is faster than light is the darkness.' I really do believe that we are going through some dark times, so you have to make a choice not to be pulled into it," she says. "Not just to resist but to transcend. I specifically work on being a carrier of the light." The *60 Minutes* pieces, then, are part of that mission, one she says is well worth leaving her porch to pursue.

"She knows the power of her voice, of her persona," says DuVernay. "Does she need that paycheck? Does she need that little bit of PR? No. But she felt like someone needs to be talking to these people right now." ●

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# NEW ROMANTICS

Escape to the entrancing Tyrrhenian seaside, where dramatic dresses sparkle amid the cinematic setting of Naples.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAN MACDONALD
STYLING BY GEORGE CORTINA

**SWEPT AWAY** Bask in a sun-soaked boat ride. Calvin Klein 205W39NYC dress, Annina Vogel necklaces, Eye M by Ileana Makri earring (at left) and Roberto Coin earring (at right).

**WANDERLUST**
Stand out from the crowd in elegant eveningwear. Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello dress and Roberto Coin earring. Opposite: Versace jacket (worn as dress), Anine Bing bra, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces, Eye M by Ileana Makri earring (at left), Roberto Coin earring (at right) and Gianvito Rossi shoes.

**STRIKING POISE**
Night or day, choose a sultry style. Marc Jacobs dress, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces and Roberto Coin earring. Opposite: Valentino dress, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces and Roberto Coin earring.

**ABOVE ALL**
Bare a sliver of skin for maximum impact. Balenciaga dress and Annina Vogel necklaces. Opposite: Louis Vuitton dress, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces and Roberto Coin earring.

**AFTER HOURS**
Twinkle into twilight with embellished pieces. Dries Van Noten tops and briefs, Falke tights, Roberto Coin earring (at left), Balenciaga earring (at right) and Gianvito Rossi shoes. Opposite: Céline dress, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces, Eye M by Ileana Makri earring (at left), Roberto Coin earring (at right) and Gianvito Rossi shoes.

**LOVE STORY**
Sequins and fringe ignite ardor. Gucci bodysuit, Falke tights, Annina Vogel necklaces and Eye M by Ileana Makri earring (at left) and Roberto Coin earring (at right). Opposite: The Row dress, Maison Margiela designed by John Galliano feather T-shirt, Azzedine Alaïa belt, Annina Vogel necklaces and Roberto Coin earring. Model, Freja Beha at IMG Models; hair, Christiaan; makeup, Kanako Takase; manicure, Alessandra. For details see Sources, page 181.

# ALEX GARLAND'S ENEMY WITHIN

After a successful directorial debut with *Ex Machina*, the author-turned-filmmaker returns with a cerebral fever-dream, *Annihilation*.

**BY ALEX BHATTACHARJI**
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOMBERG & CHANARIN**

**RISING FROM HIS SEAT** in the screening room of a London post-production facility, Alex Garland casts a shadow over the projection of his new movie, *Annihilation*. The 47-year-old filmmaker jumps up to point at a patch of hazy daylight. "I reckon we've got too much blue in the sky," he says to the digital colorist stationed behind a control board. "We could put a bit of dark gray up top."

This is the last week of post-production on his second directorial effort, a tortured three-year process following his successful debut, 2015's *Ex Machina*. After several color adjustments and crops, Garland adds, "At the risk of us dropping back into this nightmare rabbit hole, I've got one more thing."

He scans forward to the first appearance of "the shimmer," a mysterious alien phenomenon into which a team of experts ventures, including a biologist (played by Natalie Portman) seeking answers about her damaged husband (Oscar Isaac). On-screen, the effect is hauntingly beautiful: an undulating, iridescent field. Garland asks to blow it up (and up and up).

"That's better," he says. "What's the zoom now? Like 4 percent?"

"It's 12 percent," the colorist replies.

Garland purses his lips. "F— it," he says. "The question is, if you don't work in VFX, do you ever notice? Given the fact virtually no one will see this on a big screen, they'll watch it on their iPhones, does it f—ing matter?"

Garland has reasons to fret about the fate of his new movie—reasons that in a few days will become public and explain his editing-room angst. What's apparent for now is that his hotly anticipated film has been delayed, amid whispers of friction between the film's major backers, David Ellison and Scott Rudin, and upheaval at the film's distributor Paramount.

Garland just wants to make the film. "I just try as hard as I can to do the thing," he says. "Everything past that is not really my problem. Or, put another way, I wish it wasn't. I'm almost certain it will be."

Undeniably cerebral, at times impenetrably so, *Annihilation* represents Garland's uncompromising vision as both a writer and a director, and yet he shares a grim view of its prospects. "Does it look like a slam dunk? No." History may view the film as the novelist-turned-screenwriter-turned-director's most ambitious work—or his undoing. Perhaps both. Either way, Garland is willing to risk everything for it. "If it changes a lot, I'll start a nuclear war," he says. "I'll use conventional weapons. Sharpened sticks if I have to."

**EARLIER, AS WE HUDDLED** in a back room of a nearby private club in Soho, Garland explained the origins of his latest project. "This was very, very hard, but I knew it would be going into it," he says. "That was part of the intention." Adapted from Jeff VanderMeer's 2014 novel of the same name, *Annihilation* became a

**DARK VICTORY**
"This was very, very hard," Garland says of making *Annihilation*, out this month. "But I knew it would be going into it."

## GARLAND ON THE BIG SCREEN

After Danny Boyle's film adaptation of Garland's first novel, *The Beach*, the author turned his own hand to screenwriting and directing.

THE BEACH (2000)

28 DAYS LATER (2003)

NEVER LET ME GO (2010)

DREDD (2012)

EX MACHINA (2015)

SUNSHINE (2007)

ANNIHILATION (2018)

high-concept artistic exercise. "Reading the book is like having a dream, so when I finished it, I sort of set out to create a dream of the book. I never reread it. I didn't refer back to it. Everything was based on fractured memory."

What emerged is a fragmented, stream-of-unconsciousness narrative teeming with allusions and allegories. Beneath the movie's surrealism and striking visuals lies an exploration of subjectivity and the human need for self-destruction. "One aspect of self-destructive actions is that you are often not aware they're self-destructive at the time," Garland says, adding a dark chuckle. "Retrospectively, so much about making *Annihilation* was a self-destructive act. It's in the approach. It's even in the f—ing title. It's in everything."

Garland, who rejects the label *auteur*, is quick to deflect praise to his cast, collaborators and crew. Clad in a blue sweatshirt, gray twill pants and Nikes on this early December Saturday, he seems at ease with his unease, which is to say his brooding tension is directed inward. "He's incredibly hard on himself, but actually quite generous to others," says Portman. "He cares about everyone he works with and treats everyone very well, which isn't the most common attribute in a director."

> "[ALEX] IS INCREDIBLY HARD ON HIMSELF, BUT ACTUALLY QUITE GENEROUS TO OTHERS."
>
> —NATALIE PORTMAN

Neither is citing as a prime influence the double helix of science and communist politics. "I can see very, very clearly how those two strands play out in my working life," he says. His grandparents were, he says, "on one side seriously left wing and on the other it was science-based." (Garland's maternal grandfather, Peter Medawar, won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1960.) The dynamic continued with his mother, a psychologist, and his father, a political cartoonist (although he's private about his family, he lights up when he takes a call from his father, who is looking after his 10-year-old daughter, the younger of his two children with his wife, actress Paloma Baeza).

Growing up in Hampstead in north London, Garland spent his youth listening to punk music and backpacking with pen and sketchbook in hand. "Many writers somehow figure out that they want to be writers from the age of 12," he says. "All through my teenage years I was drawing." After graduating from Manchester University, Garland got his first paid work doing cartoons and illustrations. Many of his father's friends were journalists, and for a time Garland, who'd trekked across Southeast Asia, harbored dreams of becoming a foreign correspondent. He was unable to reconcile himself to nonfiction, though; he couldn't pretend to be capable of true objectivity, much less commit to a view he knew would evolve in his mind.

He was liberated by writing fiction, until he felt trapped by it. For his first book, *The Beach*, he mined his travels. Published in 1996, when Garland was 26, the novel earned praise and heady comparisons to Graham Greene. Two years later, he published *The Tesseract*, a story as structurally complex and interconnected as the titular four-dimensional cube. It was the first time he would careen from accessible to ambitious, in this case to brilliant effect, burnishing his reputation as a writer of serious fiction. And then, for several years...nothing.

