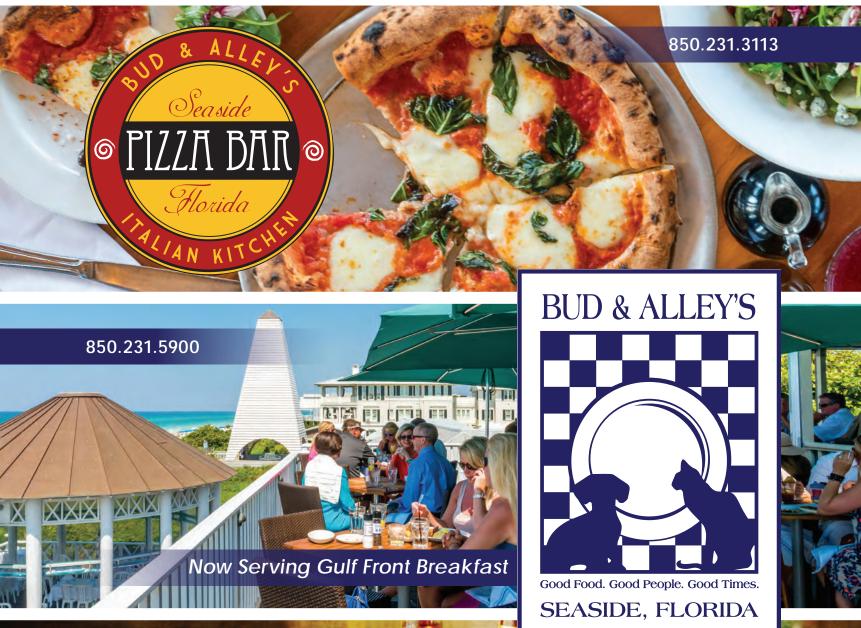




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CREATIVE TEAM

FOUNDER / PUBLISHER

LISA BURWELL lisa@viezine.com

FOUNDER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GERALD BURWELL gerald@viezine.com

EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR JORDAN STAGGS

CHIEF COPY EDITOR MARGARET STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

SALLIE W. BOYLES, MELANIE A. CISSONE, DEMETRIUS FULLER, ANNE HUNTER, ALLYSON JUSTICE LONGSHORE, TORI PHELPS, NICHOLAS S. RACHEOTES, GENESIS ROSARIO, CHAD THURMAN, MEGAN TRENT

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ART DIRECTOR TRACEY THOMAS

VIETV PRODUCER TIM DUTROW

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER ROMONA ROBBINS

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

DEVAN ALLEGRI WATKINS, LUCY MASHBURN, RINN GARLANGER

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

RAPHYE ALEXIUS, MARLA CARTER, LEE CRUM, STEFAN DAIBERL, EDDIE DAVIS, COLLEEN DUFFLEY, FRAZER HARRISON, J.D. HOLLIS, ARANKA ISRANI, SEAN MURPHY, SUSAN PFAUTSCH, DAWN CHAPMAN WHITTY, ANDREA WOOD PHOTOGRAPHY, DARRIS HARTMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, JACQUELINE WARD IMAGES, LITTLE MISS CREATIVE STUDIO

ADVERTISING, SALES, AND MARKETING

VP OF MARKETING BILL WECKEL

WEB DEVELOPER MEGHN HILL

BRANCH OFFICE MANAGER - IRELAND SHARON DUANE

MARKETING ASSISTANT ABIGAII RYAN

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

JULIE DORR

julie@viezine.com

MARY JANE KIRBY

maryjane@viezine.com

SAMANTHA MERRITT

samantha@viezine.com

DISTRIBUTION COORDINATORS

TIM DUTROW SHANNON QUINLAN

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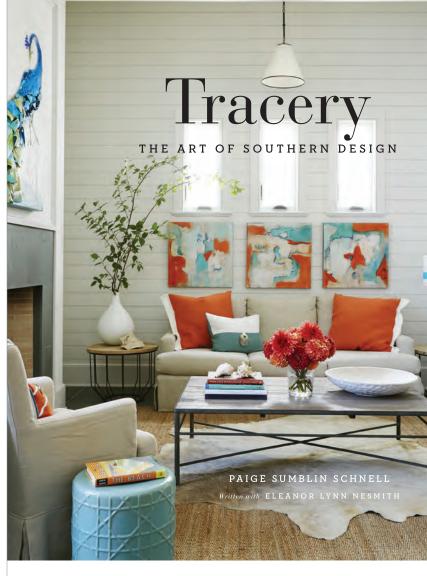
This past February 14 at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in New York, *VIE* had the privilege of covering Naomi Campbell's Fashion for Relief charity runway show. The event's mission to aid victims of the Ebola virus and Campbell's continuing efforts to help others through her influence made Fashion for Relief a highlight of the season. Captured in a moment of grace and poise on the runway by photographer Aranka Israni, Campbell wears a dress donated for the show by Givenchy. Her beauty and signature walk make her a true "Queen of the Runway."



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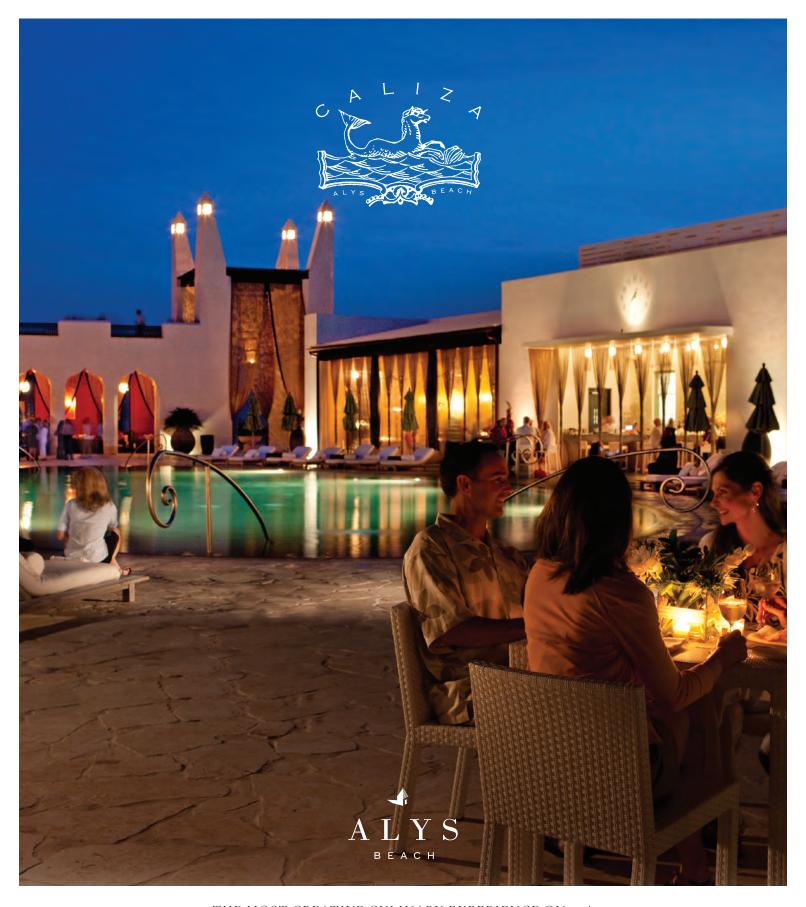


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CULTURE Makes the WORLD Go Round

Beauty Is Inspiring

So, what do art and style have to do with culture? Quite a lot, it seems, as they are influenced by and reflect the collective mind-set of the day. When we are constantly bombarded by hopeless talk of war, economic woes, terrorism—and more recently the resurgence of racism and class feuds, and the insanity of how some cities now declare it illegal to feed the homeless—we feel it both consciously and subconsciously. While I try to avoid the futile exercise of taking political stands, I would like to shine a light on the good news, the good ideas, and the good deeds that people are doing in the world to quash the negativity. There really is a lot of goodness out there, just not enough people or media platforms shouting it from the rooftops.

The essential thing that defines a culture is what its people will and will not accept, so my hope is to sound the call that complacency shouldn't rule our lives. If something is wrong and unjust, we should speak up. Naomi Campbell is doing just that. On the cover of this issue, she walks the catwalk for her Fashion for Relief charity, which she founded in 2005. By using her talent, notoriety, supermodel good looks, and powerful sphere of influence, she combats problems—big problems—and is doing something good! The best part of becoming famous isn't the money or the fame: it's the opportunity to have a platform to bring about change for good. To whom much is given, much is expected, and so we give Naomi a collective and resounding standing ovation. It takes a lot of time and effort to make things happen like she has done, and you can learn more about her good deeds around the globe in "Queen of the Runway" by Jordan Staggs.

Each new year seems to have its own theme for me, and this year it's been travel, travel, and more travel. New adventures for work were included in some of the jaunts, and my personal trips involved too many funerals but also graduation celebrations for my nieces, so life goes on, as the saying goes. We opened an office in Ireland last year with the intention, at least in part, of growing our publishing company, The Idea Boutique. In this issue, we proudly feature

our inaugural Irish magazine, *Connemara Life*. An area rich in beauty and culture, western Ireland evokes a time gone by when life seemed simpler, which is, for me, one of the main attractions of that glorious place. We hope you feel as though you've taken a journey there while immersed in the pages of our newest publication.

We've not only traveled to Ireland this year, but we also attended London Fashion Week in February to discover the latest fashion inspirations from across the pond. Then in May, we hit the skies again as we traveled to New York City to cover the grand finale event of Girl Redesigned-an after-school program created for middle school girls by the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation of New York to showcase their creativity and talents in the areas of fashion, dance, music, and film. Though I was one of two key speakers invited to present words of inspiration to the girls that night, it was they who inspired me with their talent, hope, and courage. I had the great privilege to meet and spend time with many of the students of the program, including Genesis Rosario, who was invited to write a column about her personal experience with Girl Redesigned. The story "Beautiful Imperfections" is her firsthand account of what it means to girls like herself, given the opportunity and means, to explore talents and dreams that would otherwise remain undiscovered, undeveloped, and unrealized. You can read the uplifting story about VIE's trip of discovery in "Girl Redesigned" by Anne Hunter, to whom I am immensely grateful for providing such an incredible opportunity.

How are we going to get to a place of living in peace with one another and enjoying this great world together? Love. There is no other way to get there.

The legendary songwriting team of Burt Bacharach and Hal David said it best: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love"!

To Life!

— Lisa







Top: Lisa Burwell and Gentle Meg in Connemara, Ireland Photo by Gerald Burwell

Middle: The VIE team at Girl Redesigned in NYC: Lisa Burwell, Jordan Staggs, Anne Hunter, Aranka Israni, and Allyson Longshore Photo by J.D. Hollis

Bottom: Lisa and Gerald Burwell at Hotel Café Royal in London Photo by Abigail Ryan

This issue is dedicated to my late father, John B. Ryan, and I thank him for helping me grow into the person I am today. He would always tell my five siblings and me—as he pointed to his heart—that without the "Big D" (meaning desire), you would not succeed at anything. He instilled in me a desire to accomplish things; the inspirations and ideas sometimes come out of nowhere, but the desire to see them through and succeed is always there.





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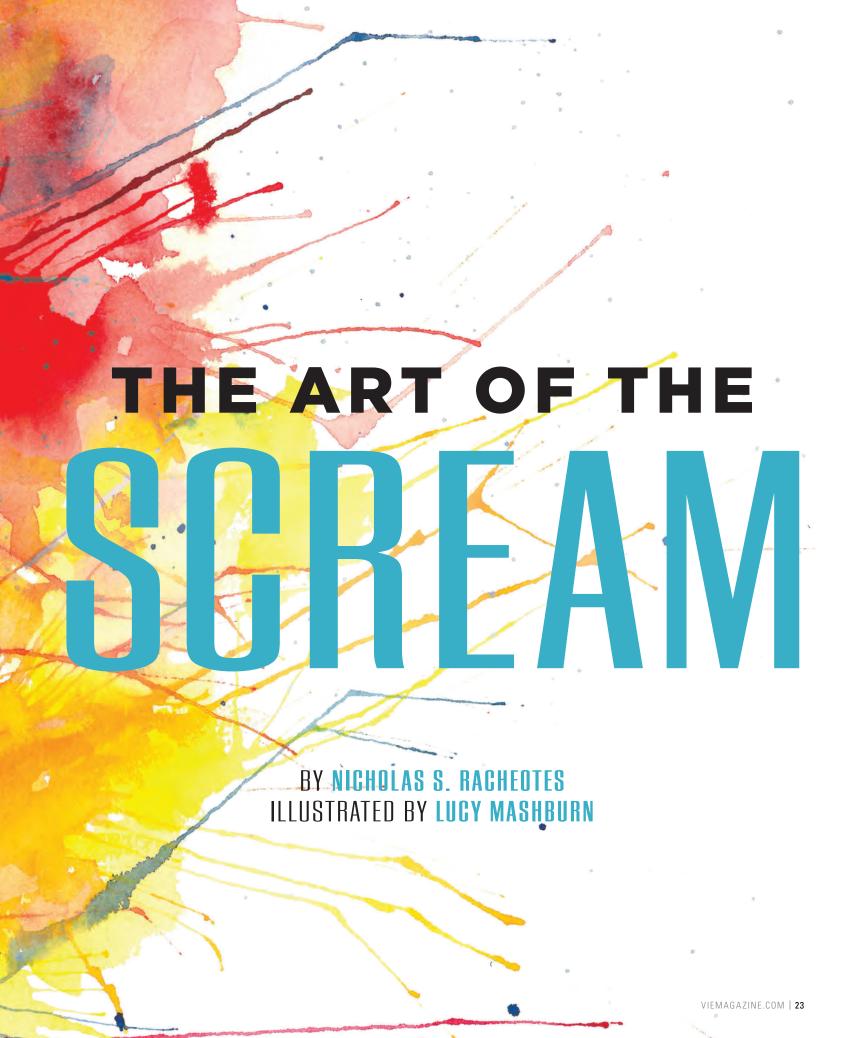
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IF YOU ARE EXPECTING A DISQUISITION ON EDVARD MUNCH'S

famous painting *The Scream* and its meaning and history since its creation in 1893, I'm going to disappoint you. The lost art of the scream of which I sing lies with early and not-so-early rock music. Gone are the days when the inattentive listener would be warned of an impending guitar or sax solo by an ear-shattering outburst by the lead vocalist.

THE LOST ART OF THE SCREW OF WHICH I SING LIES WITH EARLY AND NOT-SO-EARLY ROCK MUSIC.

