

JUNE/JULY 2017 / EUROPE

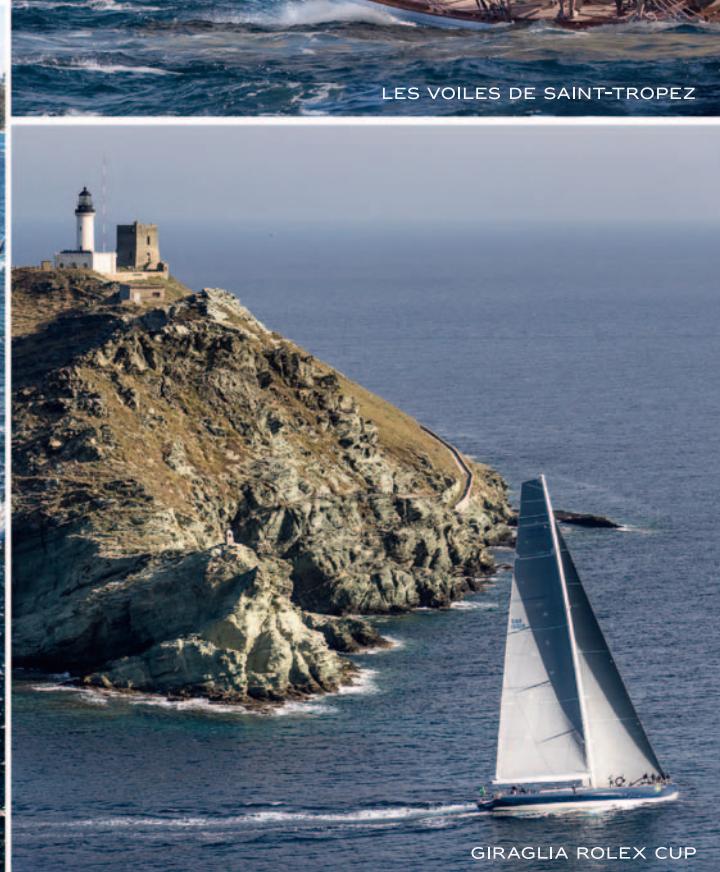
WSJ.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAGAZINE



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JUNE/JULY 2017



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THIS PAGE Arundhati Roy, photographed by Bharat Sikka.

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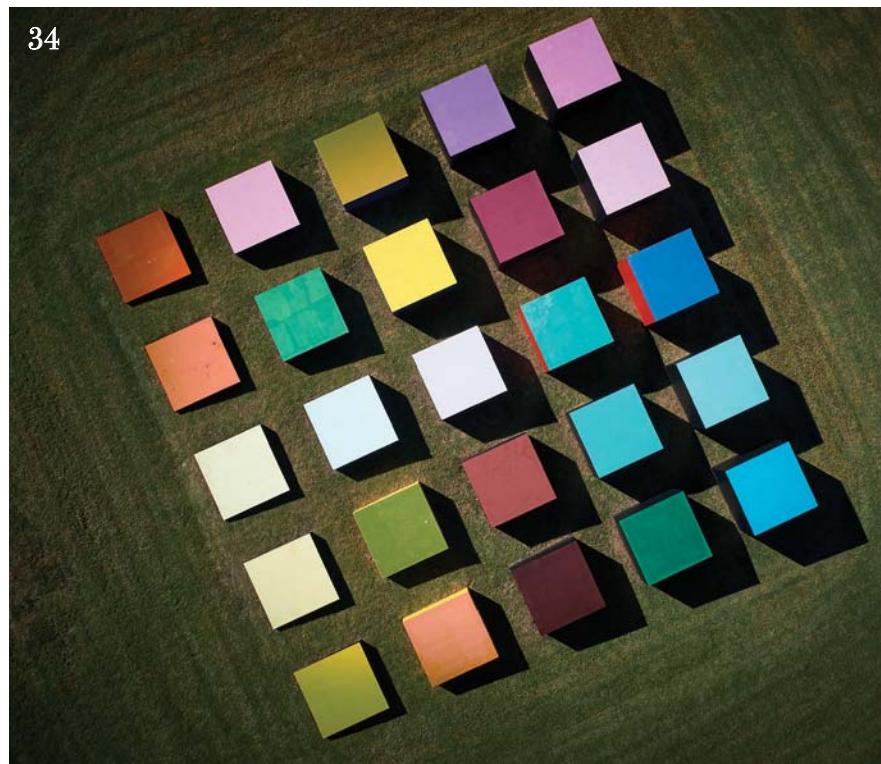
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"MY TASTE IS
MY TASTE....
I DON'T KNOW
HOW ELSE
TO DO IT."

—ALEXA CHUNG



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SUMMER ESCAPES ISSUE.

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With her new movie, *The Beguiled*, the acclaimed director is as committed as ever to her rigorously atmospheric filmmaking.

By Jason Gay

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How does a vast landscape shape an artist's creativity? Alan Gibbs found out by building one of the world's largest contemporary art parks.

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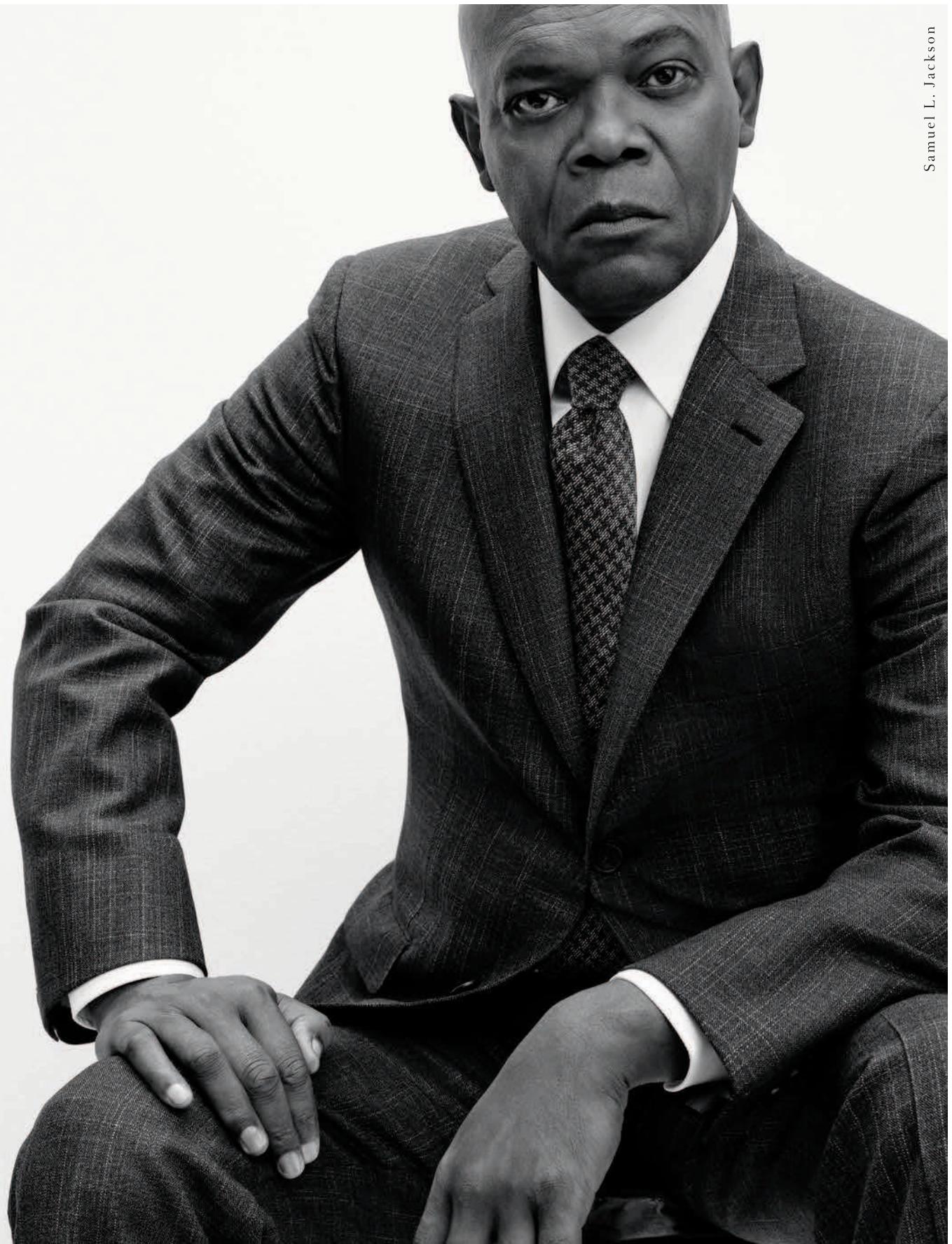
Each bespoke piece to emerge from the Louis Vuitton atelier is the result of a complex process, largely unchanged since the 19th century.

By Alice Cavanagh

Photography by James Mollison

Clockwise from top left: Alexa Chung, photographed by Angelo Pennetta. Alexa Chung sweater and her own ring. For details see Sources, page 58. A Louis Vuitton craftsman creating a Malle Fleurs trunk, photographed by James Mollison. Leon van den Eijkel's *Red Cloud Confrontation in Landscape* (1996), at Gibbs Farm in New Zealand, photographed by Adrian Gaut.

Samuel L. Jackson



TAILORING LEGENDS SINCE 1945

Brioni
ROMA

HANDMADE TALES

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEJANDRO CARDENAS



LIFT THE LID Anubis and Bast, wearing Louis Vuitton, discover Who in one of the house's bespoke trunks at its atelier in Asnières-sur-Seine, just outside Paris.

OUR JUNE/JULY ISSUE celebrates creative talents whose works range in scale from the minuscule to the gigantic. Whether the medium is a hand-stitched jewel box or an undulating stretch of New Zealand countryside, the artistry shows an exacting vision and mastery of scale.

Cover star Sofia Coppola, whose first major role came when she was a teenager in her father Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather III*, has become one of America's premier directors. Her gorgeous, atmospheric films, such as *The Virgin Suicides* and *Lost in Translation* (whose screenplay earned her an Oscar), display a rapturous attention to detail. As her new movie, *The Beguiled*, hits theaters, our profile explores a personal side of Coppola's creativity—including

the influence of her mother, Eleanor, whose feature screenwriting and directorial debut, *Paris Can Wait*, was released in May.

In this issue we also travel to the French commune of Asnières-sur-Seine, home of the historic Louis Vuitton atelier, at which custom trunks—as well as the company's leather goods and handbags—are all handmade. Over the years, LV's skilled artisans have created everything from wardrobe cases for Napoleon III's wife to a guitar case for Keith Richards. What never changes is the house's remarkable precision of craft, requiring years of training and passed on from generation to generation.