Rumors spread that Garland was suffering from a debilitating case of writer's block, when in reality he had thrown himself into screenwriting. "It's bullshit," he says. "I got asked to comment on having writer's block, and I was writing till 3 a.m. every night." His shift in focus was a response to Danny Boyle's film adaptation of *The Beach* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, which omitted the darker themes he valued in the book. "I thought, to exert control over that, I need to be involved in writing," says Garland. "That came with a concurrent realization: I never really planned to be a novelist, and it's not what I want to do."

Garland returned the advances for a pair of future novels. Publishers thought he was insane. His first script, *28 Days Later*, directed by Boyle, became a critical and commercial success, spawning a slew of imitators (the *Walking Dead* comic book series, with a very similar premise, appeared the following year).

Next Garland wrote *Sunshine*, a bleak space drama evoking Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, about a quixotic mission to rescue humanity by restarting the flickering sun. Hollywood studios dangled large sums in front of Garland for the script, but he opted instead to work with Boyle on a smaller-scale production. Their visions for the film's ending diverged, and afterward they parted ways. The movie disappointed at the box office but critics revered it, and it has since attained cult status.

Garland then tackled a pair of adaptations: *Never Let Me Go*, an elegiac work by Kazuo Ishiguro, who received the Nobel Prize in literature last year; and *Dredd*, based on the *2000 AD* comic books Garland loved as a child.

Garland was a natural choice to adapt Ishiguro's acclaimed 2005 novel. Having forged a close friendship out of mutual admiration in the late 1990s, the two have met to exchange ideas about works in progress. Garland also introduced Ishiguro to the artistic potential of science fiction, which unlocked the novel's dystopian plot about clones raised to be harvested for organs. "He opened me up to that whole universe," says Ishiguro. "That's why *Never Let Me Go*, to some extent, became possible."

Ishiguro wasn't surprised when Garland produced a finished screenplay in less than a week. "I know how he works," he says. "He gets into some sort of very intense state of creativity. Ideas come to him more or less whole, and he has to get them down. He just works and works and works and works. He doesn't sleep, he doesn't shave. Then he turns up looking like a wild man, clutching the screenplay."

Garland took the role of executive producer on *Never Let Me Go* and "had a very, very strong influence on the way the film was made," Ishiguro recalls. "He was everywhere. He was probably ready to direct a long time before he actually did. Because the producers and the people around him respected him so much, he was playing this kind of quasi-director role." Instead, he became mired in *Dredd*, a script he rewrote numerous times over a span of years, part of a filmmaking process Garland has called "deranged."

"I don't know whether he's being honest about this," Boyle says, "but he went through a period of absolute deep dissatisfaction with directors, including myself. His writing suffered. This eventually emerged in his directing *Ex Machina*, which he did beautifully. He's at his very best now."

*Ex Machina* earned Garland an Academy Award nomination for best original screenplay and the film appeared on numerous best-of lists, propelling its lead actors—Oscar Isaac, Alicia Vikander and Domhnall Gleeson—to stardom. Ostensibly about the promise and perils of artificial intelligence, the film was also a rumination on gender wrapped in a bizarre love triangle. For Garland, taking on the role of director allowed him to put his belief in artistic collectivism into practice. "It's a collaboration. It's really simple," he says. "I've got my take. Other people have theirs. Some people do find it slightly unnerving. Everybody's in the deep end."

"He's one of the best people I've had a chance to work with," says Isaac. "We made a pact we'd do everything together." Isaac was willing to pull double duty while shooting *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, juggling production schedules at London's Pinewood Studios to film his scenes in *Annihilation*, in which he plays a Special Ops soldier who returns from the shimmer afflicted with a mysterious sickness. The collaborative experience with Garland energized him. "It feels like we're two mechanics," Isaac adds. "He designed the car. I just help him put it together. It's really enticing to hear, 'Hey, I've got this new project to put together. Do you want to come hold the wrench?'"

Throughout Garland's career, each project has been a reaction to the last one, and *Annihilation* is no exception. "*Ex Machina* was like making a watch," he says. "I wanted to do something more about instinct and intuition than clockwork precision." Garland knew from the start it would invite wildly divergent interpretations. "Whoever sees it will have their subjective take of my subjective take of Jeff's subjective take. There is no truth to be found anywhere within that spectrum."

If the result is a bit like a hall of fun-house mirrors, that was the goal. Garland and his team created a hallucinatory visual vocabulary, with crystalline trees emerging from a beach, a village of humanoid plants and a tiny fawn with cherry-blossom antlers. An awe-struck VanderMeer described an early cut as "mind-blowing" and likened its conversation-starting potential to Kubrick's *2001*.

The film's depth and complexity drew Portman to the project: "It was just such an incredible synthesis," she says. "Infidelity and cancer and mutations, the messed-up ways we behave, the beauty of mutations—all of that." As her character explores Area X within the shimmer, she finds everything refracted and continually morphing—the laws of biology and physics, time and place, her own psyche. "It's a journey into herself," Portman explains, a quest to understand what led her to make a choice that drove her husband away. "She is going to investigate her own mutated mind, trying to figure out why she did what she did."

As with dreams, *Annihilation* is ripe for analysis. The allusions and allegories comprise an intricate interior scaffolding. "It's there if people are interested," says Garland. "If they're not, it's not, I guess."

ONE OF THE film's central allegories—that humanity is somehow programmed to self-destruct—offers a tempting metanarrative as Garland is left to ponder why he did what he did in making *Annihilation*, especially given what transpired after our meeting. Several days later, it emerged that Paramount had washed its hands of theatrical distribution of the film in most international markets, inking an agreement granting Netflix streaming rights everywhere outside of the U.S., Canada and China.

According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, Ellison, who co-finances a portion of Paramount's slate and whose producing credits include several *Mission: Impossible* movies, *Baywatch* and *Geostorm*, demanded significant changes—including a new ending and a more likable version of Portman's character—after poor test screenings last summer, calling the film "too intellectual" and "too complicated."

Rudin, patron of indie filmmakers such as Wes Anderson and the Coen brothers and an executive producer on *Ex Machina*, rejected these revisions. As the battles became more heated, Rudin—who had wooed Garland to make *Annihilation* and also had final cut—was able to preserve the film's content but not how it would be released. Garland doesn't dispute the account, though "much of the article related to things I had no direct knowledge about," he noted later via email. "But it's true that Scott Rudin was always creatively protective of the film."

The complaints surprised Garland and confused some critics, who believe taking him to task for being cerebral, complex and challenging is like blaming the rain for being wet. As one headline on Gizmodo put it: "The Hollywood Drama Around *Annihilation* Shows Why We Can't Have Smart Things." Separately, both Rudin and Ellison denied the account and said they have never had a conversation about *Annihilation*, with Rudin adding, "I haven't spoken to David Ellison since the week *True Grit* opened." Paramount did not address the dispute but issued a statement saying, "We are proud of this brilliant film," and that the deal was designed to reach the largest global audience.

"We've got a shitload of problems with this film, right?" Garland says. "A shitload. I love the film, I stand by it, but I understand the problems." It's a movie that challenges viewers and forces them to think. There's no antagonist—the alien entity is neither good nor evil. As frustrated as Garland is, his main issue with the Hollywood execs is their lack of foresight. "It's 'What do you do with a film that costs this much that tests the way this tests?'" he says. "Did we test brilliantly? No, we didn't. Is that dangerous waters? If it is, I couldn't give a f— because it's so self-evident. For anybody who understands testing, it's not a surprise." Asked if *Ex Machina* performed better at test screenings, Garland replies, "No. F—no. Nothing I've done has come close to testing well."

Garland argues that he made the exact film he said he would. "When it says it in the script, it's like a contract—that is what I'm going to do," he says, adding that he got buy-in from his backers and the studio for the visuals and the cast and that he stayed within budget (just under $40 million). "Now, listen, at the end of the day, is that difficult for the people making it and for the studio? Yeah, it's really f—ing hard. It was difficult to make, and it'll be difficult to sell. I've been working in film long enough to know that if I wrote this script and we tried to make it, I knew where that would lead. I wasn't under any illusions. Sure enough, that's where it led."

Garland makes it sound fatalistic, as if he embarked knowing he'd have to go to war for his art. The reality, however, may be less about his gripping his work tight than the grip it had on him.

"I'm not kidding when I say I don't approach this as a long-term strategy," Garland says. "I write based on a current set of obsessions and preoccupations—basically out of compulsion. It's not a plan. It's more like an addiction. It just isn't really in my control." ●

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# Hidden Figures

As Iran finds itself at a political and economic crossroads, a homegrown art scene is fueling a new sense of pride—and a dynamic market for contemporary work.