At this point, you should be prepared to play along by following the bouncing cursor to your favorite music download site so that you can allow examples to wash over you. Leaving aside the eponymous Screamin' Jay Hawkins, who "put a spell" on us, one of the greatest screamers of all time was Little Richard Penniman. His influence stretched across the decades and even across the pond to England. "Good Golly, Miss Molly," later covered by Mitch Ryder (who could hold his own in the scream department), "Tutti-Frutti," "Lucille," and that playful poke at adultery, "Long Tall Sally," have aged as well as their author. If you are a fan of the Beatles, you may have encountered Paul McCartney's homage to Little Richard in "I Saw Her Standing There."

While we're talking about the Beatles, the shy, retiring George Harrison may have been too polite to cut loose, but that was certainly not the case with John Lennon. His wonderful shriek on the Beatles' cover of Larry Williams's "Slow Down" is but one example of his powerful lungs. But we needn't linger over the British invaders, such as the Dave Clark Five, because we also "got to do the thing with soul."

Brother Ray Charles shouted his lament when admonished to vacate the premises in "Hit the Road Jack." He also expressed sentiments at the complete opposite end of the emotional spectrum in "What'd I Say," overstepping the bounds of what was acceptable on AM radio in its heyday. Later, few such restrictions confronted the Godfather of Soul, James Brown, when his prolonged and profound screams in recorded live concerts were of operatic proportions—and are too numerous to mention.

While Mr. Brown was "feeling good," a blue-eyed soul group, the Young Rascals, who eventually matured into the Rascals, were also nearly breaking glass, if

not the sound barrier, in their number "Come on Up," in their own killing version of "Slow Down," and in "Good Lovin'," with its channel switching that will have your earbuds blooming. In the 1960s, when the Chambers Brothers elected to jump the chasm separating gospel/blues from psychedelic, the yell in "Time Has Come Today" is remarkable for its sheer duration.

But why are we letting the men have all the fun? Before Tina Turner wondered "What's Love Got to Do With It," she drove the recording equipment to distraction and distortion with her vocals on "A Fool in Love." Even the Supremes threw their audience a very loud kiss in "When the Love Light Starts Shining through His Eyes." The Shangri-Las practiced the art of osculation in "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" and later shouted for the leader of the pack to "Look out!"

We cannot leave the women without attending to the Texas pearl, Janis Joplin. When she invited us to "Take a Piece of My Heart," she sent us over the precipice. The way was prepared for Beyoncé's plea for devotion, if not fidelity, in "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" and for the light and not-so-light pop porn interjections of Katy Perry's "Firework." With the dawn of the twenty-first century, the





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IGUESS THE ART OF THE ROCK 'N' ROLL SCREAM ISN'T UTTERLY EXTINCT; IT HAS JUST MIGRATED FROM THE SINGERS OF THE 1950S AND '60S TO THE AUDIENCES OF TODAY.

singer-songwriters have become so fixated on their, own poetry, and the hip-hoppers and rappers so preoccupied with dance and night moves, as to be completely unconcerned with shouting us into a virtuosic instrumental break.

In the end, if you've been playing along, the wax may have melted in your ears, your clicking digit may be numb, and you may have compiled a far better list of rock screamers than the one presented above. Are you still searching for where the rockin' scream has gone? I suggest attending a concert. You'll find grandmothers and grandfathers screaming at the Rolling Stones and Parrotheads doing their part for Jimmy Buffett as they become citizens of Margaritaville. Should your tastes veer toward country, you'll find truck-driving

men and aspiring redneck women giving it up for their girls with guitars or favorite male artists. Did I leave out the millions of millennials picking up the echoes from what used to greet Elvis? I guess the art of the rock 'n' roll scream isn't utterly extinct; it has just migrated from the singers of the 1950s and '60s to the audiences of today.

Nick Racheotes is a product of the Boston public schools, Brandeis University, and Boston College, from which he holds a PhD in history. Since he retired from teaching at Framingham State University, Nick and his wife, Pat, divide their time among Boston, Cape Cod, and the Western world.

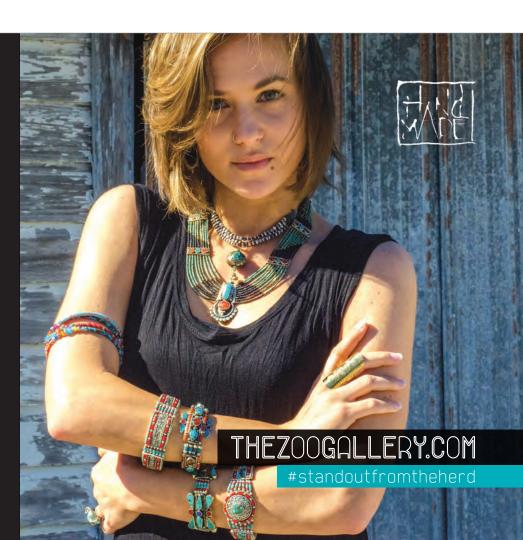


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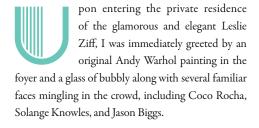
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My eyes were immediately drawn to a statuesque model in a sherbet-orange silk peplum cocktail dress that had "Palm Springs pinup glamour" vibes all over it. This refreshing cruise/resort collection certainly did not disappoint; I heard rave-review chatter as I moved through the space and admired each and every piece.

Siriano embraced a sweet 1960s aesthetic for this collection. He walked me through his entire collection and explained that his inspiration came from historian





Peter Moruzzi's book *Palm Springs Holiday*. The book captures the social scene of women living and vacationing in the Coachella Valley in the mid-twentieth century, and Siriano nailed his vision of the times effortlessly.



Photo by Susan Pfautsch

A color palette of bright neons and metallic pastels, silhouettes draped in satin, chiffon mini dresses, cotton eyelet shirting, crop top and skirt sets, flirty rompers, and cropped blazers make this collection a sure winner for the beach or a glamorous island getaway. Each and every piece could be considered a must-have for any fashionista's wardrobe.

Bravo, Christian! ■

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Queen OF THE BUNNAY

NAOMI CAMPBELL'S FASHION FOR RELIEF

 $\it by \, {\sf JORDAN} \, {\sf STAGGS}$ $\it Photography \, by \, {\sf FRAZER} \, {\sf HARRISON} \, / \, {\sf GETTY} \, {\sf IMAGES} \, {\sf FOR} \, {\sf FASHION} \, {\sf FOR} \, {\sf RELIEF}$

It's been almost thirty years since a young Naomi Campbell was plucked from London's Covent Garden district and launched into stardom as one of the world's most recognizable faces. She appeared on the cover of *Elle* UK at just fifteen years old and joined the ranks of the original supermodels, along with Linda Evangelista and Christy Turlington—the three of them became known as the Trinity in the 1990s.

Since she first gained "It girl" status, Campbell has appeared in the pages and on the covers of the biggest fashion magazines in the world, including *Vogue* publications in the UK, France, Russia, and the United States; *Vanity Fair*; and *Harper's Bazaar*. In 1991, she also became the first black model to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine. Campbell has walked the runway for the most prominent fashion houses, including Dior, Chanel, Alaïa, and Versace; she has been photographed by the world's most notable fashion photographers: Annie Leibovitz, Peter Lindbergh, Patrick Demarchelier, and many more; and she has appeared in worldwide ad campaigns for iconic designer brands such as Yves Saint Laurent, Dolce and Gabbana, Burberry, Prada, and Marc Jacobs, to name just a few.

In 1990, Campbell was declared "the reigning megamodel of them all" in an exposé on the top models of her generation in *Interview* magazine—but her talents don't end with sashaying down the runway in high heels or posing flawlessly for photographs. Campbell's other creative ventures have included releasing an R & B album and a novel, appearing in various television shows and films throughout the years, and serving as executive producer, judge, and coach on Oxygen network's modeling competition series *The Face*.

THE ERA OF SUPERMODELS
MAY HAVE ENDED. BUT
CAMPBELL STILL ROCKS
THE RUNWAY WITH STYLE
AND GRACE—AND ALL
FOR A GOOD CAUSE.

The era of supermodels may have ended, but Campbell still rocks the runway with style and grace—and all for a good cause. She founded Fashion for Relief in 2005, with the purpose of helping victims of Hurricane Katrina after it devastated the city of New Orleans and much of the southern Gulf Coast region. Since its inception, the organization has raised millions of dollars to aid victims of tragedies and natural disasters around the world.

On Valentine's Day 2015, Naomi Campbell's Fashion for Relief showed love to the world by hitting the runway at the Theatre at Lincoln Center during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week New York. Campbell, along with friends, fellow models, and celebrities, pranced the catwalk and had fun wearing pieces created and donated by Diane von Furstenberg, Proenza Schouler, Marc Jacobs, Emilio Pucci, Givenchy, Roberto Cavalli, Calvin Klein, Thom Browne, and more. DJ Jeremy Healy curated the beats as a packed house, which included celebrities, media, and fans who had purchased exclusive tickets to the event, looked on. Proceeds supported the Ebola Survival Fund, a coalition of developmental organizations that works directly with communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone to help those affected by the Ebola virus.

Highlights from the Fashion for Relief show in New York included Kelly Osbourne and Brad Goreski giggling their way down the runway hand in hand, *Boardwalk Empire* and *Hunger Games* actor Jeffrey Wright speaking about the perils of the



Kelly Osbourne and Brad Goresk





Ebola outbreak, Campbell's *Empire* costar Bryshere Gray proving he's got the makings of a runway model himself, Paralympic athlete Blake Leeper dazzling the room with the biggest smile, Mary J. Blige looking absolutely *stunning* in a black sequined dress by Burberry and receiving grand applause from the crowd, and, of course, the Queen of the Runway herself.

Campbell once again showed her prowess on the catwalk, appearing first in a flowing blue high-low gown with laces crisscrossing the plunging neckline, a creation by Emilio Pucci that was set off by a pair of rock star—worthy silver booties. She later wowed onlookers in a flirty and fun black-and-white Givenchy dress adorned with silver studs and accessorized with black lace gloves and a dazzling choker necklace. Campbell's expert runway saunter, along with her fierce determination and undeniable beauty, mesmerized everyone in the room—she was a true showstopper.

The show's grand finale featured Campbell and all of her fellow models and celebrities returning for a final walk wearing white T-shirts bearing a black zero, representing the goal to get to zero cases of the Ebola virus worldwide.

According to the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly twenty-seven thousand people have been infected and more than eleven thousand people have died of Ebola since the 2014 outbreak began in West Africa.

Jeffrey Wright, creator of the Ebola Survival Fund, helped Campbell recruit celebrities to support his cause and to remind the public that although the Ebola virus was shut down in the United States and Europe fairly quickly last year, it is still a major threat in other parts of the world. "The message that we'll try to send tonight is that the reason we shut it down in this country is because we have strong health insurance here; we have strong infrastructure; and, unfortunately, these countries don't," Wright explained. "So we can play a role to help them protect themselves now, but also going forward in the future, so we don't have to come back to this situation again."

Other celebrities walking the runway included Rosario Dawson, Paris Hilton, NeNe Leakes, Tyson Beckford, Michelle Rodriguez, Kelly Rutherford, Quincy, Cassie Ventura, and Joe Zee. VIP guests attending the show included Justin Bieber, Christina Milian, Vivica A. Fox, Russell Simmons, Estelle, Zac Posen, Adrienne Bailon, Frankie Grande, DJ Cassidy, Miss J Alexander, Bevy Smith, and Tamron Hall.

No matter whether they were sitting in the front row, the risers, or the media pit, or traipsing down the runway, all in attendance could appreciate the fun vibe of the Fashion for Relief show and were educated on the importance of its mission. "It's extremely important, and I believe this is why we've all been given something—a gift and a platform—not to just keep it to ourselves but to bless other people with it," Mary J. Blige said at the event.

Along with evoking visions of a goddess on the runway, Campbell continues to use her superstardom as a force for good by supporting charity and awareness groups fighting poverty, racism, and other global issues. In addition to Fashion for Relief, these groups include the Diversity Coalition, Balance Diversity, We Love Brazil, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Made in Africa Foundation, amfAR - the Foundation for AIDS Research, Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Citizens for Justice and Peace, the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, and more.

To learn more, or to contribute to the Ebola Survival Fund, visit www.ebolasurvivalfund.org. For more information about Naomi Campbell's many charitable projects, visit www.naomicampbell.com.











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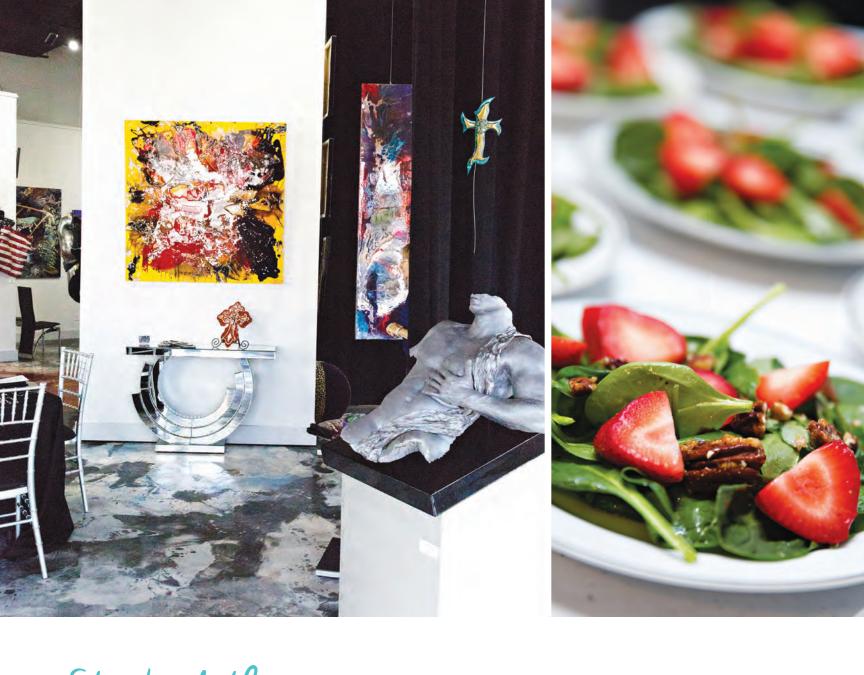
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Step Inside the CREATION LOUNGE

THE ARTISTIC HEARTBEAT OF 30AVENUE

By Demetrius Fuller Photography by Jacqueline Ward Images n the oasis of 30Avenue's whitewashed facades, meticulously manicured greenery, and liquid focal points lies an explosion of vibrancy unparalleled in our stretch of paradise. Nestled in the middle of what is dubbed the "Gateway to 30A," adjacent to the main green space, is V. Lala Galleries. In the twilight of the evening, peeking through the bottom of the majestic palm fronds, one can see the illuminated wall sign with the tag "Art | Sculpture | Creation Lounge."