Last, we visit art collector and businessman Alan Gibbs in New Zealand at his 1,200-acre property

populated by titanic outdoor sculptures from the likes of Richard Serra, Maya Lin and Anish Kapoor. Gibbs originally acquired the land for personal use but in time realized its potential as a setting for art of breathtaking dimensions, as Adrian Gaut's arresting photography (and accompanying video on wsj.com) reveals. Gibbs, inviting artists from all over the world to create new pieces against the raw landscape, encouraged them to think big, and they obliged. Proving that while the artist often shapes the canvas, sometimes the canvas shapes the artist.

Kristina O'Neill
k.oneill@wsj.com
© @kristina_oneill

N

Harmony Maker

Puglia, Italy



LA SCALA SOFA – DESIGN CLAUDIO BELLINI / VIAGGIO ARMCHAIR – DESIGN NATUZZI
SVEVO COFFEE TABLE – DESIGN MANZONI & TAPINASSI / MARCUS RUG
PLISSÉ BOOKCASE – DESIGN VICTOR VASILEV / RE-VIVE RECLINER – DESIGN NATUZZI
ONDA LAMP – DESIGN NATUZZI / LEYRA ARMCHAIR – DESIGN CLAUDIO BELLINI
GINGER SIDE TABLE – DESIGN PAOLA NAVONE / LISA DINING CHAIR – DESIGN VICTOR VASILEV
LEGGERO DINING TABLE – DESIGN VICTOR VASILEV

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WHAT'S NEWS.



DRESS CODE
Alexa Chung at
F Cooke Traditional
Pie and Mash in
London, wearing a
jersey frill-trim dress
from her new fashion
brand, Alexachung,
and her own rings.

CREATIVE BRIEF

ALL ABOUT ALEXA

With her new clothing label, fashion-world star Alexa Chung is bringing her trendsetting personal style to the world.

BY ZOË WOLFF PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGELO PENNETTA

RICHARD MILLE



CALIBER RM 07-01

AS A FRONT-ROW REGULAR, brand consultant, art director, TV presenter and U.K. *Vogue* contributor, British model Alexa Chung embodies the 21st-century multihyphenate "It Girl." Overused though the term may be, she literally wrote the book on the topic, her 2013 autobiography titled *It*. In the pantheon of fashion celebrities, few can inspire women to buy clothes based on their personal style like Chung can. Her 2.7 million Instagram followers hang on her every outfit, whether it's geek chic or glamorous. On a recent



FRESH LOOK
Chung in a striped lambswool sweater and jeans from her new label, and her own rings. For details see Sources, page 58.

"I JUST MADE THINGS THAT I WAS MISSING OR THAT INTERESTED ME."

—ALEXA CHUNG

spring day, she was standing outside London's Hotel Café Royal wearing a vintage horse-motif sweater, beat-up AG jeans and leopard-print Pierre Hardy ankle boots, exhibiting her typical just-tossed-this-together flair. It's this much-copied dress code that Chung, 33, is channeling for her new label, Alexachung, with a venerable list of retailers—including Opening Ceremony, Selfridges and The Webster—and an e-commerce site (alexachung.com).

The 150-piece debut collection of ready-to-wear, shoes and accessories is very Chung, which is to say tomboyish yet flirty, retro yet of-the-moment, collegiate yet rock 'n' roll. She grew up in a family of four children in the Hampshire countryside, where her wardrobe extended to school uniforms, Barbour jackets, navy "jumpers" and Chelsea boots—still part of her repertoire. "My taste is

my taste," she says. "I just made things that I was missing or that interested me. I don't know how else to do it." Some pieces are situational, like a tiered floral frock that came about because she had seven weddings to attend last year, while others are highly referential, such as a Brian Jones-inspired double-breasted suit in pink-and-burgundy-striped viscose. "It sounds really boring," Chung says, "but I want [my line] to be reliable." The well-cut denim staples bear that out, as does a classic trench coat that she says her mother, Gillian, will wear. But there are plenty of far-from-boring items, too, from a vinyl pinafore minidress to slogan T-shirts with phrases like "Double Trouble."

As much as her fashion sense, Chung's attitude has proved to be pixie dust for the brands that have made her their ambassador, collaborator or campaign star. She has been the face of Longchamp, Lacoste, Eyeko and Superga; both Aquazzura and Tabitha Simmons have named shoes after her. Mulberry saw a 79 percent increase in earnings in 2010, the year the British label launched its Alexa bag. Her two collaborations for Madewell sold out rapidly, and she's created highly popular denim editions for California-based AG Jeans, which has retained her as a feature model through fall 2017. Her 2016 Archive by Alexa vintage collection for U.K. chain Marks & Spencer generated a 25,000-person waiting list.

Such bankability helped seal the deal with one of Alexachung's principal investors, financier Peter Dubens, who contributed personally and through his venture capital fund Pembroke VCT. It was British model Laura Bailey, a friend of Chung's, who introduced them, in 2015. A year after their first meeting, Chung says, Dubens emailed her, "Are we doing this or what?" Chung had thought about starting her own line, and she decided it was the right time. Dubens "seemed really fun and wasn't like the type of moneymen I'd met before," she says.

Chung now works full-time at the brand's London studio alongside three ready-to-wear designers, freelance pattern cutters and specialists for knitwear and shoes. In terms of production, the line is a global affair, extending to Italy, Scotland, Romania, Portugal and India. Alexachung follows the see-now-buy-now model, with the first pieces available the day after the May 30 presentation. With four seasonal outputs a year and prices ranging from \$100 to \$1,600, the brand is positioning itself alongside the likes of Étoile Isabel Marant and See by Chloé.

Chung says she's learning on the job, fielding business wisdom from her managing director, Edwin Bodson, formerly of Haider Ackermann, and taking pointers from her fit model Shauna, who reminds her to add details like pockets. "Alexa told me, 'Don't expect me to wear something if I don't like it,'" says Bodson. "My goal is to make sure that every piece conforms to her vision." While Chung doesn't have a stylist, she seeks plentiful advice from her coterie of friends, such as musician pal Thomas Cohen, who provides vintage research and general inspiration. She's also enlisted the talents of Scottish designer and illustrator Charles Jeffrey, whose sketch of a Santa-like man smoking a pipe appears on a chinoiserie-style dress, and her father, Phillip, a retired graphic designer who contributed his '60s-era illustration of George Harrison for a sweatshirt. "I haven't really listened to other people's things ever, so I don't want to have to be shackled to a format that doesn't suit this," she says. "I want it to have a life of its own."



LEADING LIGHTS

For its Holocene series, Swedish lighting brand Wästberg tapped a trio of venerable British talents to design fixtures that function without electricity—a meditation on the geologic period referenced in the collection's name.

wastberg.com.



Jasper Morrison

Heavy and stable, Morrison's gumdrop-shaped candlestick is made of solid brass. \$137



Ilse Crawford

With its curved base, Crawford's circular brass oil lamp rocks gently without tipping. \$170



David Chipperfield

Chipperfield's brass lamp has removable panels that add a reflective, architectural element. \$170



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STUDY IN DESIGN FASHION HOUSE

"I knew his work would translate strongly into interiors," says the Rug Company co-founder

Christopher Sharp of his latest collaborator, fashion designer Thom Browne. Indeed, Browne's hallmarks—tailoring, texture and a penchant for the color gray—are on full display in his new

Rug Company line.

"I wanted the result to be true to what I do in my own collections," Browne says. Case in point: The Cable Knit rug, which comes in white or gray and is hand-carved in Nepal from Tibetan wool, is the decorative answer to the designer's signature cozy sweaters. For details see Sources, page 58.

—Christine Whitney



FLOOR SHOW
Clockwise from top: The white Cable Knit rug from Thom Browne's new line for the Rug Company; one of the designer's sweaters; a craftsman in Nepal hand-carving a rug; a look from Browne's fall-winter 2017 collection.



GOING PUBLIC

WITH LOW RATES, CO-WORKING SPACES, A FOOD MARKET AND A THEATER, IAN SCHRAGER'S LATEST HOTEL AIMS TO BE A NEW YORK DESTINATION OF ITS OWN.

IN THE 1970S, as co-founder of the legendary club Studio 54, Ian Schrager redefined nightlife, and in the '80s, as co-creator of the boutique hotel concept (first with Morgans, then with The Royalton), he revolutionized the hospitality industry. Now, at 70, Schrager is shaking things up once again, with Public, a hotel designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Herzog & de Meuron and located on New York's Lower East Side. "Airbnb is coming for our families," Schrager says of the hotel business, "and the only way to compete is to offer something that's a unique experience, very social and communal."

To wit, Public features an open-to-all second floor, with co-working spaces, conference rooms and a bar; a basement performance space, theater and night-club, with programming by Matt Kriegman and Carlos Quirarte, owners of downtown cafe The Smile, and hotel expert Ben Pundole; plus a first-floor restaurant (dedicated to New York cuisines) and a grab-and-go healthy food marketplace, both by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten. The look of the place is what Schrager calls "refined gritty" or "tough luxe"—plywood and concrete meet Molteni woodwork and fine marble.

In keeping with Schrager's "luxury for all" rallying cry, the 370 guest rooms start at just \$150. It's a price made possible by ditching old-school staples like a front desk, bellboys and room service in favor of electronic device-enabled check-in and food pickup, and a team of uniformed "Public advisers," whom Schrager compares to Apple's Genius Bar employees. "They'll do whatever it takes to make the guests feel comfortable, without being obsequious," he says. "They're our secret weapon." publichotels.com. —Mark Yarm

NEW WAVE

The latest pool of swimwear designers is inspired by a sense of place, from the preppy coast of Massachusetts to the lush gardens of Rio de Janeiro, offering smartly tailored shorts in bold prints and bright colors.

For details see Sources, page 58.





THE ETERNAL MOVEMENT

Ulysse Nardin, from the movement of the sea to the perpetual innovation of Haute Horlogerie. For over 170 years, the powerful movement of the ocean has inspired Ulysse Nardin in its singular quest: to push back the limits of mechanical watchmaking, time and time again.

ULYSSE NARDIN
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ulysse-nardin.com

THE EXCHANGE.



TRACKED

ANDERS BYRIEL

The CEO of textile brand Kvadrat is leading the way in design.

BY NATALIA RACHLIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA WYNER

IT'S A WARM APRIL DAY during the annual Salone del Mobile furniture fair in Milan, and everything seems to be covered in Kvadrat. So ubiquitous are the Danish textile manufacturer's fabrics throughout this expo of all things new and noteworthy in the design world that the city itself feels like one big Kvadrat showroom—be it at Moroso, which features a David Adjaye-designed settee sheathed in one of the brand's black velours, or at Cassina, where a Konstantin Grcic sofa is clad in a minty Kvadrat mélange, among many other pieces. "We are reaching the end of the possibility to grow this side of the business," says CEO Anders Byriel, 52. This turns out to be a typically Scandinavian, modest way of admitting that the company has essentially saturated the European market as the pre-eminent supplier of high-end textiles to the world's foremost design brands. Many major architecture firms, like those of Renzo Piano, Bjarke Ingels and Frank Gehry, are also loyal clients.