BY JOSHUA LEVINE  PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT POLIDORI

**DIVINE PROPORTIONS**
Top: Naqsh-e Jahan ("Image of the World") square, in Isfahan. Bottom: A room in Shahnaz Nader's home in Kashan, one of several restored mansions built in the 19th century. Previous pages: The Jameh mosque, in Isfahan.

**ON A FRIDAY NIGHT** in Tehran's flashy Elahieh neighborhood, the voice of the muezzin calling the Muslim faithful to prayer is nowhere to be heard, but the ostentatious whine of a Ferrari often is. Ferraris make little practical sense in car-clogged Tehran, where getting from one end of town to the other can easily take several hours. But Friday night here is for gallery hopping and showing off. A Ferrari is perfect for a noisy crawl down Fereshteh, a narrow street that winds down Elahieh's hill.

This enclave sits well up the slopes at the base of the snow-covered Alborz mountains, near Tehran's northern boundary, while the rest of the teeming metropolis of 15 million spills down the hillside onto the hot plain below. In Tehran, uptown is literal: The higher up the hill you live, the richer you are. This is where the city's stylish, monied young people come to promenade, cruising the galleries that have sprung up here in search of the latest must-have luxury: modern Iranian art.

The beleaguered Iranian economy has distributed its great oil wealth unevenly. U.S. sanctions were never fully lifted, and corruption is widespread. The widening gulf between Iran's rich and poor, among other things, provoked a rage that has flared in other parts of Tehran and engulfed Iran's provinces in violent protests. But here in Elahieh, it's hard to see signs of economic suffering and easy to spot the wealth fueling one of the most dynamic and underappreciated art markets in the world.

Contemporary Tehran offers many surprises for anyone expecting only the stern face the Islamic Republic projects to the world, and even to itself. As my plane landed at Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport, the stylish, carefree Iranian girls sitting in front of me suddenly folded their bright wings and crawled back into the shapeless cocoons they're required to wear in Iran. They wrapped themselves in loose outer coats—called *manto*—and hid their glossy black hair under hijabs. Then, laughing merrily, they all took selfies holding finger-guns to their heads. The Iranian morals police still drive around town in vans, looking for dress-code violations. The immodest are rebuked, and sometimes taken in for a lecture, but only if they get caught. Later I heard that some young Iranians had been using a mobile app that showed on a map if a morals van was prowling nearby. Couldn't the authorities have banned the app? Undoubtedly, but they hadn't. Iran is often a contradictory place.

At the top of the hill, above Elahieh, stands the 272-acre Saadabad palace complex, now a series of empty monuments to the pecking order before the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Qajar kings started building here not long after they moved Iran's capital to Tehran in 1796. (In its long history, Iran has had 40 or so different capitals.) Reza Shah, the strongman who supplanted the enfeebled Qajars in 1925, lived in what is known as the Green Palace on the Saadabad grounds and later built the White Palace nearby as a summer retreat. His son Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi spent summers in the White Palace with his glamorous wife, Farah Diba. It is now a museum. The cavernous state dining room in which the vainglorious shah entertained the American politicians who propped him up is preserved here, as is the grand salon where the shah and his wife watched TV on a boxy set—it's still there, surrounded by neatly arranged chairs—not far from where angry crowds at the bottom of the hill dismantled his hated regime. Outside the palace, a large bronze statue of Reza Shah has been cut off at the thighs and the trunkless legs left as a reminder: Ozymandias standing.

It's a short walk down to Elahieh, where a new pecking order pecks. *Elahieh* means *divine* in Farsi, and that's how it must have felt to the wealthy Tehranis who first built their cool garden villas here in the 1920s and '30s to flee the brutal summer heat of the city below. Some of those walled villas are still there, but many have been bulldozed. Cranes punctuate the skyline as the neighborhood makes room for luxury high-rises, designer boutiques, swanky restaurants, hipster cafes—and, of course, art galleries.

"There were maybe a handful of galleries when we opened in 1999. Now every day we hear of a new gallery opening. It's a very chaotic situation," says Maryam Majd, co-director of the Assar Art Gallery. The walls of these galleries are covered with new work by Iranian painters and photographers. Ten years ago, these young artists would probably have listened when their parents told them that studying law, engineering or medicine is the only way to make a decent living in Iran. But prices for contemporary Iranian art have gone through the roof since then (although the recent political unrest had a chilling effect on the market). Older masters like Charles Hossein Zenderoudi and Parviz Tanavoli and newer stars like Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Neshat have vaulted onto the world stage. They now show at galleries in Paris, New York, London and Berlin. Many of them spend most of their time outside Iran, but their success has trickled down, transforming Iran's art scene into a lively bazaar that outsiders rarely get to see. Not everybody can cash in, of course, but enough have to overcome the objections of the stodgiest parents.

"It's a golden time to be an artist here if you have talent and a little luck. The luckiest of them become richer than those doctors ever did," says Alireza Sami-Azar. Sami-Azar was present from the start, first as director of Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art, then as a consultant for Middle Eastern art auctions at Christie's in Dubai and now as head of Iran's first art auction house, Tehran Auction, which he founded in 2012.

Some say he was *the* creator of the boom, and they don't always intend it as a compliment. Christie's Dubai auction of April 2008, at which $20 million of art was sold, much of it Iranian, is often cited as the market's big bang. In May 2016, Tehran Auction recorded sales of $7.4 million, and that's mostly just within Iran, where Sami-Azar says prices for homegrown painters are now often higher than outside it. "I'm accused of creating this crass mumbo jumbo," says Sami-Azar, sounding as though he's happy to plead guilty as charged.

All of this is fairly new. After the revolution of 1979, the landscape of the visual arts—moviemaking aside—was a relative wasteland, and it stayed that way for a long time. But it's also something very old. Persia has a visual heritage going back millennia. The Achaemenids, who ruled over much of the ancient world, chiseled bas-reliefs onto the city walls of Persepolis, their desert capital. In the 17th century, the Safavids made Isfahan a jewel of Islamic art and architecture. Its graceful blue-tiled mosques and busy workshops for painted miniatures had no equal anywhere, a judgment any modern visitor will quickly accept.

The flowering of contemporary art in Iran is a trickier phenomenon to comprehend. Like many things in Iran, for every statement you can say about it, you can just as easily say the opposite. At times it appears that the country runs on a kind of elaborate, ritualized hypocrisy. For a foreign visitor, it can be difficult discerning truth from falsehood. And yet everywhere I went, I also encountered startling warmth and unfeigned generosity. However you judge it, Iran's cultural identity is being sketched out now on the gallery walls of Elahieh, just as it was once inscribed in the stones of Persepolis and the tiles of Isfahan.

In recent months, the truculent clatter of President Trump's anti-Iran rhetoric, his moves to kill Obama's nuclear deal and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to uphold the legality of the president's travel ban on Iranians, among others, have put many here in a jumpier mood. Art collectors within Iran have reined in their exuberance as they look toward an uncertain future. Ongoing financial sanctions are hobbling the trading and showing of Iranian art abroad, and they may become even tighter. "I'm really disappointed that I can't promote artists living in Iran because of sanctions," says Leila Varasteh, an Iranian curator and art dealer in Paris. "They're really stifling our voices."

After years of trying, Simindokht Dehghani finally got her AG Galerie accepted to the prestigious Association of International Photography show in New York City. This was just before Trump first proposed his travel ban. Furious, she canceled her trip. But Dehghani, who still sounds like someone from Southern California (where she went to college), points out that Iran's art boom is a homegrown phenomenon; the U.S. can't make or break it. "Only a handful of our galleries show internationally. In the long run, sanctions aren't going to hurt the art scene here. It's a great time to be active in the arts in Iran."

**KASHAN LIES ABOUT** three hours' drive south of Tehran on the road to Isfahan. The town is famous for its annual rose festival: Every May, the syrupy vapor of damask roses blankets the streets as they are rendered into rose water. In the 19th century, Kashan's prosperous merchants built many fine mansions here, but in subsequent years the merchants left for Tehran, and layers of dust gradually covered their abandoned homes.

Lately, Kashan has become very trendy, thanks in part to Shahnaz Nader, who studied interior design in the U.S. and then lived in Paris before returning to her native Tehran. Nine years ago, she was asked

**GARDEN STATE**
Top: Three women having lunch at Cafe Tehroon on Khosrow Alley, Tehran. Bottom: A tea garden and rose water shop in Kashan, a town south of Tehran famous for its annual rose festival.

**TURNING THE PAGE**
Top: A detail of a late-16th-century wall painting at Ali Qapu Palace, in Isfahan. Bottom: A visitor takes in an installation by Mahsa Alef at Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art.