Artist Velia Lala's masterpiece gallery concept has come to life along the avenue. 30Avenue is the setting, but V. Lala Galleries offers a multifunctional and malleable space that is all at once an art gallery replete with original works by Velia and select artists, a unique retail boutique featuring artisan jewelry and pet couture, a boutique wine bar, an event space, and a "creation lounge" where Velia personally leads classes on a variety of art techniques.

Born and raised in Louisiana, Velia has enjoyed a multifaceted career spanning more than thirty years. From abstract works to classical sketches to castings, her work frequently reflects her background and her zest for life. Velia's original and custom works exude life and energy with their resilient colors and textures that evoke authentic and positive emotions. Her talent is showcased through a multitude of artistic media, including acrylic, mixed medium, high-gloss epoxy, photography, and casting/bronzing.

Visitors experience the creative process immediately upon entering the gallery. The floors are a work of art created by Velia, and they flow throughout the main gallery space in waves of gray, black, and white. At the entrance of the creation lounge, pops of orange, blue, and red foreshadow the vibe of the space within. Worktables, blank canvases, drying canvases, and pieces freshly created by art class participants comprise the landscape. They are interspersed with Velia's new and in-progress works, art supplies, palettes, and smocks and a milieu of paints, tools, and brushes that would inspire any closet Picasso.

Perusing the gallery, visitors will notice the exquisite sculptures that adorn the space. Velia creates these life-size replicas of the human body, technically called life castings, from molds of human models. The finished products are so detailed and beautiful that they look like real people. From there, clients can choose a custom finish of plate (natural, bronze, or metallic), paint, or epoxy. In this instance, life comes to art—and vice versa.

V. Lala Galleries offers a variety of classes each month with details updated on the gallery's website. Private classes are becoming increasingly popular; they are often paired with wine and food from the gallery's menu of boutique wines, small plates, and craft beers. Private classes are a blast and have also been used for special events, such as company team-building sessions, girls' nights out, and bridal parties. Velia is an expert teacher who spends time with each student, focusing on his or her concept and creative process. (In some cases, the wine also assists, but I digress.) Everyone receives a twentyfour-by-thirty-inch canvas and has free rein within the creation lounge to choose tools, paints, and supplemental materials, such as beads, corrugated paper shapes, or epoxy.



Velia's original and custom works exude life and energy with their resilient colors and textures that evoke authentic and positive emotions.



While art is the centerpiece of V. Lala Galleries, the space was envisioned as a multipurpose backdrop for private dinners, special events, corporate meetings, and fund-raisers for nonprofit groups. The gallery has an impressive ability to accommodate seated dinners for up to 110 people or cocktail receptions for up to 230. The space can be rented in full or in part based on your needs, with access to a catering kitchen, rental items, and on-site wine and beer offerings. A recent "mystery dinner" event garnered praise from the more than thirty attendees and provided a very entertaining themed evening.

One very clever feature of the main gallery space is its hanging draperies. These fifteen-foot black drapes are on a unique track system, allowing the option to position them in multiple configurations around the gallery, creating the space that you need for an event or for specific artwork that can be hung on each panel. One always has the ability to create at V. Lala Galleries!





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The Beauty of PERCEPTION

BY SALLIE W. BOYLES
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MELISSA PAYNE BAKER

"People come up to me at shows and say, 'I see the sailboat,'" reveals abstract artist Melissa Payne Baker, "and I say, 'That's great!' The beauty of an abstract work is that it allows each person to see and feel different things."

Whatever one perceives from Baker's oil and acrylic paints on canvas, her intention is for the individual "to find comfort and be drawn in." While working, her mood is calm. "It's a relaxing feel when I start to paint," she says.

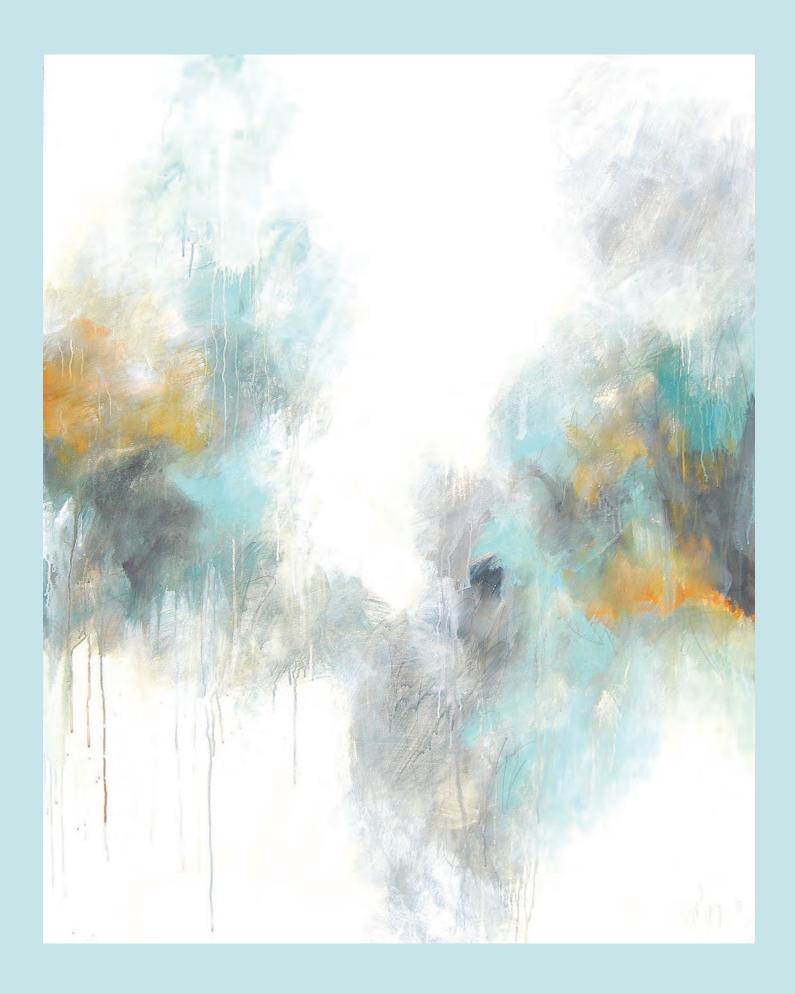
Baker's distinctive style—dreamy compositions of rich hues and subtle textures—originated with a palette knife. Growing up in Mississippi, Baker always loved the process and effect of working with a palette knife, a technique she acquired while accompanying her grandfather, an oil painter, to art classes at Memphis State University in Tennessee. More recently, she has been painting with big brushes, sometimes in concert with a palette knife.

"My mom is an artist, a retired muralist," Baker says, revealing the many sources from which her talent and inspiration stem. "I used to sit on the floor and watch her paint." In a similar vein, Baker's brother and father fabricate metals for vintage cars, and her grandmother was a national flower judge.

Baker's passion for interior design emerged while hanging wallpaper with her mother's best friend in many of Memphis's grand homes. Even so, Baker is a practical woman who studied business and graduated with a marketing degree from the University of Mississippi. "Everything's a business," she proclaims, "even art!" Pursuing her love of design after college, Baker went to work for a firm in Columbia, South Carolina. Later, she moved to Atlanta and landed a job with Glyn Weakley Interiors. Baker also met her husband, Rick, in Atlanta, where they now reside with their three-year-old son, Payne.

While busy with interior design, Baker continued to experiment with her palette knife, regularly getting together with her best friend, Michelle, for "art night," a time of painting, talking, and sipping wine. "You've got to start selling your work," Michelle would say. Tragically, Michelle was killed in a car accident, but her seeds of encouragement helped Baker blossom. When Glyn Weakley Interiors was asked to donate an auction item for a prominent church's fund-raiser, Baker offered one of her paintings: an abstract image of an angel. The outcome confirmed that her work had merit. "A bidding war broke out," explains Baker. "The one who lost called me the next day to commission a new painting." Anne Irwin, owner of Anne Irwin Fine Art in Atlanta, was the first gallerist to feature Baker's work after she found it at another local fund-raiser.

Another personal milestone for Baker—the one that ultimately let her identify herself as an artist—involved her participation in Spotlight on Art, an annual event hosted by Atlanta's Trinity School that showcases fine works by the Southeast's emerging and established artists. "My painting was next to Steve Penley's," says Baker, who still feels blessed and proud because of the association. "Two weeks later, Ann Huff (of







WHILE SOME ARTISTS MAY NEVER PONDER THE DECOR THAT WILL ACCOMPANY THEIR CREATIONS. BAKER'S INCLINATION IS TO PAINT SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL THAT COMPLEMENTS A DESIGN SCHEME.

Huff Harrington Fine Art in Atlanta) called and asked me to come by." Since that meeting eight years ago, Huff Harrington has represented Baker. Today, an array of galleries and design firms throughout the Southeast carry her work.

"I found Melissa on a design blog," says Melissa Skowlund, owner of Summer House Lifestyle, a company that retails artwork, home furnishings, and gifts and offers full interior design services to shoppers in Grayton Beach, Florida. "When I opened the store in 2012, I called her right away to see if she'd want to be our featured artist. I admire her because she can take her palette knife and produce a masterpiece right on the spot—in no time at all—using her surroundings."

Skowlund, who has a background in graphic design and spent years in advertising and marketing before relocating from Wisconsin to Northwest Florida, describes her aesthetic as "sophisticated beach." Glorifying the comfortable, casual lifestyle, she incorporates custom fabrics, original artwork, and other refinements. Initially concentrating on children's rooms, Skowlund has responded to her customers' demands, implementing three expansions over the past three years to provide "all things beautiful" for furnishings and decor throughout the home, including outdoor living spaces.

While some artists may never ponder the decor that will accompany their creations, Baker's inclination is to paint something beautiful that complements a design scheme. Her approach is especially valuable to interior design resources like Summer House that cater to a certain look. Skowlund, for instance, gravitates to navy as a staple color and adds bright shades like turquoise for pop. Baker also loves working with blues and is collaborating with Skowlund to produce a custom series using "coastal colors" for Summer House.

To choose a color palette for any painting, Baker frequently seeks inspiration from the latest fabrics, rooms, and other concepts featured on the pages she has torn from magazines; these pages fill a large wicker basket in her home studio. "I study interior magazines for designs and the next big colors," she says. "When I paint, I'm often pretending that I'm doing a commission for the room on display." As a result, for commissioned paintings, Baker loves working with clients' fabric samples and room photos, but she suggests that customers should simply trust her with the implementation and "let it all come out rather than giving too much direction. I come in with colors in mind and the painting takes me where it's supposed to go. I like the flow of color to be vivid," she adds, "but also soft with white space."

Images from her trip to Paris in 2014 have also materialized in Baker's work. "Even the gray buildings there are rich in color," she muses. Based on her numerous photos, Baker has so far interpreted Parisian colors and compositions on about a dozen canvases.

No matter what stimulates the creative process, Baker insists, "I don't let it leave the studio unless I would hang it on my wall. That's why I'll say you never know how many paintings any final piece you see has been through from my reworking it." Painting over the original, she points out, is just a stage in the process, and it enriches the painting's texture.

Along with her paintings, Baker also produces usable art: silk scarves and glassware. Printed from photographs Baker takes of her paintings, the scarves are available to order from preselected designs, or clients may request a custom creation based on another of her paintings. Either way, she personally signs each one, as she also does with every hand-painted piece of glass. "I wanted them to look free and loose," says Baker, referring to her signature brushstroke design. Beginning with a jeweled-tone base color, she adds a touch of gold for an elegant, festive flair. She'll also produce custom glass sets to complement clients' napkins and other accessories.

The enterprising artist is also branching out with a line of prints called Sasha, exclusively developed for Ballard Designs. "My niece calls me Sasha," Baker says of the name. Debuting in August, the new brand demonstrates a major marketer's faith in Baker's broad appeal, but Baker remains humble and grateful to God for her ability to earn a living through her art.

When asked how other aspiring artists might attain success, Baker's primary advice is to work hard. Beyond that, she says, "Study and research and always practice. Try different techniques and media. You have to take your passion and live it. I'm always practicing and daydreaming about what I want to do next."

From rising during the predawn hours to networking and supporting other artists by attending their shows, Baker not only lives the life of an artist but also loves every aspect. Art night, by the way, remains a highlight on her schedule, with up to twenty girlfriends taking part. Baker is also considering the idea of one-on-one consultations for artists who feel stuck and want new perspectives on their paintings. Most importantly, with Payne just beginning to show an interest in art, Baker is eager to supply him with the materials and lots of encouragement!

Readers can learn more about Melissa Payne Baker's work from Summer House Lifestyle or from www.melissapaynebaker.com.











Photo by Andrea Wood Photography



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Held in the opulent Palm Court Ballroom of London's Waldorf Hilton the evening of Friday, February 20, 2015, Paul Costelloe's "Jewels in the Mist" showcased a collection that was inspired by and created in the beautiful medieval village of Corinaldo in the Marche region of Italy. Over the centuries, the idyllic area has been home to numerous talented creators, including Raphael, a master painter of the Renaissance. In a nod to that artistic period, Costelloe's collection featured handcrafted tweeds and jacquards in spectacular jewel tones: emerald, mulberry, blush, fuchsia, sapphire blue, and bittersweet orange. Choreographing the runway through the marble-clad 1920s ballroom and using seemingly extra-tall models (perhaps that can be attributed to the massive piles of hair in modernized Edwardian updos) was fresh! This was one of my favorite shows at London Fashion Week, and the fact that this designer hails from Ireland (my second home) made me feel an even stronger connection to him.

If Costelloe's designs communicate anything about the culture and the women he designs for, there should be a return to dressing like a lady—but with an updated point of view-for the fall and winter this year. Of the collection, Costelloe says, "This reflects my passion for color, textures, and femininity to flatter and celebrate the female form." Since fashion is wearable art and has an impact on how you feel as you present yourself to the world, if you were to don clothes from his collection, you'd be communicating modern femininity and elegance with a whole lot of "kick"! The whimsical personality of the collection, coupled with superb craftsmanship, reveals a very confident and unique designer.