Headquartered in the small port town of Ebeltoft, on the east coast of Denmark's Jutland peninsula, Kvadrat was co-founded by Byriel's father in 1968. Since becoming CEO in 1998, at the age of 33, the younger Byriel has expanded the company from a \$20 million to a \$200 million business. Under his stewardship it has evolved from a very solid but rather one-track Scandinavian enterprise into an international powerhouse whose reach goes far beyond fabric. Kvadrat has supported more than 30 shows by contemporary artists such as Olafur Eliasson, Pipilotti Rist and Thomas Demand. The brand also recently announced a three-year partnership with the New Museum in New York to help emerging artists realize new work. And while upholstery isn't typically synonymous with cultural clout or cool factor, Byriel has managed to imbue Kvadrat with both, thanks in part to collaborations with some of today's most prominent creative talents, including the Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons, who debuted his fourth collection for the brand in March.

Next on Byriel's checklist is broadening Kvadrat's industrial appeal. A contract with Jaguar Land Rover, supplying an interior textile option for its new Range Rover Velar model (which hits roads late this summer), and the addition of another client, the mass-market Japanese retailer Muji, will inevitably open the door to more consumer-facing products. And there are major developments closer to home: Kvadrat's newly refurbished HQ—a complete overhaul of its existing offices by the London-based studio Sevil Peach—will be finished in June. Reconfigured to encourage creativity, conversation and collaboration among employees, the space will be a showcase of the company's fabrics and philosophies.

"Our textiles deliver aesthetics and performance, because they have to look good even 10 years down the line," says Byriel. As Kvadrat has become an integral part of the design and architecture sectors, an influential collaborator in the arts and an enduring success story, Byriel could be referring to both the product and his company when he says: "It has to be beautiful, and it has to work." >

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2,485 miles

The total length of Kvadrat fabric sold every year.

\$573

The retail price, per yard, of the brand's most expensive textile, Argo, a mohair from the Raf Simons collaboration.

20 years

The amount of time Byriel has upheld a family tradition of preparing homemade pizza on Friday nights.

1,800,000

The number of sheep sheared per year to supply just one of the company's production facilities, in Yorkshire, England.

3,000 architectural projects

The number Kvadrat completes annually. Past projects include the Oslo Opera House and Microsoft's Amsterdam office.

18-25 miles

The distance Byriel, a regular marathoner, runs every week.

130

The number that identifies the best-selling color of Kvadrat's first-ever textile, Hallingdal.

200 days

The amount of time Byriel spends traveling each year, mostly for work.

25 subsidiaries

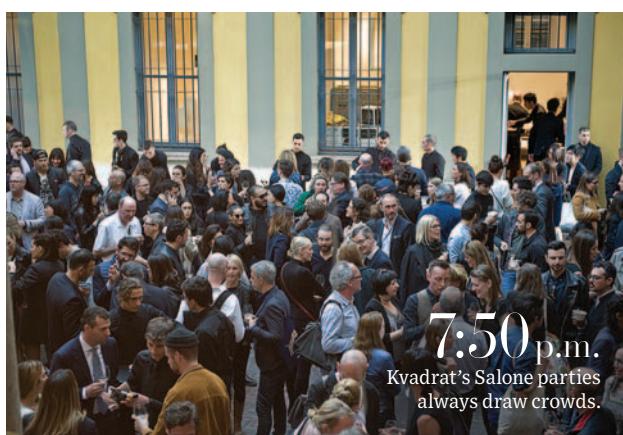
The companies in Kvadrat's portfolio, including Really, a sustainability start-up. •



A meeting with designer Erwan Bouroullec to run through his and his brother Ronan's plans for Kvadrat's new Copenhagen showroom, which is due to open in November.



Byriel speaks on a panel with Land Rover's chief designer for color and materials, Amy Frascella (right).



WSJ.noted | EVENTS

PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS WORTH NOTING

SALONE DEL MOBILE

MILAN | 4.5.17

WSJ. Magazine decamped to Milan to celebrate the April Style & Design issue during the annual Salone del Mobile design and furniture fair. Hosted by Editor in Chief Kristina O'Neill and VP/Publisher Anthony Cennane, the fête drew a crowd that complemented the issue as design world stars mingled with fashion luminaries at the newest outpost of Dry Milano.

DANELE VENTURELLI / GETTY IMAGES



Sabina Belli



Yannick Angeloz-Nicoud,
Verde Visconti



Doriana Fuksas



Mike Flattery



Angela Missoni,
Anthony Cennane



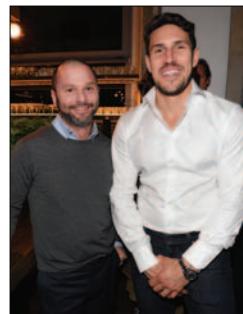
Coco Brandolini



Diego Della Valle



Faye Toogood



Billy Cotton, Charlie Ferrer



Marco Pirone,
Stefano Caputo



Isse Crawford



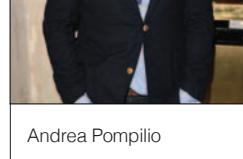
Kerry Olsen,
Federico Marchetti



Margherita Maccapani Missoni



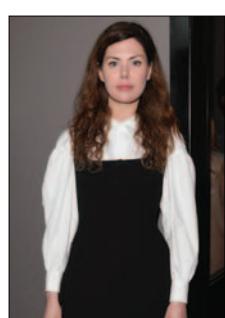
Giulia Molteni, Nicolo Bertolini



Andrea Pompilio



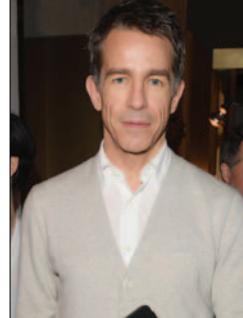
Robert McKinley,
Kate Nauta



Sara Battaglia



Britt Moran



Simon Holloway



Giorgio Guidotti



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ON THE BLOCK

THE HANDS OF TIME



Paul Newman's own Rolex Cosmograph Daytona has long been one of the world's most sought-after watches. The discovery of his timepiece, which will be sold at auction this fall, is as legendary as its original owner.

BY MICHAEL CLERIZO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HENRY LEUTWYLER

ON A LATE SUMMER'S day in 1978, 13-year-old James Cox and his father, Ed, drove 90 miles from their home in Larchmont, New York, to the Lime Rock Park racetrack in rural Connecticut.

With his range-finder camera, a recent gift from his father, James sliced through the crowds, carefully avoiding officials and snapping photos of cars barreling around the track and drivers prowling the pits. He spotted a driver in a blue racing suit, sweat-drenched but relaxed in a roped-off area. Earlier, James had heard the track announcer welcome the team of actor and race-car driver Paul Newman. James realized the man in the blue suit was Newman and edged closer, hoping for a good shot. Newman looked directly at James, winked and waved for him to slip under the rope to take his photo. James did just that. Back in Larchmont, the photograph of Newman adorned the refrigerator—but eventually was lost.

Five years later, James arrived at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. After unpacking, he wandered outside, where a speeding tan Nissan Stanza pulled onto his dorm's gravel driveway. The driver hit the hand brake and spun the car to a stop.

A girl sporting spiky blond hair, tight jeans and a plaid shirt and carrying a six-pack of St. Pauli Girl beer stepped out of the car. "She gave me a what-are-you-looking-at-kid glance—and I immediately liked her," says James, now 52, on a recent call from his home in Santa Cruz, California. The blonde, who lived on the same floor in the dorm, went by Nell Potts. "I remember doing my best to try and charm her over the next couple of days," he says.

Nell and James soon became a couple. At a dinner with other students, Nell brought a bottle of Newman's Own salad dressing, one of the products Paul Newman sold through his company Newman's Own, giving all the profits to charity. Seeing the bottle, James said: "I met Paul Newman when I was a kid at a racetrack. He was a really nice guy." As James told his Lime Rock story, everyone else chuckled. Then James learned the truth about his new girlfriend: Nell Potts, as the others already knew, was really Nell Newman, the oldest daughter of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward.

"James was the last person to find out [about my parents], and that's why he survived," says Nell, 58, who is now based in Santa Cruz as well. "But that was good—it meant he didn't have a clue, and that's why we became so close."

During vacations James stayed at the Newmans' home in Westport, Connecticut. In the summer of 1984, he offered to repair the family's treehouse, where Nell and her siblings had played, her mother meditated and her parents read film scripts.

"One of the days at the treehouse, Paul asked me what time it was, to set his watch. I replied, 'I don't know—I don't have a watch.' He was clearly surprised. So he said, 'Here, here's a watch. If you wind it, it tells pretty good time.'" Newman handed James his Rolex Cosmograph Daytona. "At that time, I knew Rolex was an amazing brand, but I had no idea how significant the watch was," James says.

Newman had received the watch as a gift from his wife, who likely purchased it at Tiffany's for about \$300 in the late '60s, around the start of her husband's racing career. The Daytona, as it's commonly called, is a chronograph—a timepiece with a stopwatch function, a useful feature for a race-car driver. "Dad's biggest interest was whether or not he could time laps on it when the cars were running," Nell recalls.

Rolex introduced that particular model—a Reference 6239—in 1963 and stopped production in the early '70s. Approximately 14,000 were produced. On Newman's watch, along with an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 others, the most distinguishing feature is a black, white and red "Exotic" dial. (The Daytona mod-

Over the years, James wore the watch that Newman gave him nearly every day without a second thought—until he attended a trade show for TerraPax in the mid-'90s. "A man who didn't speak much English tapped me on the shoulder and said: 'Paul Newman watch, Paul Newman watch.' I thought, What the heck? How does this guy know I've got Paul Newman's watch? He obviously was a watch enthusiast and saw that I had the Daytona model. That kind of clued me in, so I did a little research."

James discovered that collectors, influenced by images of Newman wearing his watch, had renamed models with Exotic dials Paul Newman Daytonas. By the early '90s, a 6239 Paul Newman Daytona garnered about \$10,000 at auction. In May 2016, the auction price for a later reference hit \$2 million.

Unaware of the new price peak but wanting to do something for the Nell Newman Foundation—the charitable organization that Nell started in 2010, two years after her father died of lung cancer at 83—James (the foundation's treasurer) approached Jeff Walsworth, a lawyer based in Irvine, California, for advice about possibly selling the watch. Walsworth

contacted Tom Peck, a well-known California watch collector, and six weeks later James met the man responsible for that record Daytona sale: Swiss auctioneer Aurel Bacs.