**ROYAL SPLENDOR**
A reception hall in Golestan Palace, a complex of buildings in Tehran built mostly during the two-century reign of the Qajars. The figure is a dummy of Nasseredin Shah Qajar, king of Persia from 1848 to 1896.

"SANCTIONS AREN'T GOING TO HURT THE ART SCENE HERE. IT'S A GREAT TIME TO BE ACTIVE IN THE ARTS IN IRAN." –SIMINDOKHT DEHGHANI

to restore Kashan's old Manouchehri mansion and transform it into a boutique hotel. Nader bought a second house for herself, for $20,000. She spent 15 times as much making it into a hidden jewel of classic Persian splendor.

Nader's house is not easy to find. From the narrow streets, all the houses in Kashan look identical, with their mud walls baked the same cinnamon brown. Traditional Persian houses turn their best face inward. When I finally found Nader's front door, I entered and Nader invited me to sit on her cool portico between two inner courtyards, one with a low shallow pool bordered by harmonious rows of trees and flowers. The house seemed to generate its own breeze.

The word *paradise* comes from the Old Persian word for *garden*—*paradaiza*—and goes to the core of Persian life and art. Persia's carpets take their motifs from its gardens. Balanced structure is everything, and the feeling is not one of profusion but of peace. I saw several celebrated gardens as I traveled around, but only Nader's gave me a sense of how delightful it must be to inhabit one. "The experience of living in this house is just extraordinary—the sun on the architecture, the sound of the birds," says Nader, as she bustles back and forth from her green-tiled kitchen, bringing plates of melon and bowls of yogurt.

Nader says she knows of several Kashan mansions that have been bought up since she arrived. I stayed in one built by Ebrahim Khalil Khan in the 18th century; it has been turned into the Saraye Ameriha Boutique Hotel—a palatial property that sprawls over a labyrinth of seven interior courtyards, all of it invisible from the street.

Four of these old mansions now belong to the Belgian bad-boy neoconceptual artist Wim Delvoye (perhaps best known for tattooing pigs and for a provocative piece called *Cloaca*, an installation that turns food into feces). He bought these houses over the past five years as an all-in bet on the future of Iran and Iranian art. When the houses are finished, he told me, they will include studio and exhibition space for him and other artists from Iran and elsewhere. "I was looking around for an alternative to the West. I looked at China, I looked at the Philippines, and then all of a sudden, I thought, Iran! I mean, nobody likes this country. It's the axis of evil! That's thrilling. I was looking for something rough but with a great trending direction. I don't mind the problems.

"The artists in Iran are on a much better level than China's were when I went there in 2003," he adds. "The Chinese are too much into accommodating the Western buyer, which explains why so many of them are painting Mao with a fish on his head or playing cards with Greta Garbo. You don't have this in Iran. There are so many galleries, so many interesting artists, and they're not trying to please me too much. I'm not in a hurry—Iran doesn't have to be a wonderful country tomorrow. I'm just going to enjoy every step they take."

Back in Tehran, I had felt some of the optimism and pride Delvoye was talking about. I met a young collector named Bahador Adab at the Dastan +2 gallery on Fereshteh. We were both admiring a series of striking portraits by the young artist Farrokh Mahdavi. The subjects all had pink, fleshy faces from which piercing eyes shone as if a living soul were inside. Adab has bought a few of these

**SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**
Top: One of a series of paintings by amateur and professional artists displayed in Kashan during the monthlong festival of Muharram. Bottom: Artist Parviz Tanavoli among his work at his home in Tehran.

portraits since he moved back to Iran in 2015. Like many privileged Iranians, he had been studying abroad. "Despite all the challenges, I am convinced this is going to be one of the most interesting places on the planet within the next 10 years. I want to be part of it," Adab says.

Buying art was a similar leap of faith. "The first work I bought, my mother was dead against it," he says. It was a painting by Ali Akbar Sadeghi, who likes to run traditional Persian iconography through a surreal blender. Since then, Adab has accumulated some 80 works, and he says his mother has come around. Lately, Adab has started dreaming about making a small private museum, something in the northwest region since he's a Kurd and that's where most of Iran's Kurds live. "I really want to do something for Iran, even if people don't take you seriously at first," says Adab.

Many of Adab's early acquisitions came through a gallery called Dastan's Basement, just up Fereshteh from Dastan +2. Hormoz Hematian, who owns both galleries, opened it six years ago as a kind of minor league for emerging artists and new collectors. The work is uneven, but there's a lot of it, some of it very good and all of it priced to move.

"It's like an audition room. We did 40 shows last year, and if three get picked up, we're good," says Hematian, a young Tehrani who received a master's in civil engineering from the University of British Columbia, discovered he hated the field and then made a radical course correction. In 2015, Hematian opened Dastan +2 for promising artists from the Basement who were ready to move upstairs. His first space was in an elegant gray-brick building that used to house the Belgian Consulate. Art galleries in Tehran often pop up and disappear overnight. More than a few are started by the children of wealthy parents, who use them to speculate on rising prices, or often just for bragging rights on Fereshteh.

Dastan has managed to sink more solid roots here, but Hematian is under no illusions about what drives the market. The original Dastan +2 shared a building with a showroom for sleek designer furniture and a fancy landscape architect. Hematian somewhat sheepishly concedes that many of his customers came there for the luxury one-stop shopping, not connoisseurship. As far back as the Achaemenids, Persians enjoyed a reputation—among the ancient Greeks, anyway—for self-pampering.

"Bling tells a good part of the story," says Alireza Sami-Azar. "Many of the collectors are very young and very rich. They already own their Maseratis. They have houses in Tehran, Vancouver and Paris. What else can they buy? Their fathers collected carpets and antiquities. When they go to one another's houses, they ask themselves why they don't have what their friend has on his walls. But that kind of competition is good for the market and good for the artist."

None of this cheapens the work I saw in Hematian's gallery. He introduced me to a wonderful painter—given the explicitness of the work, I won't mention his name—who draws in a primitive, outsider style that suggests Henry Darger or Sigmar Polke. I tried to buy a charming drawing of water polo players, but the series had sold out fast. The painter showed me notebooks of his sketches, brimming with life, some exuberantly erotic. "No one will ever see these," says Hematian.

Like so much else here, the relationship between Iran's artists and the Islamic authorities who run the country rests on shifting sand. Outright nudity is clearly unthinkable, but much else falls under a fuzzy know-it-when-I-see-it standard that is difficult to second-guess. "Just imagine your grandmother—anything she would frown on probably wouldn't work," says Hematian. Mohsen Gallery strayed across the line when it exhibited a store mannequin whose plastic breasts were covered with mirrors. It proved to be a breast too far, and the gallery was forced to close for about 10 days. "I try to be courageous," says the gallery's owner, Ehsan Rasoulof, whose father is the influential banker Jalal Rasoulof. "If I don't let young people express themselves, what are we doing here?" A current exhibition features a series of androgynous portraits by Shirin Fathi in the stiff style of the 19th-century Qajars. "It's a kind of Cindy Sherman–esque take on the Qajar taste for young boys," says Rasoulof. Officially, homosexuality does not exist in Iran, but so far, bureaucratic feathers remain unruffled.

It's not that the pressure is unremitting. If anything, people say that the enforcement of censorship has diminished noticeably since the end of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's eight-year presidency in 2013. But the pressure is unpredictable and often bizarre, and that makes people—particularly sensitive artists—extremely skittish.

The photographer Newsha Tavakolian lives in Shahrak-e Gharb, an affluent Tehran neighborhood of high-rises on the hill. It's a short drive down the Chamran Expressway from my hotel, but it took forever to get there. (Tehran's relentless traffic rarely appears to trigger road rage. I never heard a horn honked in anger, and bottlenecks are negotiated with civility.) Tavakolian welcomed me in the spacious ground-floor apartment she uses as her studio. She has won numerous awards for her work, including photos that eloquently freeze a changing Iranian society as it hurtles ahead. Her striking portrait of a young Iranian girl holding the string of an unseen balloon appeared on the cover of *Time* in November 2015 as part of a photographic essay. That's when Tavakolian says her troubles began.

"They saw a conspiracy behind the image of the balloon—that it was meant to float off to America. It became a big drama that I'm trying to westernize Iranian youth, and the politicians took me hostage," Tavakolian told me. "This is something that could happen to anyone at any time." In Iran, *noofoozi* is the word for "infiltrator" of Western ideas. The regime sees noofoozis as fifth columnists, and given Iran's abiding rancor over its history of manipulation and exploitation at the hands of Western powers, the charge packs a considerable punch. Still, a balloon floating off to America? Really?