"THIS REFLECTS MY PASSION FOR COLOR, TEXTURES, AND FEMININITY TO FLATTER AND CELEBRATE THE FEMALE FORM."













SINCE FASHION IS WEARABLE ART AND HAS AN IMPACT ON HOW YOU FEEL AS YOU PRESENT YOURSELF TO THE WORLD, IF YOU WERE TO DON CLOTHES FROM HIS COLLECTION, YOU'D BE COMMUNICATING MODERN FEMININITY AND ELEGANCE WITH A WHOLE LOT OF "KICK"!







An established name in British fashion for over three decades, Costelloe studied and lived in Paris and Milan during his early years with stints in New York and Philadelphia as well. In 1994, he opened his flagship UK store in Knightsbridge. According to his biography from the British Fashion Council, he is "always practical and refreshingly free of pretension." Costelloe's résumé also includes having designed uniforms for national airlines such as Aer Lingus, British Airways, and Delta Airlines, and sports teams such as the England Women's Cricket Team and the Great British Federation Cup Women's Tennis Team. Most recently, he designed the looks for the wives of the European team at the Ryder Cup in Chicago this year.

Paul Costelloe continues to build his womenswear business in the UK and Ireland and to strengthen his brand by emerging into a diverse array of other product lines including menswear, housewares, jewelry, handbags, and corporate wear. Costelloe hopes to deepen his brand's roots in the UK and Ireland while also exploring new territories abroad and embracing the global prospects opening across the industry.

To learn more, visit www.paulcostelloe.com.









MORE FROM LONDON FASHION WEEK

From February 19 through 24, the British Fashion Council invited top fashion designers, models, buyers, and media from around the world to come together in London for a first look at the 2015 autumn/winter styles. Somerset House, a major cultural arts hub in the heart of the city's theatre district, played host to the event's headquarters, main runways, and designer showrooms—other venues around London also held events and exclusive runway shows. Highlights included an enormously well-attended presentation by Burberry Prorsum, a leaf-strewn runway and vintage-inspired looks at Jasper Conran, celebrities sitting front row at many shows, and much more. The British Fashion Council holds events throughout the year with the mission of recognizing and celebrating artistic talent in the industry, and this season did not disappoint!

www.londonfashionweek.com

Top: London Fashion Week at Somerset House I Photo courtesy of the British Fashion Council Bottom left: Jasper Conran presentation | Photo by Abigail Ryan Bottom right: Burberry Prorsum presentation | Photo courtesy of the British Fashion Council



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aving worked with glass for over a decade, Grayton Beach, Florida-based artist Mary Hong uses a unique style called ShardART to produce mesmerizing results. "It's a mosaic-like technique of applying glass to canvas to enhance a painting," she explains. "I love glass because it's shiny and permanent. The color will never fade, and the brilliance of those colors is intense when light passes through. It's another dimension to color that you can't get from just paint." Her first piece of ShardART was a crushed-glass seahorse on canvas. "I *loved* it and so did everyone else at the show in which it debuted." Her work earned Hong the honor of being named the 2014 South Walton Artist of the Year.

Drawn to Northwest Florida's marine life and coastal landscape for subject matter, Hong says, "I like it with a twist." Her perspective is contemporary. "I love simplicity with subtle hints of insanity on the outskirts. It keeps me on my toes."

Having amassed thousands of pounds of raw inventory, Hong says, "I've developed great relationships with local commercial glass companies." The tempered glass they provide is now her staple. Persuading them to donate their castoffs to her rather than to take the easier route to the dumpster, however, takes some strategizing. "They may have a ton when you only have so much space. The good thing is that glass is something I can store outside; it doesn't matter if it gets wet!"



Also appreciative of individuals' contributions, Hong says, "I tell everyone that I only need pretty glass, and somehow I think we all know what that means!" She simply asks that people not give her any more wine or beer bottles.

Before putting the donated supplies to use, Hongs stays busy cutting, crushing, and dyeing. When she first began using tempered glass, she says, "I added glass beads that I had sitting around and then added old jewelry." Finding that she was buying more and more beads, Hong thought of coloring the glass herself. "I had a ton of different kinds of paints, including glass paints and powders. I also knew what I wanted, but I wasn't sure if I could get the process down to a level where I wouldn't have to spend much time. I like to work fast; anything I use has to be quick and easy, or else I won't stick with it."

Experimenting and succeeding, Hong currently produces over ten soft tints of tempered glass, which she also sells in the Shard Shop, her newly opened retail boutique for ShardART classes, make-your-own creativity, and supplies. "If I can't find the glass I need for a project, I'll look to glassblowers, or I'll make it myself in my kiln. I also believe in serendipity, and a lot of times the perfect piece is right in front of me—I just never saw it!"

Besides glass, shells, and jewelry for embellishments, Hong opts for "anything shiny and nonplastic. I use shell casings, porcelain and clay, doll parts and old toys, rusted (or not) metal, Christmas ornaments, plates, tiles. Broken vases and barware are awesome!" The sheer volume and variations of components necessitate order—the glass pieces alone must be sorted according to countless colors and dimensions (for example, chunks, shards, crushed bits, bubbles, and circles).

"I LOVE SIMPLICITY WITH SUBTLE HINTS OF INSANITY ON THE OUTSKIRTS. IT KEEPS ME ON MY TOES."

When beginning a piece, Hong says, "I try to make sure I have everything I need. My work takes a lot of time to complete, and I work in stages, but when I'm in the 'lay down glass' stage, I want it all nearby."

Her creative process begins with a sketch. "I usually sketch everything by hand," she reveals. "I *love* to sketch. People would be surprised to see my sketches; they are strong but simple and tell so much!" For more elaborate commissioned projects, Hong produces a mock-up in Photoshop. With the concept defined, she proceeds to a "pretty strong painting" and finishes with glass. Once again suggesting that she prefers to "move along," Hong completes her work in stages that she likens to mixing, baking, and decorating cookies in batches.

"I have days when I paint only canvases—from ten to fifty in a day," she says, depending on the sizes. "They sit around until I have a need for one. Then there are 'glass days' when I lay out the canvases and arrange the glass. Sometimes I have 'word days' when I pull out painted boards and make words out of glass on each one. I have 'tree of life days' too; I pull out *anything* round, especially sliced bottles and candle votive holders, and place them in branches." Hong also devotes time to mirrors, a collection instigated by a designer who wanted an elegant one adorned with shells for a client.

Upon laying out the main components, Hong reveals, "You have to hit the pause button" before gluing them. Nevertheless, if she later decides to shift things around, "a little sprinkle of glass" hides small imperfections. With all other enhancements in place, she finishes with a drizzle of epoxy resin over the entire work and adds her signature: "a big fat M in white on a clear piece of glass!"

Hong, who is also known for creating exquisite full-scale murals with traditional glass tiles, says, "I've done kitchen and bathroom walls, staircases, windows, wall partitions. They are fun, but nerve-racking, too!" In the past, she adds, "I spent a lot of time with kiln-formed glass, melting it in a kiln, creating bowls, vessels, jewelry, and nightlights, on up to an installation of a series of floating glass fish at a resort on Cape Cod. I started in fused glass at a time when it was still mysterious." Admittedly one who loses interest with the mundane, Hong says, "My latest body of work is my fave by far—probably because it's unique and I dreamed it all up!"







Hong has always been an artist, she says. "I remember my mom telling me that when I was very young I would draw for hours and couldn't seem to get enough of the need to create." Even so, she didn't consider art classes. "I had no idea art could be taught!" she exclaims. When she was failing Accounting 101 at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, a caring dean opened her eyes by recommending creative courses. Hong graduated with a degree in design.

"I LOVE GLASS BECAUSE IT'S SHINY AND PERMANENT. THE COLOR WILL NEVER FADE, AND THE BRILLIANCE OF THOSE COLORS IS INTENSE WHEN LIGHT PASSES THROUGH. IT'S ANOTHER DIMENSION TO COLOR THAT YOU CAN'T GET FROM JUST PAINT."

Over the years, Hong's professional path has taken numerous twists and turns. Interior design failed to hold her interest, so she went to work as a flight attendant. Living in Hawaii and loving the freedom to travel, Hong decided to freelance in graphic design. Encountering shops full of glass beads while on a personal trip to Greece sparked a new love affair; she returned home with a stockpile of them. Hong then tried jewelry making before realizing that the glass itself, not the beads, captivated her. She found a lampworker willing to teach her techniques like firing, annealing, and cutting glass. When she relocated to Northwest Florida with her husband, Hong discovered painting, thanks to an encouraging artist friend.

Reflecting, Hong credits each phase of her artistic growth to mentors and others who have inspired her, including her husband and children. Now a teacher, she loves giving ShardART classes at the Shard Shop and homeschooling her eight-year-old twins, Kai and Rain.

Meanwhile, the demand for ShardART is strong. In addition to the Mary Hong Studio Gallery and other Florida establishments, galleries in California, Arizona, Texas, and Louisiana now carry Hong's originals. She's also pondering the idea of introducing a separate collection of paintings without glass. On the opposite end of the spectrum, John-Richard, a worldwide supplier to the furniture and home accessories industries, is now selling some of Hong's selected creations as giclée prints with glass.

Through it all, Hong remains grateful for the opportunity to keep creating and sharing her work. "So many wonderful things come of my work when I'm left to play. I'm not making art; I'm playing!"

Readers can learn more about Mary Hong and her collections by visiting wiredglass. com or by calling (850) 231-1416. Information about making ShardART—including options for taking in-person or online classes, buying materials, and finding tools—is available at shardshop.com and facebook.com/shardshopstudio, or by calling (850) 231-0544.





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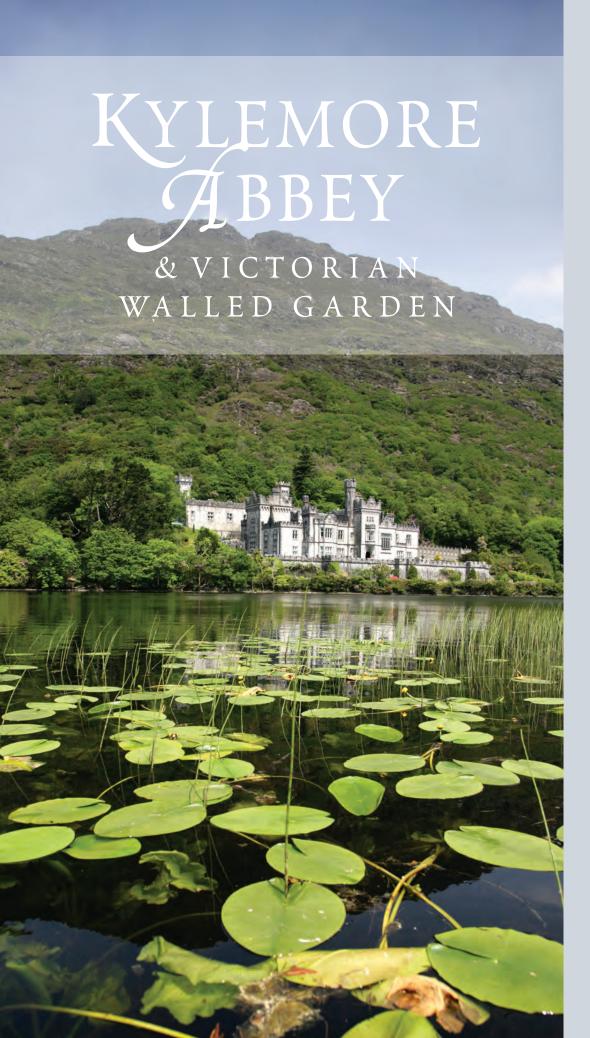


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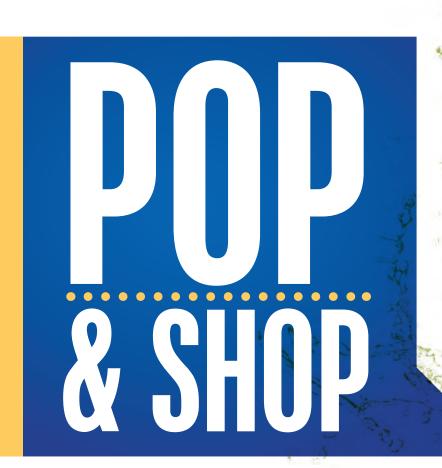


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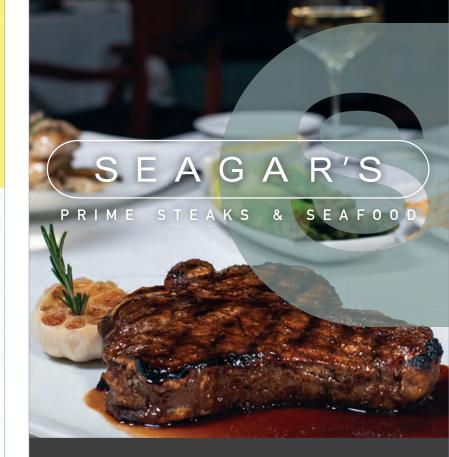












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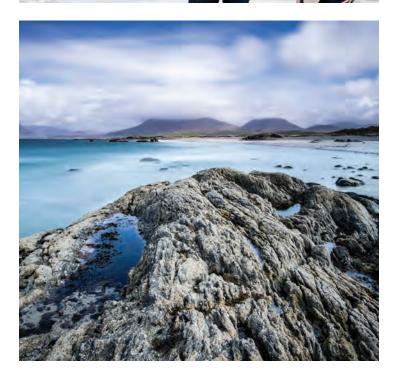


CONNEMARA EXPLORE IRELAND'S ADVENTUROUS WEST COAST Life

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ON THE COVER

The photo was taken in early May of this year while I was walking my dog, Iggy, along Renvyle Beach. Photography wasn't my primary reason for being out and about that day; however, the photographer in me is always prepared. The clouds rolling over the hills in the distance and the turquoise Atlantic Ocean inspired me to scramble over the rocky pools, set up the camera, and take a few shots while Iggy waited impatiently on the beach.

- Mark Furniss, photographer

A Yorkshireman born and bred, Mark arrived in Connemara in the late 1990s to work in a hotel for the summer season. Like so many others, he fell in love with the area and has been proud to call it home ever since. Mark's photographic journeys have taken him across Europe, Asia, and beyond, and *Connemara Life* is thrilled to have his work featured on the cover and appear throughout its inaugural issue.