Bacs, a more than 30-year veteran of the vintage-watch world, runs the consulting firm Bacs & Russo with his wife, Livia, in Geneva, and works closely with the Phillips auction house. "The first question you ask when you get interested in vintage watches is, 'Where is Paul Newman's Paul Newman?'" Bacs says. "Everyone knows that by the mid-'80s Newman is no longer wearing it, and nobody knows where it is. There is hardly a dinner with collectors where the conversation does not turn to this watch. Where is it, and how much will it make if it ever comes to market? Has he lost it? Is it in a drawer in Connecticut at the house?" During a dinner with James, Walsworth and Peck at a private club in Irvine, California, in July 2016, Bacs finally held Newman's original Daytona in his hands. "He was about as excited as a Swiss guy in a suit could get," James says.

A few months later, James decided to sell the watch. "If Paul were alive, and I went to him and said, 'Hey, you know that watch you gave me years ago? Turns out it's super iconic and valuable,'" says James. "I think his response would be, 'Well, what are you going to do with it, kid?'"

The original Paul Newman Daytona goes on sale on October 26 at the first-ever Phillips watch auction in New York. Phillips expects bidding to exceed \$1 million, and the Nell Newman Foundation will receive a significant portion of the proceeds.

"Pop would give you the shirt off his back," says Nell, who believes her father most likely approached James at the treehouse intending to give him the watch. "This is following in that tradition of generosity. I think this is the best purpose for the watch." •



TIME MACHINE

Above and opposite:
The original Paul
Newman Daytona,
which Newman gave
to James Cox in the
summer of 1984.
Right: The actor and
avid race-car driver
wearing the watch with
an extra-wide black
leather strap in 1980.

els were the only Rolex watches to be manufactured with the Exotic dials.) Woodward engraved "Drive Carefully Me" on the back, and the original stainless-steel bracelet was replaced with an extra-wide black leather strap. When the Exotic dial versions were released, devoted Rolex fans largely rejected them, but Newman was often photographed throughout the '70s and early '80s wearing his watch. Woodward bought Newman another Rolex chronograph, which is why Nell and James believe he happily gave away his first one. "Paul was not the kind of guy who would hoard or collect something," James says.

After graduating from college in 1987, James and Nell settled in California. She became executive director of the Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary, and he, with the help of a loan from Newman, eventually started TerraPax, a company that manufactures bags and backpacks. The couple, who never married, split in 1993. That same year Nell and her business partner, Paul Meehan, founded Newman's Own Organics—the stablemate to her father's company.

The Cinematic Life of Sofia Coppola

With her new movie, *The Beguiled*, the acclaimed director is as committed as ever to her rigorously atmospheric filmmaking. Which is why she'd like you to see it on the big screen.

BY JASON GAY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVEN MEISEL
STYLING BY PAUL CAVACO

ANGLE OF REPOSE
“It’s fun to adapt something—it’s like a puzzle,” says Coppola of *The Beguiled*, her readaptation of a 1971 film that starred Clint Eastwood, opening in June. Chanel jacket, skirt and shoes, Kokin turban, Bottega Veneta jacket (at side) and her own Cartier watch.



YES, SOFIA COPPOLA has heard the saying: “I want Sofia Coppola to direct my life.” She’s flattered by the line, which became something of an internet meme in recent years—it’s even shown up in promotional materials for her latest film—but she also finds it amusing. Really amusing. Coppola may be an acclaimed filmmaker, an Oscar-winning screenwriter and a fashion icon with a certain elegant, low-key personal style—Coppola says *chic* in the easy, unpretentious way you want to say it, whereas I say it like I’m dribbling Froot Loops from my mouth—but she’s also a parent. And any parent knows you can only direct a life so much.

I want Sofia Coppola to direct my life?

“It’s so funny to hear that,” she says. “I’m living with a 10-year-old who thinks the opposite.”

Coppola smiles. It’s a mild spring afternoon in Greenwich Village, and we’ve met for lunch at Margaux, a cozy restaurant inside the Marlton Hotel, a former single-room-occupancy building renovated into a downtown escape. Wood-paneled and full of homey touches like a fireplace and oversize key rings, it looks like the kind of place where Wes Anderson might leap up from behind the concierge desk. Coppola and her husband, Thomas Mars, the lead singer of the celebrated French electro-rock band Phoenix, live not far away in the West Village with their two daughters, 10-year-old Romy and 7-year-old Cosima.

I’d been told Coppola can be shy in person, soft-spoken to the point of a whisper, but she’s not at all today.

She’s engaging and funny and utterly absent of airs, whether she’s talking about the best picture envelope fiasco at the recent Oscars (“It’s sort of fun that it’s live, that things can happen”) or what it’s like to be the spouse of a rock star who’s played Madison Square Garden (“I’m not, like, the total rock wife on the side of the stage, but I like to see them play”).

Because this is lunch with Sofia Coppola, I feel added pressure to render very specific, idiosyncratic details about our meeting. So here goes: The restaurant banquette where we’re sitting? It’s classically upholstered, an olive green. Sparkling water arrives in an emerald-colored jug. There’s a trio at a table in the corner having some kind of business meeting, speaking German. At least I think it’s German. I order the kale salad (Yes: super boring, sorry). Coppola gets the poached eggs and asks for hot water, as she’s brought her own green tea. She’s wearing a pair of light-blue jeans, white tennis shoes and a vintage Yves Saint Laurent safari jacket (Yes: I have to ask).

A precise, almost fetishistic eye for detail is among the signatures that make Coppola, now 46, one of the most distinct filmmakers working today. After six features—*The Virgin Suicides*, *Lost in Translation*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Somewhere*, *The Bling Ring* and the forthcoming Southern Gothic dark comedy *The Beguiled*—even the casual moviegoer can recognize her specific, sui generis style. Coppola’s films are rigorously atmospheric. Dreamy. Often beautiful. Small, impeccable choices—a location (the Park Hyatt Tokyo in *Lost in Translation*), a piece of music (Heart’s “Magic Man” in *The Virgin Suicides*) or costuming (a pair of Chuck Taylors that cleverly shows up the 18th-century wardrobe of *Marie Antoinette*)—often register as much as the big, dramatic moments.

Coppola first came to the public’s attention as the daughter of legendary filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now*). But in describing Sofia’s discerning eye for detail, Roman Coppola, Sofia’s older brother and frequent collaborator, sees the influence of their mother, Eleanor, an artist and filmmaker herself who recently released a new film of her own, *Paris Can Wait*, at age 81. “Simple things, like a grouping of wildflowers—my mom always noticed,” Roman says. “I think Sofia inherited that.” He describes a dinner at Sofia’s home: “There are always details that make something

feel special: name cards, the way she writes things that has an appreciation for the way they look that’s not fussy, but genuine.”

Coppola’s films are similarly personal. They’re never about cinematic shock and awe. Instead, they open slowly, like a cherished jewel box. Her work isn’t to everyone’s taste—“Sofia Coppola: You Either Love Her or Hate Her” read a mildly bombastic headline on a *Slate* essay several years back—but mass appeal has never been her goal. *Lost in Translation* is Coppola’s biggest hit, and its \$120 million worldwide gross is like a slow weekend for a *Fast and the Furious* installment.

Still, Coppola remains a meaningful presence in filmmaking, not just because she’s a working female director, a status that is depressingly rare. Coppola’s one of a few American directors who keep making small, original movies—she’s a throwback to the industry’s long-gone auteur era. “When you look at her boxed set of work, it’s such varied material,” says her producing partner Youree Henley. And yet all of Coppola’s movies are undeniably hers. Says Kirsten Dunst, who has been there for most of them, playing sister Lux Lisbon in *The Virgin Suicides* and Marie Antoinette in *Marie Antoinette*, making a cameo in *The Bling Ring* and now co-starring as the schoolteacher Edwina Danny in *The Beguiled*: “When you see a Sofia movie, you know it’s a Sofia movie.”

Early on, stories about Coppola followed a rather predictable arc. They described the daughter of a moviemaking giant thrown into the harsh public spotlight after her father cast her as a teenager in a key

“WHEN YOU SEE
A SOFIA MOVIE,
YOU KNOW IT’S A
SOFIA MOVIE.”

—KIRSTEN DUNST

role in his contentious sequel *The Godfather Part III*, and then her rebirth as a director, and there was often a slightly condescending/sexy rumination about her father’s influence (as well as her previous marriage to director Spike Jonze). Listen: I adore Francis Ford Coppola’s movies as much as I adore my own children—I might like *The Godfather* even more—but at this point in her career, Sofia Coppola feels very much like

her own director, and the father-daughter thing

is pretty played out. It’s much more interesting to talk about where Sofia Coppola is today. Especially now that the movie industry is experiencing tremendous upheaval, its centers of power shifting from Hollywood to Silicon Valley and across the Pacific, provoking nervousness about how and what kinds of films will get made. Coppola has gotten this far by remaining herself, but the movie world is changing beneath her feet. I want to know if it’s still possible for Sofia Coppola to direct her own filmmaking life.

HOLLYWOOD’S VOLATILITY is not a mystery to Coppola. Despite occasional indie comets like 2017’s best picture winner, *Moonlight*, Coppola sees the anxiety in her profession, how it’s risen over the nearly two decades since she started making features. Early on, there were a number of places she could go to pitch a movie that wouldn’t be a blockbuster but promised to be compelling and hopefully turn a decent profit. Financing has never been a sure thing, but Coppola thinks the landscape for original movies began to shrink dramatically in the past half decade. Studios push for low-risk, high-yield projects with global, preexisting audiences (hence six zillion comic book movies). Around five years ago, Coppola says, “It felt like, ‘Oh, no, we’re all out of a job; we can’t make these movies anymore.’” (Her father recently lamented that *The Godfather* would never be green-lighted today.)

Another hurdle is that Coppola prefers to make movies the old-fashioned way. She shoots on film as a near-unbreakable rule, even though it can be considerably more expensive (only one of Coppola’s movies, 2013’s rich-kid crime study *The Bling Ring*, was shot with digital cameras, partly to make a point about the digital culture of social media). And she is evangelical about the theatrical moviegoing experience. Coppola jokes that if it were up to her, you’d



ON REFLECTION
“You can love beauty
and superficial
things, but also have
depth,” Coppola says.
Marc Jacobs dress,
Yves Salomon cape
and Kokin turban.



BLACK MAGIC

"When you look at her boxed set of work, it's such varied material," says Coppola's producing partner Youree Henley. Anna Sui blouse, Pologeorgis shrug, Jennifer Behr turban, Christian Louboutin shoes, Céline bag and her own Valentino jacket, Fendi pants and Cartier watch, ring and bracelet.

FACE TIME

"My kids asked, 'Is it hard being a mom?'" Coppola says. "I said, 'It's the best job.' But it's hard sometimes." Marc Jacobs dress, Pologeorgis shrug and Kokin turban.





THE LAST DETAIL

"Simple things, like a grouping of wildflowers—my mom always noticed."