"They put a lot of effort into interpreting things that aren't necessarily there," the artist Farhad Moshiri told me.

**SOON AFTER I** arrived in Tehran, I heard that one of Iran's best-known artists had just had his passport seized for committing this kind of thought crime. Parviz Tanavoli first made his name as a sculptor back when the shah still ruled Iran (prerevolutionary artists are often referred to as "modern" as opposed to "contemporary"). He now lives mostly in Vancouver but returns periodically to an elegant house designed for him by Kamran Diba, Farah's cousin, who also designed (and briefly ran) Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art. Some years back, Ahmadinejad, an implacable foe of the cosmopolitan Tanavoli, had wanted to gut the house and establish a mosque in its place. Somehow, Tanavoli managed to hold him off.

I met Tanavoli in the garden of Diba's boxy modernist gem of sand-colored brick with dark-green trim. The small swimming pool was empty, and all around it were sculptures in the artist's signature shape, a calligraphic form that looks a little like a two-eyed alien bending over one curvy leg. It's called a *heech,* which is the Persian word for *nothing,* but with a Sufi mystical twist implying that nothing is everything.

Tanavoli does many other things—he was preparing for a forthcoming exhibit of lion sculptures when I met him—but the heech is his personal brand. He made the first one in 1965, and he's made thousands since, from massive heeches for museums to little jewelry heeches for Tehran's smart set, for whom they are de rigueur. "I am a heech-making factory, it pays for my whole living," says Tanavoli. "Everybody has to have a heech—rings, jewelry. What amazes me is that they still want them."

Tanavoli told me he had spent the morning with the authorities, trying to defend himself against vague charges to get his passport back. At the root of everything was the heech. "It's more serious than I thought," Tanavoli says, not looking remotely troubled. "They are telling me that my work creates anxiety, that I am telling people false things. How do you defend against that?"

Public sympathy was with him. A cartoon by a Tehrani satirist circulated on social media: Tanavoli is asking a uniformed gendarme, "What have I done?" and he responds with a bubble containing a heech—"Nothing!" A friend of Tanavoli's told me something else the following afternoon. "I know the woman who caused all these problems—somebody had made a legal claim against Tanavoli," she says. In her version, the government confiscated his passport pending the resolution of a commercial dispute, not for ideological reasons (Tanavoli later said the dispute was trumped up as an excuse). Whatever in fact transpired, within short order he got his passport back, and no more was heard about anxiety-provoking heeches.

**TO APPRECIATE** Iranian art at its most resplendent, you must travel to Isfahan. The Safavid Shah Abbas moved Iran's capital here from Qazvin, in 1598, to be more centrally located. Once here, he remade the entire city around a vast, new square over 500 feet wide and almost 2,000 feet long. Like a modern shopping mall, the Naqsh-e Jahan square (it means "image of the world") is anchored along each side by four *(Continued on page 180)*

**SKIRTING ISSUES**
Long hems add kick to a seasonal wardrobe. Saskia de Brauw in Loewe top, skirt and sneakers. Opposite: Adut Akech in Céline jacket, skirt, brooch and shoes.

# Perfect Pieces

A cool cast of characters showcases this season's singular style: From pleated petticoats to bold prints, there is no way to go wrong with these memorable looks.

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH OLINS**
**STYLING BY LUDIVINE POIBLANC**

**CARTOON PLANET**
Wear a whimsical wonder straight from the runway. Jing Wen in Comme des Garçons coat, jacket, dress, shoes and socks. Opposite: Kiki Willems in Prada coat, shirtdress and bag.

**WELL SUITED**
A dramatic heel heightens the mood. Versace jacket, top, skirt, leggings and belt and Rupert Sanderson shoes. Opposite: Calvin Klein 205W39NYC coat, dress and shoes.

**HIGH CONTRAST**
Emanate strength in black and white. Gucci jacket, shirt, tie and pants and Chloé boots. Opposite: Lily Nova in Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello top and pants.

**RIGHT ANGLES**
Big checks (and a bare midriff) make for cheeky chic. Adesuwa Aighewi in Burberry coat, top, pants and bag and Céline earrings and shoes. Opposite: J.W. Anderson dress.

**SHINE ON**
Head-to-toe leather or silk is a smooth move. Chanel coat, Gucci pants, Wing & Weft gloves and Céline shoes. Opposite: Léa Julian in Giorgio Armani jacket and pants and Ralph Lauren Collection shirt. Models, Saskia de Brauw at DNA Models, Adut Akech and Léa Julian at The Society Management, Kiki Willems and Lily Nova at IMG Models, Jing Wen at Women Management and Adesuwa Aighewi at Silent Models; hair, Tomo Jidai; makeup, Sally Branka; manicure, Eri Handa; set design, Kadu Lennox. For details see Sources, page 181.

# STEP BY STEP

At Maison Margiela, John Galliano—one of fashion's most virtuosic (and controversial) talents—is designing in the present tense.

BY ELISA LIPSKY-KARASZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAOLO ROVERSI

OPPOSITE AN orthopedics store and a scruffy bar in Paris's 11th arrondissement sits an old convent building, its facade saturated with decades of grime. Across a cobbled courtyard lined with old latrines, a few flights up a stone staircase, is a rambling room decorated with antique eccentricities—from a vintage model ship to an articulated mannequin—like an attic of curiosities pilfered from Miss Havisham's house. Into this room bounds a Brussels griffon, followed by a man wearing an odd assemblage of long trouser shorts, sneakers, a yellow T-shirt and a wool sweater slightly unraveling at the collar. "That's Gypsy," he announces. "She's a recovery dog. I never had a dog before—it was just very good for me to be responsible and to not always think about myself." He chuckles happily.

This is John Galliano, and he could not have chosen a more fitting place to hole up, if that is what he had intended to do. For the past three years, Galliano, 57, has been creative director at Maison Margiela, the fashion house founded in 1988 by avant-garde designer Martin Margiela, who elevated privacy to performance art: Only a few photographs of Margiela are known to exist, and he often veiled the faces of models in his runway presentations, or forwent humans altogether to show his clothes on stark clothes hangers. "Anonymity: A reaction against the ubiquitous star system, the desire to let the ideas do the talking," reads an official Margiela "glossary" from 2009. In 2004, Maison Margiela took over this 18th-century building, whitewashing the crumbling interiors in keeping with the designer's affinity for white, both for its cleansing properties and because it highlights imperfections. The space is just four miles but a world away from the primly perfect dove-gray hallways at the Avenue Montaigne headquarters of Dior, which Galliano helped build into a pulsing $1.1 billion empire—until he was fired days before the fall/winter 2012 show when a video of him drunkenly making anti-Semitic remarks at a Parisian bar became international news.

It would be easy to conceal oneself within Margiela's cloistered heritage, but Galliano has nothing to hide. He says he has been sober for nearly seven years—he attended rehab after losing his post—and in that time has tried to face his demons head-on.

"I said what I said. I didn't mean it," he says now. "And I continue to atone. Some people have forgiven me, and some people will never forgive me. But that's something that I have to take on board." He says he is also still grappling with legal issues stemming from the incident.

Before Galliano became a symbol of how the mighty can fall, he was a symbol of how the mighty had risen. Fashion, an industry that can sometimes seem as though it's busy proving that nothing exceeds like excess, portrayed him as the apotheosis of romantic genius. He was appointed at Dior in the late '90s, in an era when bold deal-makers like Dior's owner Bernard Arnault, the architect of luxury conglomerate LVMH, had discovered there was a fortune to be made by applying the go-go strategy of M&A to the antiquated luxury world. Galliano was the perfect creative partner, his Vesuvian imagination and virtuosic technical abilities unleashed by burgeoning budgets. He became the ultimate celebrity designer, paparazzi'd during nights out with supermodels like Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell, his long hair braided into plaits, his body buff and tanned. He delighted fashion editors with the imaginary tales behind his collections, told in a dizzying array of accents—jumping from the diction of a Shakespearean actor to "mockney" slang to his native Spanish to upper-crust French. He even supplanted his fabled predecessor, calling the line Christian Dior by John Galliano and taking runway bows as theatrical as his catwalk shows: dressed as a matador with pink stockings or a pompadoured astronaut or Napoleon. The French emperor, though, found Versailles too extravagant; not so Galliano, who staged Dior's fall/winter 2007 haute couture show there in celebration of Dior's 60th anniversary. Four years later, it was all gone: Galliano's gilded fantasia vanished in a cloud of ignominy.

"I'm not God. But I realize that now," says Galliano, who these days wears his dark hair pulled back by a simple black head wrap instead of the crown he once rakishly cocked for a photo shoot. "Whereas before I would self-will and self-will and self-will. When you are driven by perfection, you miss out on something beautiful that happens in between that is unfinished—that does have emotion that is relevant in this house," he says, referring to Margiela's appreciation for experimentation.