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THE COURTYARD, STATION HOUSE, CLIFDEN, CO. GALWAY, IRELAND



FOUNDER / PUBLISHER

LISA BURWELL Lisa@ConnemaraLife.ie

FOUNDER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GERALD BURWELL Gerald@ConnemaraLife.ie

EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR

JORDAN STAGGS

CHIEF COPY EDITOR

MARGARET STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

ROS COYNE, SEAN COYNE, LAURIE CROWLEY, MICHAEL GIBBONS, NICHOLAS GRUNDY, SIMON LEYLAND

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ART DIRECTOR

TRACEY THOMAS

FILM CURATOR

SHANE REYNOLDS

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

DEVAN ALLEGRI WATKINS, LUCY MASHBURN, RINN GARLANGER

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

LAURIE CROWLEY, MARK FURNISS, NICHOLAS GRUNDY, AOIFE HERRIOTT, PAUL KEELING, TOURISM IRELAND IMAGERY

ADVERTISING, SALES, AND MARKETING

VP OF MARKETING

BILL WECKEL Bill@ConnemaraLife.ie

BRANCH OFFICE MANAGER

SHARON DUANE Sharon@ConnemaraLife.ie

WEB DEVELOPERS

MEGHN HILL MARK THOMAS

MARKETING ASSISTANT

ABIGAIL RYAN

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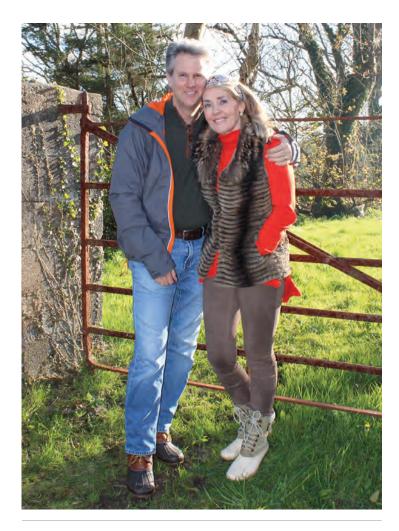
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TELLING A GOOD YARN



Publishers/Founders Gerald and Lisa Burwell Photo by Lucy Mashburn

Why would we venture off to a faraway land to tell stories? It's simple. We love telling a good yarn as much as we love hearing one. And, no one tells a better story than the Irish, so we dedicate this publication to you! Since you're not ones to trust blow-ins, we hope we do you proud!

We are excited to introduce the inaugural issue of *Connemara Life* to readers in Ireland, America, and beyond. My personal love of Ireland—and the special place that Connemara has had in my heart since I first visited her shores in the summer of 1977—will never wane. It was my mother's love before mine. She, her siblings, and her mother, who was born in Ireland, spent several years here before returning to America, so it truly was her home away from home. Since my first visit, I have travelled back here on numerous occasions with my husband, siblings, aunts,

uncles, and grandparents from both sides of my family; each trip has its own unique and special memories for me.

When my beloved mother, Marie Bernadette Eldridge Ryan, passed away four years ago, I was devastated by the loss of her, as were many others. *Connemara Life* pays homage to my mother and my father, who died just recently—and to their Irish heritage. It is also a special tribute to my dear great-aunt Maggie Coyne McLoughlin, whose lovely Derryherbert cottage remains part of our family's legacy.

The enchantment and wonder of Ireland are impossible to ignore. The people of Connemara possess a love for storytelling and music; they are hard workers and have great wit, hardiness, personality, reverence (and irreverence), creativity, and intelligence. Their charm is complemented by the majestic beauty, romance, mystery, and adventure of the land. If you're looking to experience and explore a place that has not been intruded upon or overdeveloped by man, you've come to the right place. Connemara is an undiscovered destination that the world must see. The rugged beauty and ethereal tranquillity of her mountains and her seashores will intrigue you.

As a publisher of lifestyle magazines, I wanted to create a platform to honour the people and the place I dearly love. It is with a humble heart that I hope to do justice to Connemara, its people, and its way of life—and I hope you will journey with us along our path. My goal in publishing *Connemara Life* is to nurture, protect, celebrate, and embrace the Connemara way—where the region's beauty and its people seem to restore the soul. It is a privilege for me to showcase its rich cultural heritage, one that I am fortunate to have discovered.

We don't know how the story will end, but we are committed to having a good time creating it and hope you will help write the story with us!

To Life!

—Lisa



A TESTIMONIAL

Alan,

One of the reasons we chose Ficarra Builders Inc. to build our home was because of your commitment to building a home that would last in these tough beach conditions. You told us the house wouldn't just look good but would be good right down to the bones. You said it would be tight enough to repel the driven rain and tough enough to withstand the assault of wind and salt air. Your emphasis was on structural integrity not just a handsome facade.

Given the above I thought you would be interested to learn how your work was evaluated 8 years after the home was completed. Recently we listed our Watersound Beach property and it sold for its full listing price the second day it was on the market. We used one of the largest, most respected firms on 30-A to handle the transaction. Their person who is responsible for completing the inspections reports on their listings sent us the following message when our report was complete: "FOR THE SIZE OF YOUR HOME AND THE PROXIMITY TO THE WATER, THAT IS THE CLEANEST INSPECTION REPORT I HAVE EVER SEEN".

They say the proof is in the pudding and the above statement confirms for me that you did exactly what you said you were going to do when you built our house. It has been a great, low maintenance, home that we have loved living in, and I anticipate the new owners are going have a similar experience.

THANK YOU!

Bill Goodwin

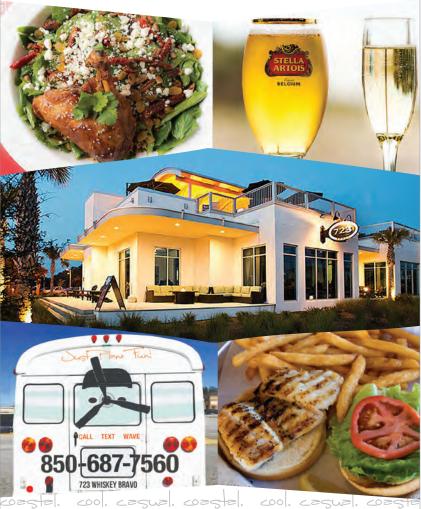
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Remude AN IRISH TIMESCAPE

By MICHAEL GIBBONS
Photography by MARK FURNISS

On a day of bright sky, when the hills are of that intoxicating misty blue that belongs especially to the west, the bogland is a lovely far-reaching expanse of purple and rich brown: and the lakelets take on the quite indescribable colour that comes from clear sky reflected in bog-water, while the sea-inlets glow with an intense but rather greener blue. On such a day the wanderer will thank is lucky star that it has brought him to Connemara.

ROBERT LLOYD PRAEGER, The Way That I Went

The Connemara Landscape

Ireland's west coast, one of the finest wilderness areas surviving in Europe today, remains a bastion of traditional landscape and culture. The history of this landscape is ancient, as it has taken over 750 million years to evolve. Its geology is one of the most complex and interesting in Europe. More recently, the landscape has been shaped by a series of ice ages, or glaciations. The last cold period, when the mountains known as the Twelve Bens were topped by sheets of ice, ended only twelve thousand years ago. With the melting of the ice sheets, the area was rapidly colonised by flora and fauna, then finally by man. The sea levels rose rapidly, separating Ireland from Britain and the European continent, and the creation of the Irish Sea prevented the migration of cattle, horses, sheep, deer, and snakes to Ireland, though St Patrick is credited with the banishing of snakes and demons from Ireland.

First Settlers (10,000 Years Ago)

The first to arrive were small bands of nomadic hunter–gatherer groups, who crossed the Irish Sea in large dugout canoes. On arrival, with few mammals to hunt, they instead lived off fish, especially salmon and eel, as well as large flocks of fowl and protein-rich hazelnuts, which were abundant in the largely forested area. These nomadic people left little in the way of surviving remains except for their rubbish dumps (midden sites), which consist of layers of burnt stone, shell, and ash. The winter storms of 2014 that battered the Connemara coast revealed a whole series of these sites, together with numerous stone axes and the remains of ancient forests long buried in peat. One of these sites exposed on a beautiful beach on the Renvyle Peninsula is almost seven thousand years old.

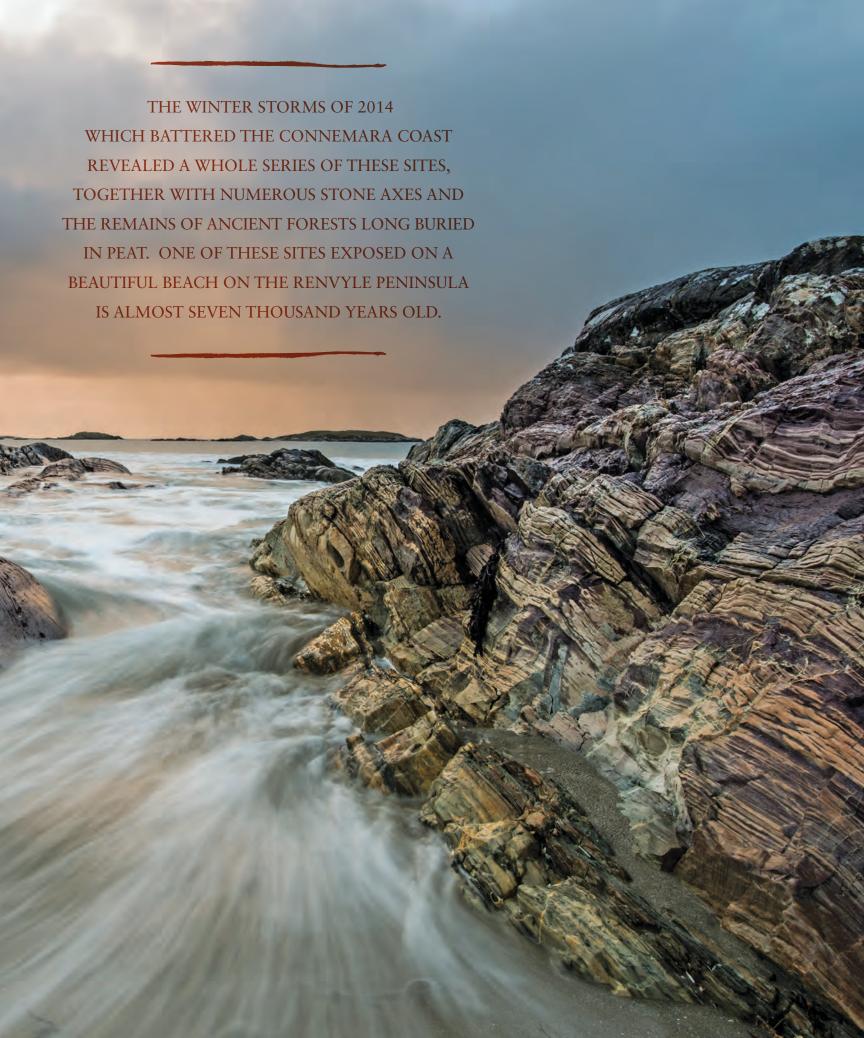
First Farmers and Their Tombs (c.6,000 Years Ago)

The nomadic hunter–gatherers were in time engulfed by more technologically advanced farming communities that cleared the woods and cultivated the land. By 5,800 years ago, they were building a variety of large stone tombs to house their dead. Many are still found throughout north-west Connemara, and some are partially entombed in peat bogs. In local tradition, they are known as the beds of Dermot and Gráinne, mythological figures from the Irish Iron Age, three thousand years after the tombs were built. One of the intact tombs was discovered high up on Tully Mountain, where it commands a huge ocean and mountain panorama. The other four tombs in the area are located on some of the best land and survive today because of the historic reluctance of local people to interfere with them.

From Stone to Metal (c.4,500 Years Ago)

New ideas and ritual practices arrived around 4,500 years ago, and these Bronze Age people left us an equally impressive legacy of monuments consisting of spectacularly sited standing stones. Some of these were constructed as part of an elaborate cult related to events surrounding the changes of the year, and many were erected over the cremated remains of tribal elders. Quantities of gold were mined from the rich ore deposits in the Connemara and Mayo Mountains, and exquisite gold artefacts were fashioned from the raw ore. Soapstone deposits were also exploited along the north Connemara coast and used to make moulds for casting metal cooking utensils and net sinkers. A soapstone mould for bronze axe heads was found in the beautiful townland of Culfin on the north Connemara coast.







The Connemara landscape changed again between 1100 BC and AD 500. Great blanket bogs developed over much of the uplands and squeezed the population into a narrow, fertile strip along the coast. Huge stone and earthen forts were built, some in the most extraordinary cliff-edge locations, like the fort at Caheradoona at the tip of the Renvyle Peninsula.

Early Christian Ireland (c.1,500 Years Ago)

Though Ireland remained pagan and outside the Roman world, it did eventually adopt the new Christian tradition introduced by Patrick the Briton. Numerous pagan Celtic wells, trees, and mountains were absorbed by the seemingly all-powerful Christian faith, including Croagh Patrick, which is visible across the sea from the Renvyle Peninsula. The nearby islands of Caher, Crump, and Inishbofin all have important early monasteries.

Viking Raiders (c.1,200 Years Ago)

These rich monastic islands fell prey to marauding Viking fleets in the ninth and tenth centuries. However, the Vikings were defeated by the people of Connemara. A lone Viking warrior's grave and armour were discovered after a storm at Eyrephort in west Connemara, a stark reminder of their failed attempts at conquest in the west.

Norman Invasion (c.900 Years Ago)

Though much of Ireland was conquered by the English in 1169, Connemara remained a bastion of Gaelic culture dominated by the powerful O'Flaherty and O'Malley sea lords, with Grace O'Malley being the most famous of these. One of

their castles still survives as a dramatic ruin overlooking the sea. In 1588, the castle at Renvyle hosted survivors of the ill-fated Spanish Armada, whose ships had sunk in the rough waters nearby. Most of these men were handed over to the English, who later executed them. (The swarthy good looks of the Connemara people do not come from intermarriage with these particular Spanish visitors.)

Final Destruction of Gaelic Ireland (c.400 Years Ago)

The western islands and mountains were the last strongholds to fall to the English during the Cromwellian Wars. Following their capture, star-shaped forts were built on Inishbofin and on the Aran Islands. The Gaelic lords, defeated and broken by the wars of the 1650s, were evicted from their lands and fled to France in huge numbers, to be replaced by an influx of new landowners from the east in what became known as Cromwell's policy of 'To Hell or to Connacht'.