I think Sofia inherited that," says her brother Roman. Fendi dress, Jennifer Behr head wrap, Salvatore Ferragamo shoes and her own ring.

never see *The Beguiled* anywhere but in a theater. "I feel it's so different, seeing it on a big screen," she says. She makes a plea: "Can you put in your article to please see it in a theater?"

Such adamancy puts Coppola at odds with filmmaking's current direction, which is becoming platform-agnostic as devices improve and streaming services proliferate. There are directors today who know a lot of consumers will watch their work on nothing bigger than a smartphone. It should be said that Coppola isn't completely averse to new technology or streaming—not long ago, she partnered with Netflix to make *A Very Murray Christmas*, a loungey Christmas special, with her pal Bill Murray—and she says she liked the creative freedom Netflix offered. "In the past, you couldn't make something that was 40 minutes long," she says. "That's cool."

For *The Beguiled*, however, Coppola went back to her classical approach. The movie is a departure for Coppola in one respect: It's a remake—or, to be exact, a reinterpretation—of a 1971 Don Siegel movie starring Clint Eastwood as Corporal John McBurney, an injured Civil War Union soldier taken in and cared for by a school for girls (the headmistress was played by Geraldine Page). Remaking a film was "just something I would never think to do," Coppola says, but her longtime production designer, Anne Ross, had recommended *The Beguiled*, and the movie stuck with Coppola. After reading the 1966 novel by Thomas Cullinan, she began working on an adaptation. "It's fun to adapt something—it's like a puzzle," she says.

Coppola knew early on she wanted to tweak the original *Beguiled*'s point of view—to tell the story not from McBurney's perspective, but from the women and girls living in a mostly empty house during wartime. "I thought it was interesting to see these women who were left behind," she says. "They'd been raised to be companions to men...and there were no men around." The chance to tinker with Southern and Civil War archetypes was also appealing. "Everything's polite and lovely," Coppola says, "but then there's darkness underneath."

To play the school's headmistress, Coppola brought on Nicole Kidman, an Oscar winner whom she'd long admired but never worked with. She installed Dunst as a teacher and another prior collaborator, Elle Fanning (who co-starred in 2010's *Somewhere*), as one of the school's remaining students. For McBurney, Coppola says she wanted an actor "women and gay men both love." Colin Farrell proved to be an ideal fit. "He's so charming and masculine," she says. "And he has a bad boy kind of thing."

The film was a quick production, shot in six weeks in Louisiana, about an hour's drive west from New Orleans. The budget was kept tight. The entire cast and crew stayed at a Hampton Inn. "Everyone was a good sport about it," Coppola says.

By now, a Sofia Coppola movie set is a tight-knit operation, with a lot of returnees behind as well as in front of the camera. "People are bringing their kids, [Sofia's] own kids are saying, 'Action!'" says Dunst. Kidman was impressed by Coppola's polite control on the set. "She's so dignified and soft-spoken [but] she still gets everything done," Kidman says.

"She sticks with what she wants, and she doesn't waver," says Dunst. "That's really what matters from a director."

The Beguiled has many hallmarks of a Sofia Coppola film: It's gorgeously shot (Coppola worked with a new cinematographer, Philippe Le Sourd, recommended to her by her friend and former cinematographer Harris Savides before Savides's death from brain cancer in 2012), and it takes full advantage of the haunting scenery amid the lowland fog and live oaks. As always, attention is paid to costuming (the long nightgowns are an undeniable nod to *The Virgin Suicides*) and sound: Outside the school, there are the constant, ominous booms and rumbles of bloody battles nearby.

What's surprising is the movie's sense of humor: *The Beguiled* is

often funny, with flashes of camp. Coppola delights in showing the infighting and elbowing over the corporal's care, and both Kidman and Dunst are excellent as subtle rivals for the soldier's affections. Farrell is more than a hunk, alternating between gentleman and Lothario before the film takes a final, sharp twist.

Compared to her reputation as a visualist, Coppola's talent with actors is underrated. Bill Murray has long been one of our greatest comic actors, but it was Coppola's writing and directing in *Lost in Translation* (in which Murray played a melancholy actor on a business trip to Tokyo) that finally captured his complete range, especially the unspoken, sad-eyed loneliness lurking beneath his ability to brighten every room. "Not many people could get that performance out of Bill Murray," says Anne Ross. "The gentleness and containment." Coppola and Murray remain close. Earlier that morning, she'd visited a studio in the city where Murray was recording, of all things, a collection of readings accompanied by chamber music.

Like Murray, Coppola has stuck to her own path. But there was a moment, not long ago, when Coppola and Universal were in pre-production on a live-action version of the animated smash *The Little Mermaid*. It was a fascinating proposition: Coppola's indie vision paired with the full power of a mega-studio franchise. Eventually, it fell apart over creative differences. "It was such a big-budget production, I didn't have the creative freedom I'm used to," Coppola says. "We didn't agree on certain aspects."

Speaking as a fan, I admire Coppola for not yielding, but it's a mild bummer. What movie buff wouldn't have wanted to see an auteur's interpretation of a fairy tale? *Beguiled* producer Youree Henley agrees. "I would have been very curious to see what Sofia Coppola's *Little Mermaid* was like," he says. I doubt Coppola holds deep regrets. She's still very much about making movies the way she wants to make them. She does take the occasional detour—in May 2016, in collaboration with the fashion house

Valentino, she directed a live production of *La Traviata* in Rome ("Thrilling—and terrifying," she says of the experience). Meanwhile, her influence in fashion remains undiminished. Last year, Louis Vuitton re-released a line of handbags she designed in 2012. Coppola also directed commercials for Calvin Klein starring Dunst, Lauren Hutton, Rashida Jones and others; and she made a spot to celebrate Cartier's re-release of its gold '80s-tastic Panthère watch.

Coppola's side interest in fashion goes back to her teenage years, when she interned for two summers in Paris for Chanel. Her friend Marc Jacobs has often used her as a muse, and true Sofia disciples fondly remember Milk Fed, the irreverent '90s designer label she founded with childhood pal Stephanie Hayman. Coppola says she still finds fashion inspiring, and she waves off the usual criticisms about the business of pretty objects. "You can love beauty and superficial things, but also have depth," she says.

Coppola's family, meanwhile, is prepping for a busy summer: Mars and Phoenix are releasing a new album, and when school is out, there are plans for Sofia, Romy and Cosima to join Dad out on tour.

I ask Coppola if the kids have expressed any particular fascination with their parents' artistic careers, and she smiles and says they haven't. She recalls an exchange with her children from the prior night: "My kids asked, 'Is it hard being a mom?'" Mars is away, Coppola says, and she is scrambling to put the finishing touches on *The Beguiled*. "I said, 'It's the best job.' But it's hard sometimes."

Professionally, Coppola says she doesn't know what movie she will be doing next. "I have tunnel vision," she says. If she's unsettled about the turbulence in the movie world, she doesn't show it. "I'm not worried about Sofia," says Henley. "She'll be fine."

This is almost surely true. What's next will eventually find its way to Sofia Coppola. It always does. So far, hers has been an original, creative life—well-directed. •

"SHE'S SO DIGNIFIED AND SOFT-SPOKEN BUT SHE STILL GETS EVERYTHING DONE."

—NICOLE KIDMAN



QUIET RESOLVE
“She sticks with what she wants, and she doesn’t waver,” says Kirsten Dunst, who has a lead role in *The Beguiled*. Lanvin dress, Jennifer Behr head wrap, Sally LaPointe stole and Salvatore Ferragamo shoes. Makeup, James Kaliardos; hair, Jimmy Paul; manicure, Jin Soon. For details see Sources, page 58.

THINK BIG
At 275 yards, Richard Serra's *Te Tuhirangī Contour* matches the scale of the powerful New Zealand terrain. The artist recalled Gibbs telling him that he didn't want anything "wimpy."



Field of Dreams

How does a vast landscape shape an artist's creativity? Alan Gibbs found out by building one of the world's largest contemporary art parks in New Zealand.

BY TONY PERROTTET PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN GAUT



LOCATION, LOCATION
Each site-specific work at Gibbs Farm is integrated within the dramatic landscape. Clockwise from top: *Arches*, by Andy Goldsworthy; Sol LeWitt's *Pyramid (Keystone NZ)*; *Easy-K*, by Kenneth Snelson. Opposite: Alan Gibbs.

“A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE IN WHICH ARTWORKS ARE SENSITIVELY SET CREATES AN ELEVATED EXPERIENCE. NOBODY IS LOOKING AT THEIR PHONES AT THESE PLACES.”

—JOHN P. STERN



IT'S HARD TO HIDE this place,” says the art collector Alan Gibbs as he bounces in an open-topped Jeep through his vast contemporary sculpture park in rural New Zealand. “People see things from the road. That’s how it first got known.” Only the site’s isolation has kept it a relative secret within the art world. Everything about its scale is gargantuan.

Across the 1,200-acre park, known simply as Gibbs Farm, the eye is drawn from one enormous *coup de théâtre* to the next: an 80-foot-high trumpet in lipstick red, towering columns of burnished steel, brilliant stainless-steel tubes that twist in the air like hairpins of the gods. Over the past two decades, this landscape has sprouted works by Richard Serra, Anish Kapoor, Sol LeWitt and Maya Lin, among others.

Gibbs drives up to the most prominent piece: Crowning one of the park’s highest crests are the soaring metal fingers of French artist Bernar Venet’s 2012 sculpture *88.5° ARC x 8*, whose 88-foot-tall strands have been compared to “golden arcs dancing *en pointe*” by one critic. A couple of Mongolian yaks stand beneath it, munching idly on the grass. “My

yaks like to sharpen their horns on that one,” he says. “You can see the marks.”

The boldness of these colossal artworks matches the grandeur of their natural setting. The Farm, an hour’s drive north of Auckland, sprawls along Kaipara Harbour, the largest estuary in the Southern Hemisphere, which consumes the horizon like an inland sea. It’s a primeval landscape, bathed in crystalline light: The sky here feels eerily close, as if pulled tighter to the earth at this far latitude. The fringes of the Farm bristle with spiky native nikau palms that seem plucked from a *Lost in Space* episode.

The park has been sculpted into voluptuous hills dotted with man-made lakes and open lawns of manicured kikuyu grass, resulting in a dreamlike interplay of art and nature. Some sculptures revolve in the wind; others catch the sunlight and burn incandescently at dusk. On the mud flats, a string of 11 Roman-style arches created by Andy Goldsworthy from pink sandstone emerge from the water at low tide like the coils of a sea monster. After dark, video artworks project onto trees and a giant transformer shoots out electricity to create “artificial lightning.” On one man-made lake, a wall of geysers spurts on command from Gibbs’s cellphone. On another, a polished stainless-steel island—Chinese artist Zhan Wang’s *Floating Island of Immortals*—drifts back and forth, evoking haunting images of Ming Dynasty paintings. Cameras are set up around the park so Gibbs can admire its many moods while traveling.