**HOUSE PROUD** When he was hired at Maison Margiela in 2014, Galliano says, the brand's "rawness and emotion appealed to me, because I was feeling raw and emotional."

When owner Renzo Rosso first approached Galliano in 2013 to take over Maison Margiela—the founder had officially retired in 2009—Galliano's response, he says, was " 'What?' I didn't get it at all." (The Italian fashion impresario knew the designer from having manufactured the children's line of Galliano's eponymous brand.) He turned down the offer several times, but the persistent Rosso slowly seduced Galliano by taking him cruising through the Greek islands and the French Riviera on his motorized yacht, the *Lady May*. "I just loved the idea of working with this guy, the most important designer in the world," says Rosso, who was unfazed by Galliano's controversial history.

In 2013, he convinced Galliano to visit the Margiela headquarters when it was empty one Saturday night in August, and the building on rue Saint Maur finally won Galliano over. Upon entering, "I felt good—the beautiful decay, the peeling paint," he says. "I had become so f—ing polished and so finished. Suddenly that rawness and emotion appealed to me, because I was feeling raw and emotional."

Galliano immediately set about reorganizing the fashion house into the strict pyramidic structure he had mastered at Dior: a high-flying couture collection that garners attention and sets the tone for the ready-to-wear collections, in turn informing the commercial collections, the bags, the shoes and even the beauty lines. "It's the only way I can work," he says. "I was really honest [with Rosso]. I need to express myself—the parfum that can then be diluted into the eau de parfum, the eau de toilette."

"John said to me, 'I am a couturier,' " says Rosso. "I am very happy with that. A designer can just do a collection, but a couturier can dream and invent something that doesn't exist."

**COUTURIER,** God, that sounds grand," says Galliano, laughing at himself. "I'm a dressmaker. There aren't many of us who can cut, make patterns, drape."

Galliano's extraordinary skills have been his solace and his redemption: Just three months after he left Dior, he was slated to make Kate Moss's wedding dress for her 2011 marriage to musician Jamie Hince. Without access to an atelier, he was left on his own to create the creamy confection, which featured a skirt of delicately embroidered feathers that appeared to have been dipped in gold sequins: "He sewed every sequin onto that dress himself," says Condé Nast artistic director Anna Wintour. "People don't make dresses the way that John does anymore."

While Maison Margiela has shown haute couture since 2012—an offshoot of Margiela's Artisanal project, through which recycled and vintage materials became one-off follies, such as leather sandals transformed into a lacy vest—it had become known primarily as an upscale contemporary line, serving reworked staples from the house repertoire. Galliano seized on the Artisanal idea, bringing gifted couture seamstresses to flesh out the Margiela atelier and installing longtime loyalists as his top deputies in the design studios. But how to apply Galliano's taste for fantastical fairy-tale gowns to Margiela's conceptualized versions of streetwise boots, sweaters and trench coats?

**FALLEN ANGEL** Maison Margiela Artisanal designed by John Galliano coat. Model, Irina Liss at Supreme Management; styling, Alexis Roche; hair, Odile Gilbert; makeup, Marie Duhart; manicure, Typhaine Kersual; set design, Jean-Hugues de Chatillon. For details see Sources, page 181.

While Margiela was known for purposefully awkward elements such as the jutting, padded shoulders on his jackets and dresses, or massively oversize coats, Galliano had made his name with a liquid-like bias-cut gown, in which a single piece of fabric is sliced against the grain so that it wraps languidly around the body like a second skin. It's dressmaking's triple axel, enough to confound its cutter—and ruin yards of fabric—if not done with precision. But an early meeting with Martin Margiela, during which the designer said, "Take what you will from the DNA of the house, protect yourself and make it your own," helped ease Galliano's anxieties about melding their sensibilities.

"It's exhilarating for me to be inspired by outerwear or a ski jacket. It's not always a fabulous '50s couture gown shot by Mr. [Irving] Penn," adds Galliano, who was surprised to discover he and the reclusive Margiela shared an interest in 17th-century French literature and 18th-century costume. They also employed similar techniques, particularly early in their careers: "Bricolage, recycling, inside out, upside down—that's kind of what you do when you are a young designer," he says. "You destroy, you construct, you reveal."

One of the ongoing motifs that emerged from this impulse is something Galliano calls *décortiqué*—the reduction of a garment to its inner skeleton, both a witty reference to Margiela heritage and a display of Galliano's technical wizardry. Along with other themes (which he has given such names as "unconscious glamour" and "dressing in haste"), it appears throughout his couture and ready-to-wear collections as well as Avant-Premiere, which entails broader offerings. (Prices range from $184 for a T-shirt to $8,585 for a coat.) He has even turned out the bias cut in stiff tweed.

Deconstruction has been a preoccupation for Galliano from the beginning: His first Dior dress, famously made for Princess Diana's attendance at the Met Ball after her divorce from Prince Charles in 1996, was a navy silk bias-cut slip, which Galliano constructed with an interior bustier to protect her royal modesty. But when Diana arrived at the gala to greet him and co-chair Liz Tilberis, "We were like, Oh, my God—she's torn out the corset," he remembers, leaving her décolletage scandalously exposed under the negligee-like lace straps, though the other guests—and, until now, Diana fashion historians—remained none the wiser about her last-minute alteration. "It was a reflection of how she was already feeling: liberated."

Although Galliano himself seems to feel freed by his new home away from the spotlight, he is determined to remain respectful of Margiela's legacy. He knows firsthand how sensitive it is to take on a living designer's house, having lost his own eponymous line, which he had founded in 1988 (91 percent-owned by LVMH, it is currently designed by Galliano's former right-hand, Bill Gaytten). "It was like losing one of your children," he says. "A lot of work had to be done to stop me from doing anything silly."

He pauses and looks away. "I was killing myself anyway—it was a slow death," he continues. "I didn't realize I was killing myself. I was completely in denial. You think you can deal with it and cope with it, and [you tell yourself] it's just the creative pressures, and every excuse. The insidious disease that creeps up and takes you over, and I was too weak."

"We all knew he was going through troubled times. And we tried to look after him," says milliner Stephen Jones, a longtime collaborator and friend, who points out that for years Galliano was designing 15 collections annually, a rare feat in the industry. "He dealt with it extremely well for a very long time, and it became a huge success. But he was very much in the eye of the storm of fashion."

The workload was notable to many. "He is such a perfectionist," says Wintour. "He had the inability to delegate or let go. The job was almost too mammoth—it was the volume of work, and he was so particular about everything."

"I was just afraid to say no to Mr. Arnault," Galliano now admits. "I thought it was a sign of weakness and that I would lose my contract. How dumb. You know, when work becomes more important than your health—the work came first at the risk of everything. Health, relationships, family—ruthless. That's how sick I was. And your world becomes the bottle, the drugs, the ups and the downs."

He has been able to forgive himself by re-examining his life: the move to England from Gibraltar at age 6, growing up as a closeted homosexual in a strict Catholic family in South London, bullied at school until he found his way to St. Martin's School of Art. "You see the little Juan Carlos Galliano-Guillen—what happened to him? That poor thing. And that's where you start to be able to handle it. Because you become this—whatever I became."

> "WHEN YOU ARE DRIVEN BY PERFECTION, YOU MISS OUT ON SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL."
>
> —JOHN GALLIANO

These days, he attends regular AA meetings and retreats four times a year to a wellness center in southern Spain following each fashion show. He's home every night, he says, at his Marais apartment with longtime partner Alexis Roche, and spends weekends at their country house in Auvergne with their two dogs, pacing his workload according to a concept he calls "step by step."

"Seriously, I just didn't get that before," he says. "Or living in the present—I didn't understand. It took a long time to get that life is this, now, what we are doing, not my head stuck up my own ass thinking about 2020." He also maintains a mostly macrobiotic diet, though his taste for cigarettes and coffee are unabated—as is his joyfully wicked laugh.

"Recovery is an amazing journey to go through—to be given a second chance at life, and to regenerate creatively," he says. "I'm happy to talk about it, because I think it's nice to hear that you don't lose it all—that you can't paint and you can't write and you can't sing, because it's not true. You can. It's actually more intense, the levels of creative highs. I guess it's because you are more aware of them as well. Because you are just so electric—all the good things that I love about this industry, the process—oh! It makes me jump out of bed in the morning."