The Great Famine (c.150 Years Ago)

The eighteenth century saw more settled and prosperous times. Smuggling of wool, wine, and tobacco to France and Spain had developed, while the wrecking of ships was also widely practiced. The population increased steadily in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but collapsed amid the horrors of famine and mass emigration to America, Canada, Britain, and Argentina. Haunting reminders of these times are found in the many deserted farms and potato fields that are scattered throughout the Renvyle Peninsula.



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MUSIC, PUBS, AP GUINNESS MAKE GOOD COMPANY

By Simon Leyland Photography by Mark Furniss

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG AND WILL NOT COME RIGHT, THOUGH YOU DO THE BEST YOU CAN, WHEN LIFE LOOKS BLACK AS THE HOUR OF THE NIGHT — A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN.

FLANN O'BRIEN, 'THE WORKMAN'S FRIEND'

o paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes and perhaps the Irish pub. From Ulan Bator to Union Street, you will find the unofficial emblem of Ireland—the Irish pub. With its unique atmosphere, a guaranteed warm welcome, and the serving of a national icon—a pint of plain or Guinness—visitors

When I first came to Connemara nearly a decade ago, I wrote down my initial impressions of the first pub I visited.

will get an idea of the role of the pub in Irish society.

"... slightly tarnished road signs announcing the distance to Dublin jostling for space with lovely black-and-white photographs of a Connemara of the past. Over the front of the bar are selections of (I think) agricultural tools, which look vaguely menacing, along with a watermarked picture of W. B. Yeats.

'Sitting across the other side of the bar are three elderly men having an animated conversation about the various merits of sheepdogs, and next to them, looking slightly bewildered and gazing at a map neatly laid out on his table, a coffee-drinking tourist is planning his next move. One of the barmaids is busily hefting logs, some only slightly smaller than her, into a roaring, open fire.

'My table appeared to be a touch wonky and after a cursory inspection, the landlord came bustling over, armed with a handful of beer mats and promptly placed them under the offending leg of the table. How kind. I am going to like it here ...'

I am pleased to report that not a lot has changed, although the dreaded fruit machine is beginning to make an unwelcome appearance in some quarters.

Now, on to a more important matter: the proper pint. A perfect pint of Guinness will have a dark ruby colour and a creamy head of foam on top. To get the head just right, the barman or maid fills the glass about three-quarters of the way, lets it settle for a few minutes, and then carefully tops it up. If a pint of plain is not your thing, or you're just feeling adventurous, Guinness cocktails are also popular. The Black Velvet (Guinness and champagne) is a classic, and other interesting concoctions include the Trojan Horse (Guinness and cola), the Guinness Shandy (Guinness and lemonade), and the Midnight (Guinness with a measure of Port).









AN INTEGRAL PART OF 'TRAD' IS 'THE SESSION', WHEN MUSICIANS MEET UP IN A PUB TO PLAY. TO THE UNINITIATED, MYSELF INCLUDED, IT LOOKS VERY INFORMAL, BUT THE TRADITIONAL SESSION IS A MINEFIELD OF ETIQUETTE.



All pubs adhere to licensing laws that date back to British times; they are sometimes seen as a legacy of the Eight Hundred Years of Oppression. In light of this, after-hours drinking is seen as an act of quiet patriotism. Years ago, the traditional afternoon closing of pubs was known as 'holy hour', after a church observance popular with Catholics. Drinkers who managed to avoid leaving a pub during the afternoon closing hours were said to be 'doing the holy hour', although sadly this was never a defence accepted by the courts.

Ireland has always been blessed with sweet-sounding lyrical music, and one of the most welcoming sounds as you open any pub door are strains of live music coming from within. Traditional music has always been an important part of the pub experience and is a cornerstone of Irish culture. An integral part of 'trad' is 'the session', when musicians meet up in a pub to play. To the uninitiated, myself included, it looks very informal, but the traditional session is a minefield of etiquette.

The first rule of the session is that the music must be traditional. Sadly, there are no helpful definitions explaining what traditional means. This is because the understanding of what is or indeed not traditional has been passed on orally or telepathically, like the music itself, from generation to generation, but never in such a form that it could land in the hands of the authorities.

Experienced players can tell a nontraditional tune just from its rhythm and feel—or sometimes from its aroma, if their senses are particularly developed. In certain parts of Connemara, disputes on what is traditional may be referred to bearded holy men who ensure that the music is played in accordance with rules laid down in the dim and distant past.



SINGING IS ACCEPTABLE AT A SESSION, PROVIDED THAT IT IS OF THE TRADITIONAL VARIETY KNOWN AS *SEAN-NÓS* (PRONOUNCED SHAN NOCE). THIS USUALLY MEANS THAT THE SONG SHOULD TELL A STORY AND PREFERABLY BE IN IRISH.



encouragement in the manner of worshippers in an Alabama Baptist church.

Sometimes during a session you will come across some Irish dancing. There are two main kinds of Irish dancing: Riverdance, the stage spectacular, which at one time was running in more cities than a faulty faucet; and Real Irish Dancing. The latter has many similarities to Riverdance but exists mainly in a competitive format. The observant among you will notice other differences, such as, in Real Irish Dancing, men do not wear frilly blouses and dancers may not express themselves (except in a written note to the adjudicators).

Until 1994 there was only Real Irish Dancing. Unlike most national dance forms, such as the tango and flamenco, it had no sexual undertones at all. All traces of sensuality had been carefully removed by the combined effects of competition and the strict Catholic u bringing to which most dancers were subjected. Arms were held rigidly by the sides, as if glued there. Backs were even more rigid, and excessive Elvis-type hip movements would be punished by loss of marks or—in extreme cases—excommunication from the Church.

Traditional instruments include the fiddle, the tin whistle, and the flute. Nontraditional instruments include the guitar, the oboe, and the trombone. However, the bodhrán (a one-sided drum made from goat skin) is now often seen in sessions and tolerated (at least publically). Musicians may express their disapproval in a variety of subtle ways, such as getting up and leaving.

Singing is acceptable at a session providing it is of the traditional variety known as *sean-nós* (pronounced shan noce). This usually means that the song should tell a story and preferably be in Irish. It should also have at least fifty verses or go on all night—whichever is longer.

Ballad singing is frowned upon, and group sing-alongs will usually result in ejection from the premises. However long they take, *sean-nós* songs must be heard in rapt silence, except during the pauses between verses, when listeners may shout

Things have changed, however. Twenty-first-century Real Irish Dancing seems to have slowly evolved: its long-repressed sexuality is now smouldering, and competition organisers now have fire marshals at all venues, just in case.

Now I must away, for I hear the clarion call of a pint being poured and my foot is beginning to tap to the sound of a man playing a fiddle.



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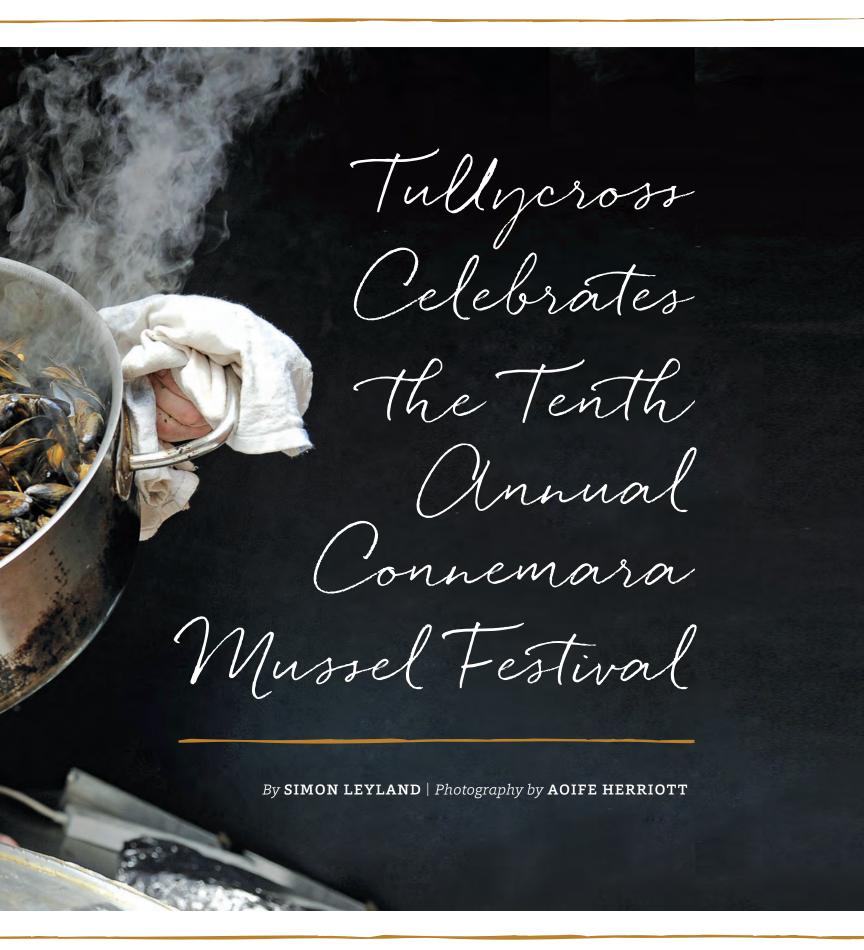


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The bank holiday in the first weekend of May typically ushers in the start of the Irish food festival season. It would appear that most festivals these days are in thrall to the large corporate food companies and their stealth-like sponsorship. Luckily, the annual Connemara Mussel Festival in Tullycross seems to have escaped that unfortunate stigma. For two whole days in May, this lovely little village is home to a food festival so unspoilt and positively bursting with good humour, it truly captures the whole essence of what a food festival should be about.

Thankfully untouched by the professional exhibition specialists, the Connemara Mussel festival (last year's winner of the Irish Food Festival of the year) is organised and run by a group of wonderful volunteers. The result is a great atmosphere and a relaxed feel about the event. The many stallholders who attended had an extraordinary array of home-grown produce—and there was not a commercial food company in sight.





The audience, too, is splendidly eclectic, ranging from the BMW-driving 'foodies' to local food fanciers.

The audience, too, is splendidly eclectic, ranging from the BMW-driving 'foodies' to local food fanciers. Harassed mothers with hyperactive children and neatly ironed senior citizens with their 'his and her' thermos flasks were in attendance. There were, of course, also the mandatory festival professionals, complete with dreadlocks and dreamcatchers, offering henna tattoos in exchange for pints of Guinness.

It appears that the star of the show, the humble bivalve, is doing rather well for itself, having finally shaken off its status as the trailer park relation of the shellfish family. The various cooking competitions over the weekend expertly showed off in rather imaginative ways the sheer variety of recipes available for this magnificent mollusc.

Much of the event is unticketed, meaning that everyone meanders around the single street looking at the various craft and artisan food stalls and occasionally stepping out of the way to avoid crocodiles of newly face-painted children coming out of the many childfriendly events on their way to look at Ireland's smallest cow. Being a city dweller most of my life, I was interested in what this cow would look like, thinking it would be the size of a chihuahua. I was

somewhat disappointed to discover that it was, in fact, a slightly smaller cow than an average small cow.

The anticlimax of seeing the not-so-diminutive bovine was quickly forgotten when I heard the throaty roar of motorcycle engines coming into the village. At first glance, it appeared to be a gang of superannuated Hells Angels and their equally vintage motorcycles. Sadly, on closer inspection, they all looked to be estate agents, dentists, and solicitors. Nevertheless, it seemed somehow in keeping with the spirit of the festival.

There were many events over the weekend ranging from a session on organic vegetable growing to a 1970s-themed fancy dress disco. The Connemara Beekeepers Association and food media darlings John and Sally McKenna spent half an hour or so rhapsodising about the role of the bee and the many exotic varieties of honey to an occasionally mystified audience. There were also well-attended talks on a variety of seemingly unconnected topics such as W. B. Yeats, a history of Tullycross, and cave paintings, and there was a rather good art exhibition in the hotel next door.

The one event I was determined not to enjoy turned out to be the most memorable. Normally any event prefaced with the word *celebrity* fills me with dread. So, with some trepidation, I took my seat to watch Irish television personalities Sean O'Rourke and Michael Lally take part in a celebrity chef competition in the special marquee erected for the weekend. They immediately won the audience over by debating the conundrum of whether to stir clockwise or anticlockwise, as well as gleefully exchanging anecdotes about grandmothers whilst chatting, arguing, and trying in vain to follow their recipes. These things always appear to have an air of being previously rehearsed, but in this case the cooks' naturally ebullient personalities and their valiant (but sadly inefficient) attempts at chef superstardom breathed life into a somewhat hackneyed formula.

Leaving the marquee, I managed to get tangled up in a posse of thirsty German tourists just back from a guided walk along the coast. After untangling myself and waiting for the walking rucksacks to move away from the door of the pub,

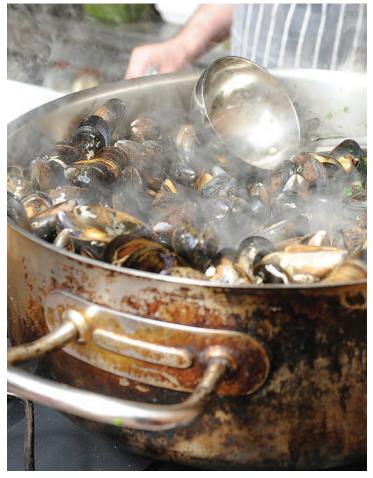


I too decided it was time for refreshment. After fortifying myself with a pint of the black stuff and a bowl of mussels (and rather nice they were too), I then wended my way back to the artisan food stalls.

The producers of these artisan foods are sustained by a ferocious belief in their products. One lady cheesemaker was championing organic cheese with the







The producers of These artisan foods are sustained by a ferocious belief in their products.

same eloquence and conviction that the Pankhursts once used to agitate for women's suffrage. Her objective—one I think we all would commend—is to dilute the market share enjoyed by the ubiquitous processed cheese.

Which segues rather neatly into a final memory of a marvellous weekend: sometime after his leather-clad colleagues had ridden off into the sunset, the sight of one remaining aged biker trying to cajole his machine back into life whilst trying not to drop a well-wrapped lump of Connemara artisan cheese pretty much summed up all that was right about this wonderful event.



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Lonnemara Mational Park

By Jordan Staggs

The Wild Atlantic Way is known for the idyllic scenery that makes up much of western Ireland, including rugged mountains, craggy beaches, and rolling moors. Perhaps the best place to get a bird's-eye view while also learning about the region's wildlife and geologic history is Connemara National Park. Best known as the site of Diamond Hill, a popular hiking destination, the park opened to the public in 1980. Admission is free, and the park boasts many nature trails, abundant wildlife, a playground, educational tours and events, a visitor centre and tea room, and more.