Adding to this otherworldly atmosphere are exotic animals—yaks, zebras, alpacas, buffalo and emus—wandering among the park’s 30 sculptures. There’s also a special pen with a trio of giraffes, which sometimes freeze in awkward positions when approached. At such times, Gibbs Farm feels less like Storm King, the monumental sculpture park in New York’s Hudson Valley to which it’s often compared, than Dr. Dolittle’s backyard. Plump sheep graze happily across the hillsides, some of them with wool dyed yellow and green. “The person who did that used food coloring,” Gibbs says. “Although it’s beginning to fade now.”

NEW ZEALAND, a lush archipelago better known as a cinematic landscape for hobbits than for its contemporary artists, might seem an improbable place for such a fantastical venture. But Gibbs Farm is the product of changes that have reshaped the international art

scene. “Over the past 25 years, there have been so many amazing fortunes built all over the world, and many of the new private collectors are so passionate,” says John P. Stern, the president of Storm King, which was founded by his father and grandfather in 1960. Recent years have seen a surge of interest in the idea of experiencing art in nature (pioneered by U.S. sculptors of the 1960s such as David Smith, Mark di Suvero and Claes Oldenburg), leading to ambitious projects where creativity on a grand scale is possible, including Naoshima in Japan and Inhotim in Brazil, both set up by multimillionaires who became collectors.

“There is a longing to get out of the white walls of traditional museums,” Stern says. “A beautiful landscape, natural but also designed, in which artworks are sensitively set, creates an elevated experience, entirely in the moment. Nobody is looking at their phones at these places. People look up at the sky, the long views, the sculptures, and say, ‘Oh, my God, this is amazing. What’s next?’”

As Gibbs Farm put New Zealand on the international art circuit, it also expanded the cultural life of this thinly populated island nation. “Artworks we once had to travel thousands of miles overseas to see can now be experienced here,” says Sir James Wallace, founder of the Wallace Arts Trust, which promotes New Zealand’s contemporary art in Auckland, the country’s largest city, with 1.5 million inhabitants. Admission to the park is free, but it’s open to the public only about 12 days a year, with spots booking up months in advance.

To hear Gibbs tell it, the whole enterprise began in 1991 as a caprice. “I didn’t buy the Farm to make a sculpture park out of it. I bought it as a place to get out of Auckland for the weekend,” he explains as he drives toward his farmhouse residence. “I just wanted to get away somewhere and do ‘boy things.’” These boy things include sailing, helicottering, shooting and driving his collection of vintage military vehicles. The Farm has never had a curator, which is why it so strikingly bears its owner’s personal stamp.

At 77, Gibbs still has the tall, powerful build of a rugby player and the irreverent sense of humor that many New Zealanders cultivate as a national sport. Wearing an olive Western shirt with yellow trim and a cowboy hat, he resembles a gentleman rancher in Montana with a touch of dandyish flair—a Kiwi Ted Turner.

The many facets of this outdoors-loving collector come together in his grand, rustic residence on the Farm, which he refers to cheerfully as his

“ALAN IS DETERMINED! AND HE IS VERY PERSUASIVE.
WHEN HE HAS AN IDEA THAT IT’S POSSIBLE
TO DO SOMETHING EXEMPLARY, HE’S GOING TO DO IT.”

—ANISH KAPOOR

“wood cabin.” Parked in the garage is a Bond-like amphibious car, the four-wheel Aquada, built by his own company (“Richard Branson drove one of those across the English Channel,” he notes). Based in Auckland, Gibbs Amphibians now has 10 high-speed amphibious vehicle prototypes, including large Humdingas being manufactured in Singapore to help with Asian flood rescues and Quadskis, a cross between a quad bike and a jet ski aimed at the leisure market.

As we settle in for lunch on the expansive farmhouse porch, Gibbs adjusts the angle of our table so that the view includes one of his favorite sculptures, George Rickey’s *Column of Four Squares Excentric Gyroratory III*, whose gleaming silver plates swivel in the breeze. He then points out the hidden details of the harbor, including mud flats that have been sculpted into a lattice of channels. He revels in the Farm’s utter isolation. “Nobody sails around here,” he says. “We might get a couple of boats a week passing by. A few duck hunters in the season. Nobody else.” From this vantage, the Farm seems less like a happy accident than a deliberate projection of Gibbs’s personality.

“Alan is determined!” says Kapoor, who worked with him over three years to create his 2009 piece *Dismemberment, Site 1*. “That’s a word that springs to mind. And he is very persuasive. When he has an idea that it’s possible to do something exemplary, he’s going to do it.”

GIBBS’S CHILDHOOD in 1940s New Zealand, then a sleepy dominion of the waning British Empire, may explain his affinity for remote getaways but did not suggest a career in contemporary art. A descendant of a religious Presbyterian family, his father was a businessman whose ventures included a string of lingerie stores. “Growing up, I had no exposure at all to modern art,” Gibbs says. “My father had a few landscape paintings on the wall and Maori artifacts, but that was it.” His teen years were spent playing sports before he began studying engineering and economics at the University of Canterbury and Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand’s capital. It wasn’t until 1963—when, at 23, he made the long ocean voyage to Europe for a camping trip with his then wife (and former high school sweetheart), Jenny Gore—that his sensibilities were jolted by a visit to the Museum of Modern Art in Paris.

“We were both very young, and there was a show

with fantastic huge lyrical abstractionist paintings,” he recalls of the exhibition of French artist Georges Mathieu. “We were very taken with their scale and vividness. We thought, Wow, this is fun.”

A lifelong taste for abstraction and minimalism was born, although Gibbs did not yet have the funds to indulge it. He had several false starts in business, ranging from the wildly optimistic (trying to manufacture New Zealand’s first domestic car) to the absurd (importing live chickens from Australia, which died of heat exposure on the flight over). He made his first modest fortune in real estate in Sydney in the early 1970s and was soon renowned in the Australasian business world for being impatient and sharp-tongued.

Helping to establish the Chase bank in Auckland led to a second road-to-Damascus moment: A business trip to Manhattan in 1973 left him deeply impressed by the modern art on display at Chase’s headquarters. “That’s what really got me into collecting,” he recalls. “I thought, We should have art in our New Zealand offices. It would show we’ve got a bit of class. But the board said, ‘Good heavens, no. Our shareholders won’t stand for that!’ Oh, bugger it, I thought, I’ll just buy some art myself.”

“That was over 40 years ago,” he adds. “I thought, I’ll keep going so long as I am having fun. So far, I’m liking it better and better.”

Gibbs made his first million in 1981, shortly after he turned 40, from corporate takeovers. In the following decade he helped broker the privatization of state-owned companies in New Zealand against strong public opposition, dodging protesters to attend some meetings. He was soon one of the country’s richest individuals and most prominent art patrons, although he balks at being seen as a Medici. “Art was an interest, not an obsession,” he says. “It’s still not.” Gibbs is averse to overthinking his approach to collecting. “Art is not about reason; it’s an emotional response. That’s the nice thing about it. It’s like looking at this view of the harbor—how do you reason about that?”

Gibbs soon gained a mythic status among New Zealanders as an intensely private, almost secretive figure, consumed by ambitious entrepreneurial plans and exotic travel. In 1991, seeking somewhere remote to relax (“I didn’t want to be seen”), he scoured sparsely populated stretches of farmland north of Auckland by helicopter. He had long dismissed Kaipara Harbour as “a dumpy place,” but when he landed at the future Farm, he was taken aback by its grandeur. Despite its enormous size, the harbor is

very shallow, so the tide sweeps out for more than a mile. “When the wet sand is exposed at low tide it has a mirrorlike surface, which reflects the clouds,” he says. “A golden sunset makes it glow like a fire.”

The 250-acre farm, available for a bargain NZ\$250,000 (\$170,000), was run-down, but Gibbs could see its potential. “The land was as rough as guts, all gullies and ridges, with a few pine trees and eucalyptuses,” he recalls. “But the hills were very muscular; you could see the site had drama and presence.”

Gibbs later purchased more of the surrounding acreage. He knocked down most of the invasive trees himself with a vintage armored car (with a working machine gun) he received as a gift on his 50th birthday, and later with a lumbering tank purchased from the New Zealand army. (On one occasion, he says, he took the visiting actor Michael Douglas for a daredevil spin in the tank; afterward, a visibly shaken Douglas joked that he usually favored a stunt double for such jaunts.)

The first site-specific sculpture was commissioned in 1992 from New Zealand artist Chris Booth, who created *Kaipara Strata* from a stack of flat stones and river boulders, echoing the Farm’s layered waterfront. After divorcing in 1996, Gibbs began to spend more time overseas, living in Detroit and London to be close to his car factories and visiting large-scale contemporary art sites in the United States—Donald Judd’s enclave in Marfa, Texas; Walter De Maria’s *The Lightning Field*; James Turrell’s Roden Crater; and Storm King. (“America’s full of lunatics like me,” he says with a chuckle.) More ambitious ideas for the Farm began to germinate.

Every summer, Gibbs returned to New Zealand, inviting artists of international stature to work there. His relationship with visiting artists—through which he has become part of the creative process, often going back and forth about a new work’s design and execution—is one of the more striking elements of the Farm’s development. “It’s very interactive,” Gibbs says. Artists will often stay at the Farm for weeks at a time, over a period of several summers, exploring with Gibbs the contours of the property, which he knows intimately. The entire process can take up to five years. “Usually by the third year, they have an idea of what they want to do,” says Gibbs.

The sense of open-ended possibility often spurs the artists to make their largest pieces to date. “The works have to compete with the landscape, so they need to be ambitious,” he says. “They’ll be lost otherwise.”



HORN APLENTY

Anish Kapoor's *Dismemberment, Site 1* required the excavation of an enormous hillside. Gibbs did not balk at delaying the project several months to fulfill the artist's vision.





OPEN DIALOGUES
Clockwise from top:
The Farm's yaks like to
sharpen their horns on
Bernar Venet's *88.5°
ARC x 8*; *Floating Island
of Immortals*, by Zhan
Wang; Maya Lin's *A Fold
in the Field*. Opposite:
Neil Dawson's *Horizons* is
one of the most popular
works among visitors.

“MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WAS EPIC.... THERE ARE VERY FEW PLACES WHERE ARTISTS CAN HAVE THEIR FREEDOM AND THE ABILITY TO WORK AT SUCH A LARGE SCALE.”

—MAYA LIN

As the sculptures have grown, so have the practical challenges of constructing them. A former engineering student, Gibbs is very involved, along with his son-in-law, the architect Noel Lane, blurring the lines between artist and collector. “Not many artists have much of an idea about engineering,” he says. “Sometimes they just give us a few squiggles drawn on a piece of paper, and we have to figure out how to build it.”