His name is also being reintroduced to the annals of Dior, though since that fateful day the news broke he has never again spoken to Arnault or the then-president of the brand, Sidney Toledano ("My calls were not accepted," he says). Pieces from his 15-year tenure at Dior were included in the brand's sweeping exhibition staged at Paris's Musée des Arts Décoratifs last year, a moment that was more emotional for Galliano than he anticipated. "It's quite wonderful that they are letting [my designs] be viewed, because for a while they were locked away," he says. "It's really nice to see the old girls getting an airing."

**HIS SLOW-AND-STEADY** approach at Margiela is also taking hold: For this spring, the house launched a new bag, the Glam Slam, a pillow-like creation that was introduced alongside a travel-themed collection with the sly implication that it could be used in lieu of a neck cushion on long-haul flights. January marked his first men's show, and eventually he will tweak the look of the Margiela stores, of which there are 60 worldwide (the brand is also sold at retailers like Barneys, Saks, Nieman Marcus and Net-a-Porter/Yoox).

Rosso's strategy is not to pump the brand for profits. "It's a niche brand," he says, explaining he has already seen double-digit growth. "I want it to have product with real passion, not become the biggest brand in the world." He doesn't anticipate that it will more than double in size from its current position (about $160 million in revenue, versus the $5 billion in revenue for a mega-brand like Chanel). "It takes time for the old pyramid to filter through and for people to appreciate it," Galliano says. "The buyers want to know that you are serious—when they come to the showroom, they don't want to just hear 'Fab show'; they want to see what effect you've had."

In the meantime, he'll be in his drafty studio with "the kids," as he calls his design assistants, where they are doing fittings for the fall/winter 2018 couture show. He's been seeking inspiration from all sides, including from "Insta-glam" muses that he finds on social media, or his own experiences, such as throwing on a trench coat tied with a leather belt over a tracksuit to walk the dogs at midnight. "Is it music, is it a film, is it a painting? It's life—being a little bit more connected," he says. "It's the idea of proposing a new glamour, though I never want to be so arrogant to think I could arrive at it—that doesn't interest me. But the process does interest me and my team."

He watches his fit model stride across the room wearing the beginnings of a chinoiserie coat redone in a reflective material that creates a holographic, X-ray effect (inspired by a recent viewing of the *Blade Runner* remake—"Major!" he gasps in operatic tones). As she walks, the material gently floats, and he clucks approvingly. He nods and says quietly to himself, in time with her sashaying feet: "Step by step." ●

## HIDDEN FIGURES

*Continued from page 163*

monumental hubs: the Mosque of Sheikh Lotfollah for the shah and his family, the grand bazaar, the Ali Qapu Palace and, grandest of all, the Royal Mosque. The hallmarks of Persian aesthetics are all on view. The palace's second-story portico rises on rows of slender columns, giving it a delicate lightness that sets old Persia's buildings apart from the grandiloquent monuments of its Ottoman and Mughal neighbors. The gently swollen domes of the two mosques are wrapped in shimmering tiles crawling with intricate geometric patterns. When the sun sets over the square, they glow an otherworldly turquoise. As the old Persian saying has it, "Isfahan is half the world." It isn't much of an exaggeration after you've seen it.

In Shah Abbas's day, the arcades connecting the square's four hubs buzzed with artisans: Carpet weavers re-created Persia's famous gardens in silk and wool, calligraphers hunched over priceless manuscripts, metalworkers filigreed potbellied brass jugs with gold and silver, and painters shrank the great Persian epic poems down to tiny miniatures (despite the regime's Shiite piety, Safavid artists enjoyed unusual freedom to portray the human form). This was the high-water mark for Persian national art, and after the Safavids were booted off the world stage in 1736, nothing quite like it was seen in Iran again.

It remains a wellspring from which so many of the contemporary artists I met in Tehran still draw. The painter Farah Ossouli executes flawless Safavid miniatures, except her armored paladins often tote AK-47s and carry riot truncheons. The sculptor Sahand Hesamiyan fashions steel-ribbed interpretations of traditional Persian domes. "Everything Iranian, from eating to architecture, has made my personality," says Hesamiyan. "When I change mosques, houses, dishes, fabrics into sculpture, it has the whole background of Iran in it."

**THE ROAD FROM** Isfahan's bazaar to the galleries on Tehran's Fereshteh Street is a long and bumpy one. In 1794, the Qajar dynasty took over Iran. The Qajars are remembered today for sexual decadence and for selling off Iran's resources to bankroll their wild spending. Few Iranians have a good word to say about them. I visited the Qajars' Golestan Palace in Tehran and found it to be, on the whole, a gaudy, kitschy affair—made even kitschier by the Qajar taste for plastering their walls with elaborate mirror mosaics. It feels like living inside the world's biggest disco ball. My guide told me the story of how this came to be. On one of their frequent luxury shopping sprees to Europe, the Qajars fell in love with France's gilt-framed mirrors and bought boatloads of them to be shipped home. The mirrors were packed badly, and most shattered en route. The mosaics in the Golestan Palace, pieced together from the salvaged fragments, are the Qajars making lemonade out of lemons. Unfortunately, Iran developed a taste for lemonade. Mirror mosaics are everywhere.

By 1925, the military strongman Reza Khan had toppled the Qajars and proclaimed himself shah, ushering in the two-generation Pahlavi dynasty. The allies replaced Reza Shah with his more malleable son Shah Mohammad Reza at the outset of World War II. The young shah kept the oil taps open while spending the profits on a bulging, useless arsenal of American weaponry. His one nod to Persian identity was to cloak himself in the mantle of the bygone Achaemenids, which seems to be many Iranians' favorite dynasty.

That was an empire, stretching at its height from Libya to India. The ceremonial capital of Persepolis was designed as an exercise in awe: Dignitaries marched up the long steps and under columns topped with winged bulls and lions to deliver their tribute to a Darius or a Xerxes or an Artaxerxes. You can examine every detail of the ceremony in fine-lined bas-reliefs all along the walls: the tribute bearers leading sheep and cattle and carrying precious goblets and jewelry as gifts, the squadrons of troops from every part of the empire, each nation wearing its own strange and marvelous hat.

The Achaemenid dynasty ended abruptly in 330 B.C. when Alexander the Great cut through it like butter. After looting the treasures of Persepolis, he burned it. In 1971, the shah invited the West's beau monde for a party among the ruins to celebrate Persia's 2,500th anniversary. He meant to access Achaemenid glory but ended up evoking its transience instead. Eight years later, the Islamic Revolution swept him away. In an empty field, I noticed the bare frames of the air-conditioned tents the shah had erected for his party guests. They look like the discarded chassis of alien spaceships. My guide couldn't tell me why they were never removed.

During the years the shah was stockpiling American F-14s, his wife, Farah, was stockpiling Monets, Renoirs and Francis Bacons. In this she was advised by her cousin Kamran, who was also badgering the queen to fund a national museum of modern art. "I thought we should have a national collection," says Kamran Diba, who today lives and works mostly in Spain and France. "The Iranian art scene was primitive, and my idea was to give it prestige from a kind of 'Bilbao effect.' So I advised my cousin to buy abstract expressionists. She bought impressionists. I made the plans for the museum, and it opened in 1977, nine years after inception. It had a big impact on the art world in Iran. Suddenly, everybody got the idea that artists must have some value, since it's such a big building. We no longer had to feel inferior to the West."

Tehran's MoCA is a handsome building that showcases Diba's skill as an architect. Sunlight filters in through a graceful series of low turrets inspired by Iran's old wind-catching towers. (The towers, called *bâdgirs* and built many centuries ago, channel the wind outside to be cooled by reservoirs of water within.) Inside the museum, Diba designed a Guggenheimy ramp that spirals down around the central space. After TMoCA opened in 1977, Diba presided over a collection that had grown to several hundred works, estimated to be worth more than $3 billion today—Gauguin, Pollock, Rothko, van Gogh, Picasso and on and on.

Very few people outside Iran have seen these paintings. "When the revolution came, the museum was out of the picture," Diba says. "The only art they were interested in was the propaganda art of war martyrs." The Farah Diba collection, under the government's control, was stored in a vault and largely forgotten. It remains in that vault, still under lock and key, but slowly the paintings are coming back into view. Visitors can now apply for permission to enter the vault. (When I was there, I was told the only guy with the key was out of town. True? Who knows?)

I met TMoCA's previous director, Majid Mollanoroozi (he left his post last year), in his office at the museum. On the wall behind him hung a beautiful Cézanne-like painting of trees by Sohrab Sepehri, who is also one of Iran's best-loved poets. Mollanoroozi came in after the more moderate Hassan Rouhani took over the presidency from Ahmadinejad in 2013. Still, Mollanoroozi felt he must mediate between two groups of people who don't really get one another, and he seemed put-upon and tired when we spoke. "The job is a tricky one. There's just not good cooperation between artists and politicians. It's a major problem."