After a brisk or leisurely hike, visitors can relax with coffee and assorted homemade goodies in the tea room. Connemara National Park also often hosts outdoor activities and educational events, including guided hikes, biodiversity seminars, and children's nature lessons.

To learn more about Connemara National Park or to see its events calendar, visit www.connemaranationalpark.ie.





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Throughout the United States, the huge majority of seafood is imported. Most of it is mislabeled. Frozen seafood is sold as "fresh" and imported seafood is sold as "local." According to Oceana, 93% of fish sold as red snapper is actually some other species. 57% of tuna sold at sushi bars throughout the country is not tuna. Most of the tilapia served in this country comes from Viet Nam and Thailand and much of it is farmed in waters with sewage run-off and the source of feed is pig feces.

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Snapper and Tuna stats: http://oceana.org/en/news-media/publications/reports/oceana-study-reveals-seafood-fraud-nationwide Imported seafood stat: http://www.fishwatch.gov/farmed_seafood/outside_the_us.htm Tilapia/pig feces: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-11/asian-seafood-raised-on-pig-feces-approved-for-u-s-consumers.html

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SEASONS of IRELAND

ON THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

The day of this photo shoot saw high winds, heavy rain, mist, and then glorious sunshine—just another perfect day in Connemara. From rolling hills to pebbled beaches, the sweeping landscapes here are a feast for the eyes and the spirit. The region's kind-hearted people are always prepared for a jaunt across the countryside or for a pint and some lively music in a favorite pub—as long as there's a good yarn to tell along the way. Life here is beautiful!

PHOTOGRAPHY by AOIFE HERRIOTT

HAIR STYLING by LOUISE JORDAN / BELLISSIMO GALWAY

MAKE-UP by ISABEL HARDMAN / BELLISSIMO GALWAY

STYLING by DYMPNA COYNE AND SHARON DUANE

CLOTHING provided by DESIGN PLATFORM, OHH! BY GUM, HEHIRS, AND MILLARS MODELS: STEPHANIE CASSERLY, KATHERINE GANNON, TOBY FOYLE



PREVIOUS PAGE | EVA KAYAN SEQUIN TOP FROM DESIGN PLATFORM €135.00; EVA KAYAN JACKET FROM DESIGN PLATFORM €170.00
RIGHT | ANNETTE GÖRTZ DIXIS COAT FROM DESIGN PLATFORM €610.00; ANNETTE GÖRTZ TAIB DRESS FROM DESIGN PLATFORM €395.00







LEFT | FISHERMAN OUT OF IRELAND CABLE-KNIT SWEATER FROM HEHIRS €149.99 RIGHT | ISOBEL DRESS FROM OHH! BY GUM €97.95; DUBARRY OF IRELAND MARTELLO NAVY AND WHITE STRIPED SWEATER FROM MILLARS €100.00;

DUBARRY OF IRELAND GORE-TEX LEATHER BOOTS FROM MILLARS €385.00





RIGHT | FISHERMAN OUT OF IRELAND CASHMERE BLEND PULLOVER FROM HEHIRS €110.00; FISHERMAN OUT OF IRELAND WAISTCOAT SWEATER FROM HEHIRS €89.99; 6TH SENSE JEANS FROM HEHIRS €59.99; ARAN CRAFTS CAPE FROM HEHIRS €59.99

An Afternoon Stroll on WHITE STRAND BEACH



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LEFT | MUCROS TWEED WAISTCOAT FROM HEHIRS €129.99; LEE VALLEY GRANDFATHER SHIRT FROM HEHIRS €34.00; 6TH SENSE JEANS FROM HEHIRS €59.99; LONG ALICE DRESS IN VINTAGE ROSE BLUEBELL FROM OHH! BY GUM €59.99 **RIGHT** | SNOWDROP WHITE COTTON SHIRT FROM MILLARS €69.00; DUBARRY OF IRELAND BLACKTHORN TWEED COAT FROM MILLARS €495.00





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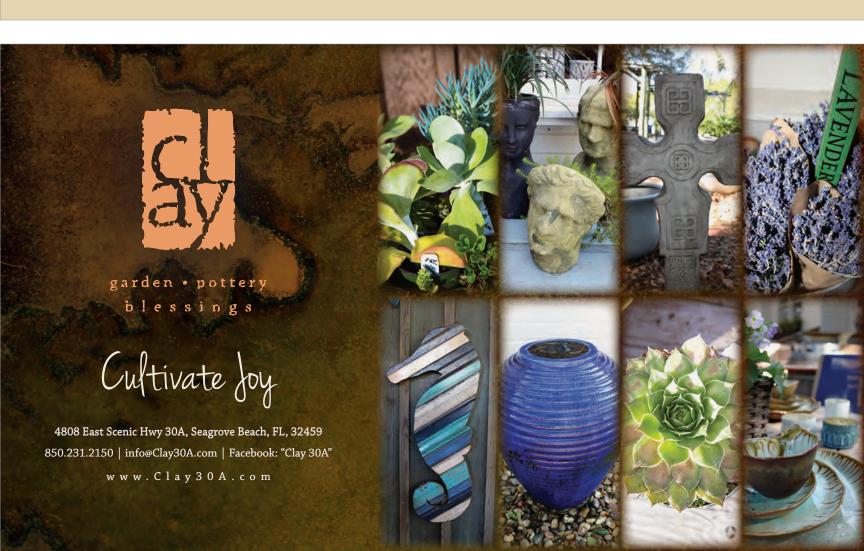


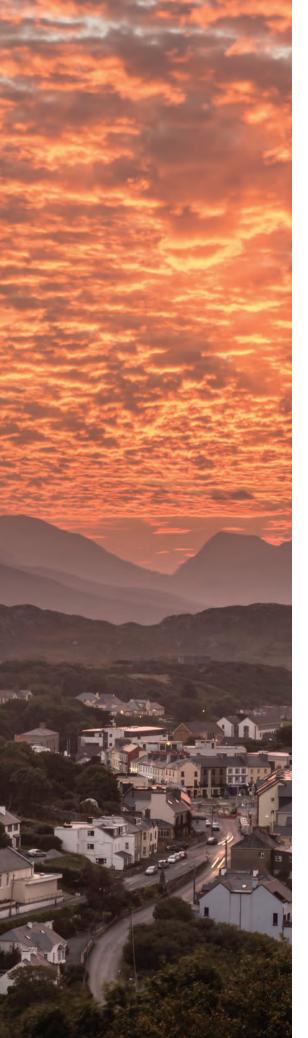






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CONNEMARA

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK FURNISS

JUL

Connemara Rugby Sevens Tournament

3 through 5 July

www.facebook.com/connemarasevens

The tournament will start Friday evening and run all day Saturday, with the finals on Sunday. The tournament intends to provide some fast-paced rugby and a fun-filled weekend in Clifden, the capital of Connemara. We have a full line-up of entertainment in the festival marquee and pitchside over the weekend.

Roundstone Connemara Pony, Dog & Sheep Show

12 July

www.roundstoneevents.com

The Roundstone Pony Show, now in its fifth year, is held annually on the second Sunday in July.

Galway International Arts Festival

13 through 26 July

www.galwaytourism.ie

This is one of Europe's most inventive, vibrant, and colourful events. The festival, a truly international celebration of the performing and visual arts, takes place in and around Galway City each July.

Women's Adventure Race

25 July

www.gaelforceevents.com

This adventure race, designed by amazing women and for amazing women, takes place in Galway. Down with sweaty, jostling men—this start line is just for the ladjest

Roundstone Regatta

25 and 26 July

www.roundstoneregatta.com

Each July the quiet Connemara village of Roundstone erupts in a spectacular celebration for a maritime festival that dates back to the 1890s. Sails and oars propel traditional boats in two days of racing that showcase athletic skill and keep alive the important role that these craft have played in the islands and coastal communities over the centuries.

Claddaghduff Pony Show

26 July

Contact: Sinead O'Flaherty 0876357634

So much more than just another pony show, the Claddaghduff Pony Show promises you a fun-filled day packed with activities. The Showfield in Claddaghduff village, County Galway, is in an idyllic location that overlooks the spectacular Omey Strand and Omey Island.

Galway Races Summer Festival Meeting

27 July through 2 August

www.galwaytourism.ie

Ireland's premier horse-racing festival takes place at Galway Race course, Ballybrit, Galway. Adrenalin-pumping action, heart-stopping finishes, and breathtaking fashion are all part of the Galway Races. Situated on the outskirts of Galway City in the West of Ireland, the Galway Race Festivals are renowned worldwide.

AUG

2 August

www.omeyraces.com

Often referred to as 'the other Galway Races', the Omey Races take place annually on the strand at Omey Strand, in Claddaghduff in Connemara. Re-established as a tradition in 2001, the annual summer races have been attracting greater numbers every year, and previous races have drawn crowds of almost five thousand people for a wonderful day of sun, sand, sea, and, of course, horse racing. With up to nine races on the card, there are opportunities for young, upcoming jockeys to hone their skills while providing a great day out for spectators.

Roundstone All-Ireland Dog Show

3 August

www.roundstoneevents.com

The 2015 Roundstone All-Ireland Dog Show, held in August, has become a very popular event. This event brings dogs and handlers from all over Ireland. The idea of the dog show is to select an All-Ireland Supreme Champion and Reserve Champion.

Omey Dash Triathlon

8 August

www.facebook.com/omeydash

Omey Dash 2015 is a triathlon limited to two hundred entrants, so sign up as soon as possible. The race is open to all individuals and teams in any combination.

Connemara 100

8 and 9 August

www.connemara100.com

The Connemara 100 on the West Coast of Ireland is run over a measured and certified 100-mile course

Gael Force West

15 Augus

www.gaelforceevents.com

The original and still the best, this has always been the triathlon course to conquer and to master. The sixty-seven-kilometre course

is challenging and unique, and takes place in the magnificent

Glassilaun WaterSports Day

A family fun day out at Glassilaun Beach, Renvyle. Water-based activities include boat rides, scuba diving, and kayaking. There are lots of onshore activities to be enjoyed as well.

Connemara Pony Show & Festival

The 2015 Connemara Pony Festival will celebrate the worldrenowned Connemara pony and is built around the long-running Connemara Pony Show, which takes place each summer in Clifden.

Biggest Ray in the Bay Fishing Competition

This competition is a fundraiser for the local branch of the Royal

Oughterard Agricultural & Horticultural Show

www.oughterardshow.com

The programme of events includes classes in ponies, horses, cattle, sheep, donkeys, dogs, cats, pets, poultry, and vintage display.

Galway Races Autumn Meeting

www.galwaytourism.ie

Ireland's premier horse-racing festival takes place at Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit, Galway. Adrenalin-pumping action, heartstopping finishes, and breathtaking fashion are all part of the of Ireland, the Galway Race Festivals are renowned worldwide.

All-Ireland Supreme Champion of Champions Pony Show, Roundstone

www.roundstoneevents.com

The Pony Showing Season of 2015 reaches its pinnacle at the annual Supreme Champion of Champions Show, where first-place winners of 2015 Connemara Pony classes countrywide compete for the title of Supreme Champion.

Clifden Lifeboat 10k

The inaugural Clifden Lifeboat 10k Race took place on 14 September 2008 to raise funds for the RNLI and the Clifden Lifeboat. Due to the overwhelming positive response, it was decided to make this into a yearly fixture. The race is open to all athletes, as well as leisure runners and walkers, and can be entered into individually or as a team.

Clifden Arts Festival

The longest-running community arts festival in Ireland, Clifden Community Arts Festival is now in its thirty-eighth year. This year's programme promises yet again to have something for everyone.

Rough Diamond Challenge

The Connemara Rough Diamond team has put together the following three routes, which are both challenging and inspiring, with rugged landscape and breathtaking scenery:

Sport – 39.5 kilometres

Sky Road TV & Film Festival

This exciting new three-day festival aims to shine a spotlight on the best of Irish film, TV, and new media.

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Connemara Four Seasons Autumn Walking Festival

www.galwaytourism.ie

Explore the Connemara landscape with great walking and great guides who will provide fantastic insight into the area's unique cultural, archaeological, and historic heritage.

Conamara Sea Week

www.ceecc.org

The annual Conamara Sea Week takes place in the Quaker village of Letterfrack in north-west Connemara. It is a celebration of the wonderful marine heritage of Connemara.

Gael Force Turf Warrior Challenge

www.gaelforceevents.com

and extremely fun event.

Connemara Four Seasons Winter Walking Festival

www.galwaytourism.ie

Explore the Connemara landscape with great walking and great guides who will provide a fantastic insight into the area's unique cultural, archaeological, and historic heritage.



2016

Rás Chonamara

Connemara International Marathon

Clifden Traditional Music Festival

Connemara Mussel Festival

www.connemaramusselfestival.com



COURCIO BIKE

STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICHOLAS GRUNDY



IF YOU'VE SEEN CONNEMARA ONLY BY CAR OR BUS, THEN YOU HAVEN'T TRULY SEEN IT. TO PROPERLY EXPERIENCE THE MAJESTIC LANDSCAPES AND DEEP BLUE SKIES OF IRELAND'S FABLED WEST, YOU NEED TO STICK YOUR HEAD OUT INTO THE OPEN AIR.



With an absence of open-top tourist buses, your only remaining option is to get on your bike, or as the locals might say, *Ar do rothar!*

That's exactly what I did this spring while investigating the path of the proposed Connemara Greenway. In the not-too-distant future, the cycleway will follow a disused railway line approximately seventy-six kilometres (forty-seven miles) from Galway to Clifden. The track will begin alongside the River Corrib before venturing northwest through the village of Moycullen towards Oughterard, which is where my own journey began. After pulling my bike from the bus cargo hold, I sped down the road, full of anticipation for what the next two days would bring.

As I was rolling out of town, the forest gave way to Connemara's typical yellow-flowering gorse and rust-tinted boggy scrubland. At the first opportunity, I swung a hard left off the main road and headed for the hinterland. The first sight to greet me was the Quiet Man Bridge in the village of Leam. Stones covered in white lichen gleamed in the

sunlight as the first of many pristine lakes shimmered below, leading my eyes towards the emerging mountains. Retracing the former Galway–Clifden railway further west, I spotted a quaint farmstead resting on the shores of Lough Bofin and approached the adjacent cottage to ask permission to photograph it.