The most titanic of the Farm’s 30 pieces, Richard Serra’s *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, commissioned in 1998 and unveiled in 2003, was a turning point for the Farm, elevating it from a millionaire’s folly to a site of international stature. The vast ribbon of steel, which now crowns a hillside like an austere tiara, broke new ground for the artist. Serra, who has said Gibbs told him that he didn’t want anything “wimpy” when he first visited the Farm in 1998, rose to the occasion with a work made from 56 steel plates, each weighing 11 tons. After the enormous shards were rolled at a foundry in Germany, disaster nearly struck: When the 600-odd tons of steel were ready to be shipped, the captain loaded the slabs too high and they fell over, nearly capsizing the boat. Much of the work had to be redone, setting the project back a year.

After the massive jigsaw finally arrived in New Zealand, Gibbs and Lane worked with Serra for months to devise a system allowing it to be erected—a task made more complex by Serra’s wish to have the entire wall angled at 11 degrees from the vertical. The solution was to weld metal plates to the base of each piece, which were then bolted to a concrete bed hidden beneath the earth. A special base was designed to allow each plate to slide slightly, so that the metal mass wouldn’t buckle when expanding in the summer heat.

The result is elegant in its simplicity when seen from a distance and powerful up close: One critic compared its looming presence to “a dam bulging with water.” Gibbs points out that the rusted Serra is shinier near the base, with a line almost like a watermark close to the grass. “That’s where my sheep rub up against the metal,” he says, smiling affectionately. “I rather like that.”

Matching the Serra sculpture in ambition is Kapoor’s *Dismemberment, Site 1*, a 275-foot-long red tube, whose twin elliptical openings, each 80 feet high, emerge like monstrous horns on both sides of a hilltop. “It was an engineer’s horror story,” Gibbs says.

Kapoor says he’d never heard of Gibbs Farm when he was initially contacted to do a piece in 2006,

so he made the first trip to New Zealand warily. “I didn’t want to feel like I was wasting my time,” he says. “But it was clear from the start that Alan was serious.” Kapoor made three visits to the Farm of several weeks each, adjusting his initial concept to engineering and financial realities. To create the final object, swathes of tensioned PVC fabric were stretched between two 45-ton steel pipes to create a “membrane” that is both majestic and sensual. Kapoor compares it to “the flayed skin of Greek mythological heroes.”

Instead of placing the work at the crest of a hill, he and Gibbs decided it would be more striking to embed it in the earth. An entire hillside was excavated, a 70-foot-deep concrete base laid and the artwork put into place by cranes. “Alan is not afraid to mess with the landscape,” says Kapoor. “It’s not sacred. He understands what sculpture does. He knows why it needs to fit in the landscape.”

It’s hard to resist touching the finished artwork. “Jump inside if you like,” Gibbs says. “It’s the world’s biggest trampoline.

“Just don’t slide down the other side,” he adds. “The last person who did that broke both her legs. So we don’t encourage that now.”

I hoist myself onto the lip and bounce inside, feeling a wind blast like the exhalation of a giant lung. From the dark interior, elliptical views of the countryside are framed as neatly as Victorian miniatures.

Maya Lin had a dramatic introduction to the Farm in 2010. “My first experience was epic,” she recalls of her arrival during a tempest. “It was a very bleak, tough, windy, stormy few days.” She wandered the site in a pounding rain. (“I was up to my knees in muck.”) She had met one of Gibbs’s daughters at Storm King; later he explained that he had a huge amount of spare earth on hand from a lake he was excavating and invited her to visit. But he gave her no brief. “He just let me really react to the site,” Lin recalls.

She found herself drawn to one of the most ungainly areas of the Farm, a ragged set of former pastures by the mud flats with horrible drainage. (“I lost a set of boots on it.”) She began to envision undulating mounds covering the 11-acre site, each more than 60 feet high. The next morning, she modeled her idea with paper to show Gibbs. After taking topographical lines, Lin created larger models back in her studio in New York, which were digitally scanned for Gibbs’s team to construct from 105,000 cubic meters of earth. There was a major glitch when the folds turned out to be sharper than Lin

had expected, requiring a reworking that delayed completion by a year. “Alan didn’t quibble,” Lin says. The final piece, *A Fold in the Field*, was unveiled in 2013, reshaping a lost section of the Farm into a hypnotic, rhythmic expanse. “There are very few places where artists can have their freedom and the ability to work at such a large scale,” she says. It remains Lin’s largest work.

Perhaps the creation with which Gibbs became most personally involved is Eric Orr’s “lightning machine,” *Electrum (for Len Lye)*, completed in 1998. Fascinated by the idea of generating lightning since he was a student in the 1950s, Gibbs had already funded several scientific studies on the subject before commissioning Orr to create a device. Working with an electrical engineer in San Francisco, Orr built the world’s largest Tesla coil, a transformer that can generate high-voltage current, named after its 19th-century inventor, Nikola Tesla. Resembling a ball of stainless steel raised on a slender column, it can be pumped with 44,000 volts at the flick of a switch. The coil then increases the current exponentially to create an electrical field of 1.7 million volts that eventually shoots out “artificial lightning” with a deafening crack, an effect both awe-inspiring and terrifying.

Not everything is futuristic or coolly abstract at Gibbs Farm. As dark clouds gather, Gibbs pulls his Jeep up to a stone plinth surrounded by a small fence, the grave of a 19th-century Maori chief, Te Hemara Tauhia. Located on a headland, it seems a site-specific sculpture in itself. The grave is thematically paired with an artwork in the water below, a series of rocks that fully emerge only at low tide. Created by New Zealand artist Russell Moses, *Kaipara Waka* is based on Maori tradition and points north, the direction taken by spirits of the dead on their last voyage.

The conversation turns to the future of the Farm. “My ideas on art are evolving all the time,” Gibbs says. “Now I need to make a push. We’ve been averaging one commission a year, but we’re falling behind. I want to increase the pace.” The Farm’s growing renown hasn’t affected his artistic decisions, he says, and he has no plans to increase visitor access to cater to demand. “It’s not a public park,” he says with a shrug. “It’s not a charity. I’m happy to let people see it, but it’s still primarily a family holiday retreat.” He admits his four children may not agree: “They can do what they like when I’m gone.”

“While I’m alive, I’m going to keep on having fun with this place,” he adds. “I’ve never had plans. I’m not going to start making them now!” •

BAYWATCH

Created in 1992, New Zealand artist Chris Booth's *Kaipara Strata* was the farm's first commissioned artwork.

Its sandstone slabs echo the mud flats of Kaipara Harbour, the largest estuary in the Southern Hemisphere.



A fashion photograph of a woman walking through a park. She is wearing a long, dark green double-breasted coat over a light-colored, knee-length skirt. She is also wearing red socks and brown leather loafers. Her hair is short and dark. The background consists of bare trees and fallen leaves on the ground.

FORCE OF NATURE

Earth tones accentuate the subtle elegance of military-inspired pieces in this season's pre-fall collections.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNEMARIEKE VAN DRIMMELLEN
STYLING BY MELANIE WARD



RAY OF LIGHT

Suit up in a patterned riff on a utilitarian jacket. Louis Vuitton coat and Laura Lombardi earrings. Opposite: Dior coat, Agnona dress, Max Mara pants, Ellery shoes, Maria La Rosa socks and Pamela Love earrings.

IN THE TRENCHES

Embellish a neutral coat with unconventional details and a cinched waist. Balenciaga trench and Moscot sunglasses. Opposite: Nehera shirt, pants and necklace.







INTO THE WOODS

Run free in a seasonal coat showcasing the richest of fall hues. This spread, from left: Prada jacket, Nehera shirt and Laura Lombardi earrings. Hermès coat, turtleneck and pants, Ellery shoes and Maria La Rosa socks.





BUTTONED UP

Think plaid or mix in an unexpected skirt with swing. Ralph Lauren Collection jacket and Laura Lombardi earrings. Opposite: Céline shirt and skirt and Laura Lombardi earrings. Model, Saskia de Brauw at DNA Model Management; hair, James Pecis; makeup, Dick Page; manicure, Mar y Soul. For details see Sources, page 58.



IN THE HISTORIC Louis Vuitton atelier in the commune of Asnières-sur-Seine, next to an elegant 19th-century villa filled with Art Nouveau antiques, a longhaired man with a skull ring and a scorpion tattoo is hard at work. Éric Leroux, 54, was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 2013 for his role in mastering and preserving the art of trunk making. At the moment, he's focused on a custom-made box destined to encase a client's prized tourbillon watch. "You can make 10 of these, but you'll never be able to make the same one," he marvels of the intricately crafted case, which will cost upward of \$5,400.

This is a time-consuming yet relatively simple commission for Leroux, whose repertoire is eclectic and varied: everything from a Chinese checkers case to a snowboard travel case (with room for boots). His most memorable commission? Keith Richards's guitar case. "I was over the moon," he says of the 2008 piece; the case was made to measure for the rocker's instrument and took six months to complete. "It's just a guitar case—we know how to do it, and we don't get worked up about it—but what we liked was that it was for the guitarist for the Rolling Stones." (A custom job like this operates on a price-upon-request basis, but an "off-the-rack" guitar-size case from the men's spring/summer 2015 collection retailed for around \$61,500.)

The founder and namesake of the label, Louis Vuitton, built the workshop in Asnières in 1859, adding on the three-story home—a wedding present for his only son, Georges—20 years later. In the century that followed, his descendants lived and worked on this site. Today, Georges's fanciful living rooms, which he furnished in daring fashion with floral motifs climbing the walls and stained-glass windows blooming with irises and ranunculus painted by Paul-Louis Janin, are preserved in time. The last full-time occupant moved out in 1964, but the former home is still filled with fresh-cut flowers every Monday.

The workshop next door, by contrast, remains a hive of activity, and today 200 highly skilled artisans, like Leroux, work here. Together, they are responsible for hand-crafting the label's signature

handbags, special-order hard-sided leather goods and the ultimate status travel item: custom-made trunks. Croquet trunks, caviar cases and skateboard cases are all customized to the client's request. The only limit is that the team caps its output at 350 special orders per year. "The trunks are no longer the very essence of our business, but they are a sym-

In Vuitton's day, wardrobe trunks, canvassed in his signature stripes or cube-themed Damier motif, were the business's mainstay. In Georges's and his son Gaston-Louis's era—which saw the advent of both automobile and airline travel—they produced everything from vanity cases (complete with a set of Art Deco glass bottles) for the couturière Jeanne Lanvin to a library trunk for Ernest Hemingway.

Reflecting on the brand's evolution in the 21st century, Burke notes that the main variable has been size, not craft. "What is especially noticeable is that trunks keep getting smaller," he says. "Last year's bestseller was the Petite Malle [handbag] that [artistic director] Nicolas Ghesquière invented. It's very small, but it has all the attributes of the old trunk. The idea is still: 'I keep my most precious possession in the container that Louis Vuitton sold me.' It's still the same story—nothing has changed in 160 years, except that today the most precious possession is often a person's phone. So now we only need to carry and protect a phone, which is what we do."