Mollanoroozi had assigned himself the mission of bringing modern Iranian art to the wider world's attention. To help make this happen, the treasure trove of Western art in the vault could serve as an excellent Trojan horse. "This is undeniably our strategy," he conceded. "Without the European works in the exhibit, nobody would pay attention—I confess that honestly."

From the bustle up on Fereshteh Street, it's clear that new Iranian art will find a way to emerge. The process isn't always pretty, and sometimes it feels as though there's more foam than coffee in the cappuccino. A respected art journalist at a local newspaper asked me if he was right in suspecting that auction prices could be manipulated. (I told him it had been known to happen in the West, and he seemed reassured.) Rumors abound: This one is laundering money, that one is channeling art profits to terrorist groups. Iran's mullahs have even jumped into the art trade to make a quick buck.

Hamid Reza Pejman is an amiable young man with a bodybuilder's physique who made a fortune in his family's pipe-laying business. He is also one of Iran's most committed art collectors. His foundation sponsored an archival museum show in Iran at TMoCA, a collection of U.S. and Soviet cartoons and postcards that formed the visual culture of Iranian children before the revolution. He's engaged Diba to design a museum for his foundation's huge collection in the mountains north of Tehran. "Everybody asks about what I'm doing, and no one understands it," says Pejman. "Am I laundering money? Look, if I wanted to launder money, I wouldn't need to create an art foundation."

Despite the backbiting and political meddling, nearly everyone I spoke to in Iran accepts chaos as the price of progress. They also believe that, come what may, a better future is pretty much unstoppable. "The kids—they don't give a damn if they live in the Islamic Republic. It's a fact of life—deal with it," says Hematian of the Dastan galleries. "We're not reaching out to the government to help us. We're not reaching out to the West to help us. What's happening now—we're making this for ourselves." •

## COVER
Azzedine Alaïa bodysuit, $840, net-a-porter.com, Brandon Maxwell pants, $995, Bergdorf Goodman, 754 Fifth Avenue, New York, Deborah Drattell belt, $298, upon request, deborah@deborahdrattell.com, Belperron belt buckle, price upon request, Belperron, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, David Webb earrings, $55,000, David Webb, 942 Madison Avenue, New York

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WSJ. MAGAZINE

# MEN'S SPRING STYLE

ON SALE MARCH 10, 2018

STILL LIFE

# CATHERINE OPIE

## The renowned photographer shares a few of her favorite things.

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY CATHERINE OPIE**

**"THE LEFT-MOST SCULPTURE** on the mantel was made by the artist Mary Brogger. She's very interested in transforming objects. She inserted purple dye in the middle of this candleholder, and it slowly seeped into the plaster over three years. I got the 'sinking' ship in a bottle from a thrift shop in Sandusky, Ohio, where I grew up. I thought, How odd to see a sinking ship instead of the ship in the bottle as a perfectly enclosed thing. Next to that are baskets my wife and I made in a class in Yosemite. In a way I feel the baskets represent our personalities and our relationship: I'm short and overweight and quirky, while Julie [Burleigh] is tall and slender and super cool. The photo was taken during our first family road trip to Big Sur, California. Julie is blowing bubbles for our son, Oliver—it's one of my favorite pictures of the two of them. Beside it is a ceramic vessel that my friend Roger Herman made, with a primitively drawn sex scene on it. The painting above has been in my family for a very long time. I like how the dogs are barking at something they don't see. Dogs in paintings often aren't active, but this painting has a photographic quality—it's off frame, and the dogs are in action. On the floor is a sculpture of a pie sandal my son made when he was 11. I think it's just a fantastic object and really well executed. The craft box is from O-P Craft, our family company in Ohio, which sold blank basswood boxes for people to decoupage. Now it holds pieces from my dad's political campaign collection. On top is a commemorative ribbon from when Abraham Lincoln died. My dad had the largest political campaign collection in the country, most of which is housed in the Smithsonian now. Understanding politics is a lot of how we make sense of history, and he had a lot of influence on the way I thought about things. My work now is very embedded in ideas of representation, especially in terms of identity and creating history." *—As told to Sara Morosi*

# MAKE BREAKFAST HAPPEN SO KIDS CAN BE HUNGRY FOR MORE

Photo By: Peggy Sirota

I was one of our nation's hungry kids growing up. Today, 1 in 5 children in America struggle with hunger. But when they get breakfast, their days are bigger and brighter. Learning, attention, memory and mood improve. Together, we have the power to get breakfast to kids in your neighborhood — let's make it happen. Go to hungeris.org and lend your time or your voice.

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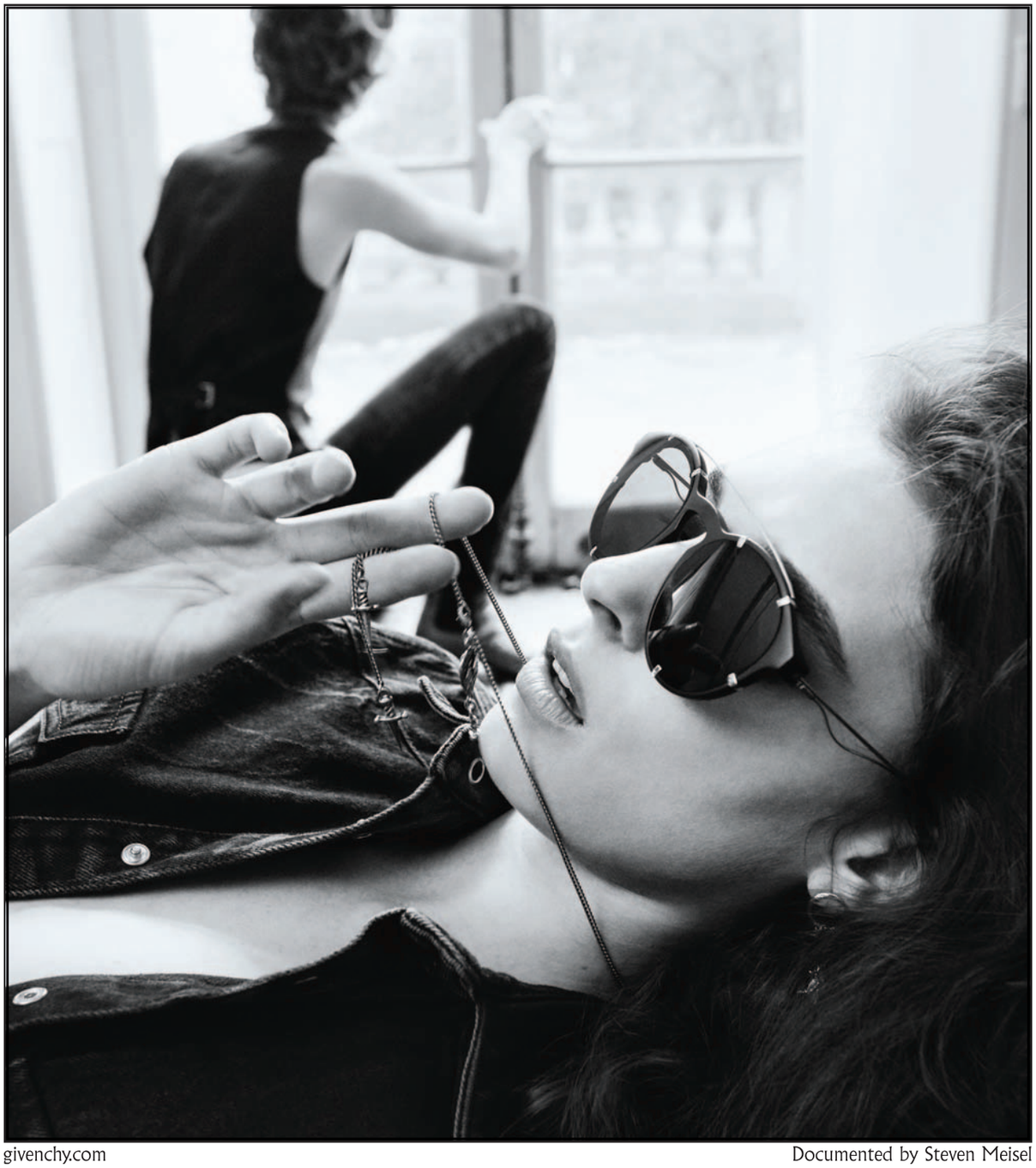

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Documented by Steven Meisel

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