The Trunk Show

Each bespoke piece to emerge from the Louis Vuitton atelier outside of Paris is the result of a collaboration of specialists, a complex process that has remained largely unchanged since the 19th century.

BY ALICE CAVANAGH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOLLISON

bol," says Louis Vuitton chairman and CEO Michael Burke. "Our vocation has always been to adapt to new forms of travel and to innovate by anticipating them by creating the luggage of the future." The Asnières workshop is still a family concern, overseen by Patrick-Louis Vuitton, a fifth-generation family member, who began in the workshop before he turned 20, nearly 50 years ago.

allows clients to customize pieces.

Each day, Chartier operates an enormous cutting machine, which maps out the separate pieces digitally and then faultlessly cuts through everything from cowhide to precious alligator leather with mechanical blades. She points out a few imperfections on the skin—a few creases and one or two dark marks—but she'll cut around those. "The most difficult is the

ARTISAN CRAFT

Technical trunk
maker Michel
Duffrenoy with a
special-order trunk.

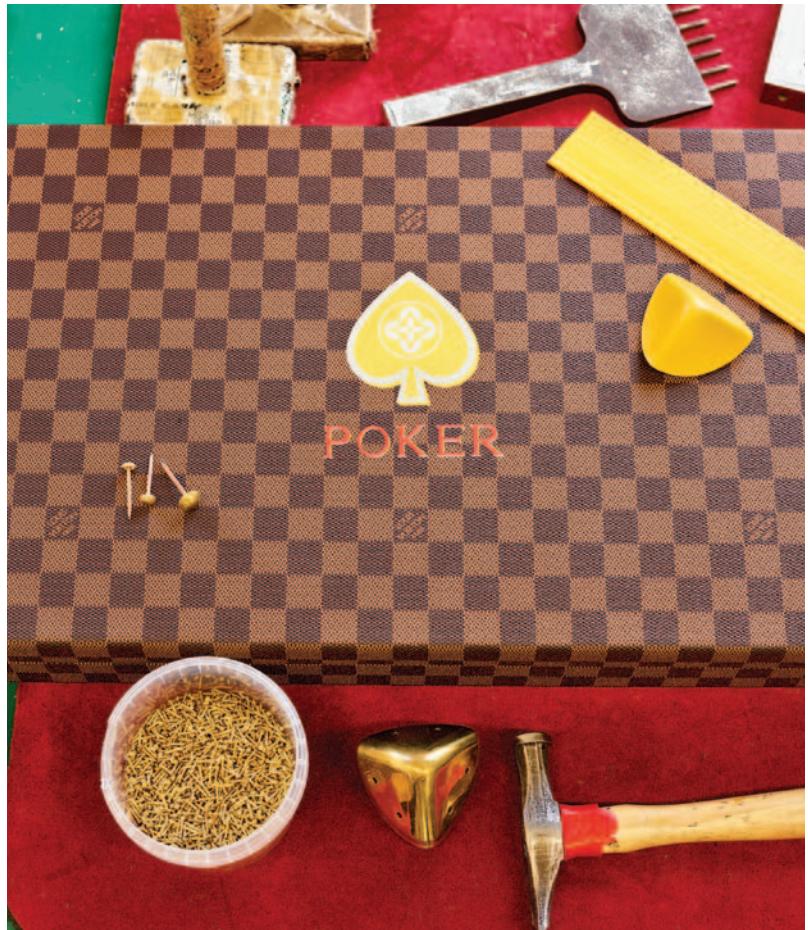
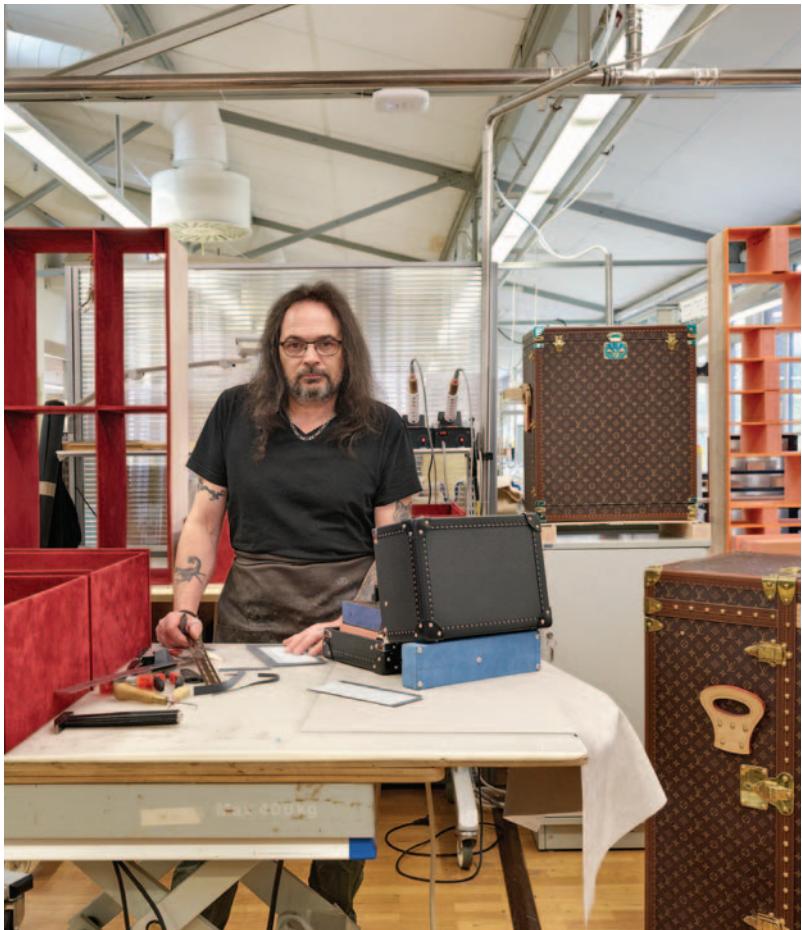




**PULLING OUT
ALL THE STOPS**
The wooden
interior of a trunk
in development at
the atelier.



MATERIAL WORLD
Clockwise from top left:
Leather craftsman Éric
Ruez; leather craftsman
Christine Chartier; Petite
Malle specialist Souityn
Naud; carpenter and
leather craftsman Darwin
Quezada Escobar.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Clockwise from top left:
Alligator hides in a golden
metallic finish; leather
craftsman Fatima Rhessal;
a poker trunk; leather
craftsman Éric Leroux.



TO THE
MANOR BORN
The historic
Vuitton family
home, next
to the atelier.

crocodile," she says, because of the skin's diminutive size. "You also have to use several different leathers and piece it all together like a puzzle."

While Chartier and many of the leather craftsmen began their careers here, the atelier often recruits and retrains people from other professions. Chilean carpenter and leather craftsman Darwin Quezada Escobar, 34, had worked as an engineer before he started here in 2015. As a result, he brings great precision to his task, in which measurements are painstakingly minute. Today he's working on the frame of a trunk, for which he first cuts and sands down the planks of wood (a mix of okoumé, poplar and beech) and then assembles the form. This trunk will have enough compartments, some of them secret, to accommodate 30 watches. On his workbench lies a color sketch of how the finished product will look: masculine, with royal-blue microfiber lining and the LV monogram on the outside. Next to the sketch sits a 3-D vector illustration of a portable DJ booth he'll

start working on next. "Before starting a carpentry project, we study each piece," he says.

Escobar's role, and that of the other carpenters in the ground-floor wood workshop, is just the first step in the assembly line. Next, the trunk will travel upstairs to be upholstered by artisans like Éric Ruez, who carefully lines each trunk in velvet, microfiber or other materials. Ruez, who was an architect for 15 years before he joined the workshop, has just started on the interior frame, or *carcasse*, of a new wardrobe from the permanent collection. "There was the need to make something with my hands, and I love the finality of projects here," he says of his career change. "It's very close to architecture but smaller—very Parisian." He estimates that a large trunk like the one he is working on will take the atelier about 150 hours to complete. Some smaller styles that he has worked on, such as the Supple Rigid case designed by Ghesquière for the fall/winter 2016–2017 runway collection, take about 10 hours.

It is here, on the top floor of the atelier under a glass roof, that the final hard-sided products (including Ghesquière's Petite Malle) are furnished and brought to life. This is Leroux's domain, as well as that of another of the atelier's most esteemed team members, Michel Dufrenoy. An earnest man of 57 who has also been named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Dufrenoy has worked here for nearly 30 years and oversees the training of many of the new craftsmen. He's currently assisting a younger colleague who's having trouble with a small box designed to hold an 18-ounce dish of caviar and four spoons. He maintains that the team could produce just about anything, although it has had to draw the line on one occasion: "There was a man who asked us to do a coffin, but we said no, because all the items we make here are for travel," Dufrenoy says, chuckling. "The client explained that it would be for his final journey, but we told him that you should carry the luggage, not be in the luggage." •

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WSJ. MAGAZINE

FALL PREVIEW

ON SALE
AUGUST 5, 2017

COVER
Lanvin dress, \$2,210, Lanvin
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Photo By: Peggy Sirota



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STILL LIFE

ARUNDHATI ROY

The Man Booker Prize-winning author shares a few of her favorite things.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BHARAT SIKKA

TWO YEARS AGO, after the doctor told my dear friend Bindia that the cancer had gone to her brain, she came to me with this rocking chair. She said, ‘Sit in it and read me a chapter from the book you are writing so that it will go with me wherever I’m going.’ The embroidered shawl draped on the chair’s arm belonged to my mother. She had it on the first time I remember seeing her dressed up. Those cargo pants are 16 years old. I once wore them for three weeks walking through the forests of central India with Maoist guerrillas. Behind the chair is a photograph of my father, in which he’s holding my brother and me—growing up, it was the only image I had of

him. I finally met him when I was in my 20s. Next to that is a wooden bowl of seeds. It’s such a powerful thing to think that that could be a potential forest. The drawing above is of Simone Weil, the French philosopher, by my beloved John Berger, the writer, who died recently. John was one of the only people who knew I was writing my new novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which is out this month. He used to call me Utmost. The wooden clock above is like the plastic toy wristwatch that Rahel wears in my novel *The God of Small Things* because it’s always stuck on 10 to 2. My husband made it for me to commemorate the book. My friend Tarun Bhartiya made the

red poster below when I was accused of sedition for disagreeing with the official catchphrase ‘Kashmir is an integral part of India’ and saying that this was historically incorrect. There’s a pile of newspapers to the right—I read newspapers every day. I would rue the day when there are no hard copies. Above them is a sachet that contains a peace pipe that comforts me from time to time. The owl, made of Styrofoam, was created 27 years ago as a prop for a film I wrote called *Electric Moon*. I was also the production designer. Avatars of him appear in both my novels. As creaking and old as he is, he still finds his way into my stories.”

—As told to Sara Morosi

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