'Sorry, but I only speak French,' came the heavily accented response as the cottage's resident motioned for me to slow down. In broken French, I explained my situation. Meanwhile, a farmer materialised behind us. It seemed I'd met the family staying in Martin and Mary Joyce's holiday cottage, Islandview. The couple welcomes the proposed cycle path, which will open up the beauty of Connemara; however, it appears the region's lakes are already famous in France, thanks to the popular song 'Les Lacs du Connemara'. Nonetheless, according to the Greenway's chief engineer, Kurt Lydon, if recent experiences hold true, the Clifden to Galway route will prove an absolute boon for tourism. The Connemara Greenway is expected to prove even more popular than the Westport to Achill Greenway in County Mayo, which generated 7 million euros in tourist revenue in its first year of operation. This is an impressive figure to say the least, especially considering that it more than covered the Mayo route's €5.5 million development cost.

I bid farewell to my newfound Gallic and Gaelic friends and soon after circumvented a pair of sheep rambling over an old rail bridge. The rusting span is just one of many hidden gems to be unearthed by the completion of the cycle





THE RUSTING SPAN IS JUST ONE OF MANY HIDDEN GEMS TO BE UNEARTHED BY THE COMPLETION OF THE CYCLE ROUTE. AFFORDING VIEWS ONE SIMPLY CANNOT OBTAIN BY CAR.

route, affording views one simply cannot obtain by car. In the waterways below me, beds of emerald-green river grass swayed gently in the current. Crossing back over the main N59 road from Galway to Clifden, one soon enters dedicated turf territory. As the magical Maumturk mountain range loomed ever nearer overhead, I rumbled past the full array of machinery used to turn the slumbering bogs into heat-giving parcels of turf. Meanwhile, lounging cows stared up from beside the trail while a duo of inquisitive Connemara ponies trotted cautiously beside this foreign, two-wheeled contraption.

'Lovely weather today!' Six sharp syllables pierced the silence. Wheeling around, I watched as an elderly man emerged like an apparition from behind the gorse. 'Stunning weather indeed,' I responded to the man, whose blue eyes were as vibrant as the surrounding lakes and whose mane of snow-white hair fluttered in the breeze. And just like that he vanished, disappearing around a bend as he continued eastward under the beaming sun.

Rejoining the N59 at Maam Cross, my heavily laden bicycle thundered along the asphalt. Thirty minutes later, I parted ways with the smooth surface and rolled along an old boreen (rural road) into Derryneen. Hidden from the view of motorists, this side trip treats cyclists to views of lush, green hillocks dotted with sheep and a rushing mountain stream shooting beneath Derryneen Bridge.





Left: A completed section of the Connemara Greenway outside Clifden. Right: The view north-east toward Ballynahinch Castle

Mr Lydon's comments seemed apt as I continued westward. He had noted that the Greenway would bring the additional benefit of allowing locals to avoid walking along the narrow main road—a rather dangerous pursuit on dark winter nights. Rural communities will be connected once again, all atop a route intended to link up with Dublin as part of the National Cycle Network, and even one day with Moscow as a component of the gargantuan EuroVelo system.

My next stop before sundown was the lakeside village of Recess, where Cushlough House Bed and Breakfast awaited my overnight stay. Bemused by my journey, the hospitable Maisie Molloy invited me to relax by the fire and revitalise with a warm cup of tea. After replenishing my energy levels, the sun's diminishing stature prompted me to ascend the slopes behind us. With guidance from two local farmers, I managed to cycle halfway up Cnoc Lios Uachtair, an impressive peak. The freestanding sentinel provides spectacular views across the entirety of Connemara, and during this particular sunset it far surpassed expectations. I gazed past golden puffs of cloud as my eyes wandered north along the Inagh Valley, east across the Maumturks, south over expansive bogs towards the Aran Islands, and finally back westward to the towering peaks of the Twelve

Bens. Then, as if a switch was flicked, the lands were engulfed in darkness, heralding my descent towards a well-earned sleep.

Riding past the former Recess railway station the next morning, soft light illuminated the quartzite pinnacles above. To my right, mist billowed from the river, shrouding a tract of pines. Suddenly, to my left I noticed a silhouette standing still atop a low ridge. The man dropped out of sight while I lay in wait to film a trio of unsuspecting sheep following the track. Right before I hit 'Record', the sheep began sprinting straight towards me. In the nick of time, I grasped my tripod and rolled to one side, narrowly avoiding a trampling. The instigator of the stampede—a sheep dog—emerged and tore past, eager to herd the three vagabonds.

Along the hidden eastern shores of Derryclare Lough, I met locals Pat and Jean Mullan using the gravel track to walk their dog, Bonnie. Further south, I discovered that the Athry rail bridge was out, and after fording the shallow stream, my soothed feet pedalled in the direction of Ballinafad. Here, two ancient cemeteries rest on either side of the azure Lough Nabrucka. As my



bike's weary wheels hit paved roadway, the thick forests surrounding Ballynahinch Castle offered some shade from the piercing sun. The estate is home to the scenic Owenmore River, along which extends a peaceful boardwalk, providing views of the castle with an impressive mountain backdrop. Little did I know that the real surprise lay right around the next bend.

After Ballynahinch, the most remote and exposed stretch of the proposed Greenway begins. The track winds its way across a palette of dazzling hues typical of the Connemara wilderness. To either side, I surveyed jet-black turf beneath blanket bog and bronzed heathland interspersed with purple moor grass. Untouched lakes dotted the desolate terrain, while the Twelve Bens commanded a full 180 degrees of my view. Apart from a few farmers, mankind has not gazed upon these lands since the railway closed eighty years ago. Lakes gradually gave way to tiny tarns, evoking visions of New Zealand's highlands—an area more than eighteen thousand kilometres (eleven thousand miles) away.

Without warning, the desolation gave way to civilisation. From here on out, it was easy riding into Clifden along the only completed section of the Greenway. After refuelling with a delicious bagel at the Upstairs Downstairs Cafe, I had

THE TRACK WINDS ITS WAY ACROSS A PALETTE OF DAZZLING HUES TYPICAL OF THE CONNEMARA WILDERNESS.

enough time to check out the view from the John D'Arcy Monument overlooking town. However, upon returning to my bike, I discovered that a dashing white Connemara pony had taken a liking to it and was attempting to eat my watermeloninspired helmet!

After rescuing my rothar, it was with a heavy heart that I descended to conclude my adventure. I keenly await the Connemara Greenway's opening in the near future, and—who knows—perhaps next time I'll start my romp towards Clifden from Moscow!



Top: The Twelve Bens at sunset, viewed from just north of the village of Recess. Bottom: A cyclist follows the former railway line along the eastern shore of Derryclare Lough.

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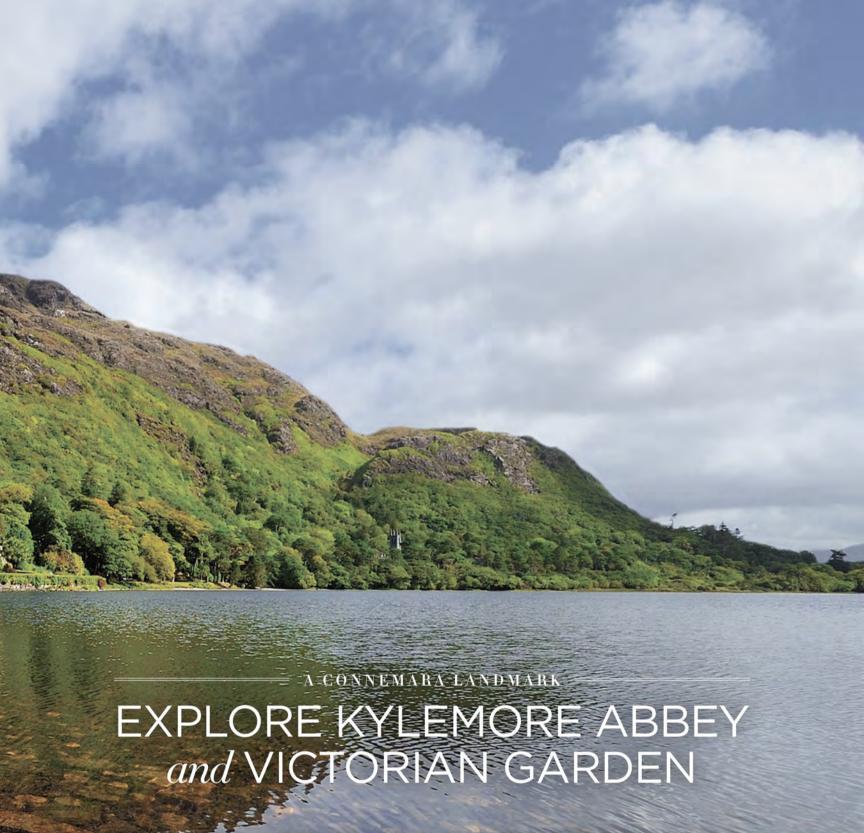
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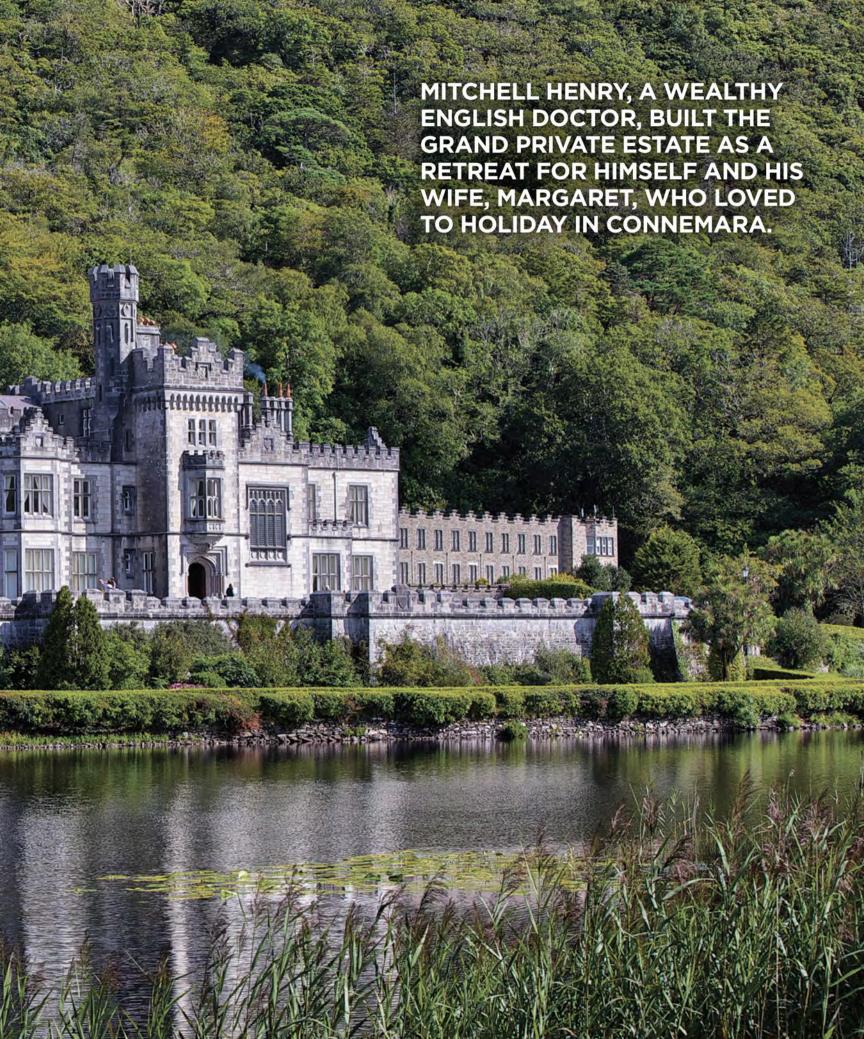
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Near Letterfrack and Connemara National Park, just a few miles from Ireland's western coast, the shimmering waters of Kylemore Lough act as a mirror to the impressive neo-Gothic structure known as Kylemore Abbey.





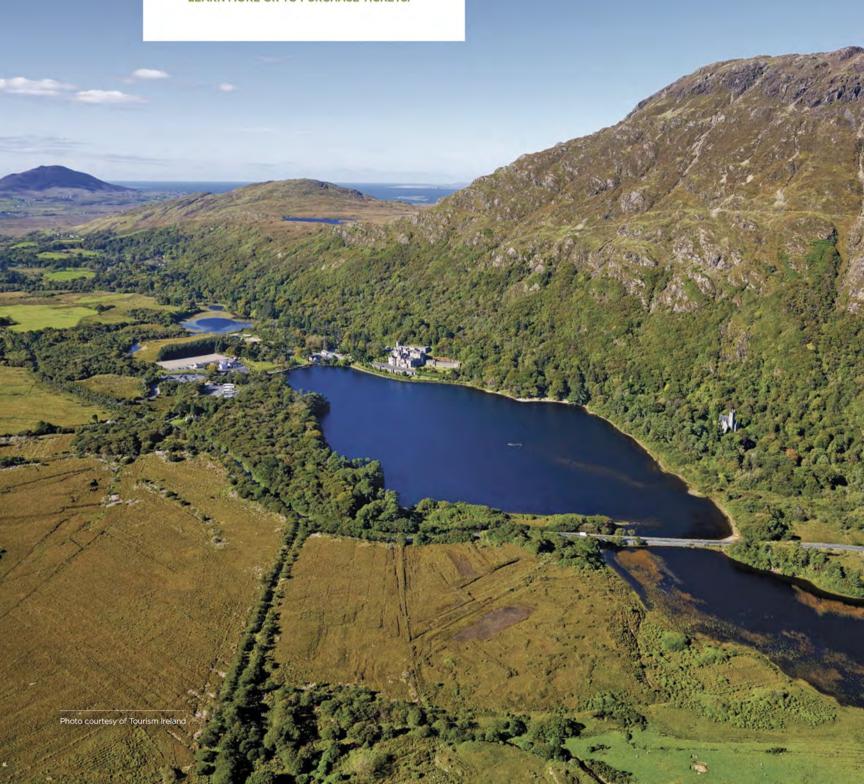






Today, Kylemore Abbey and the adjacent Victorian Walled Garden, the Gothic Church, and the grounds are Connemara's most-visited attraction. Daily history talks are available year-round, garden tours are available in the summer months, and the property also features an extensive gift shop, dining options, outdoor activities, and events for all ages to enjoy.

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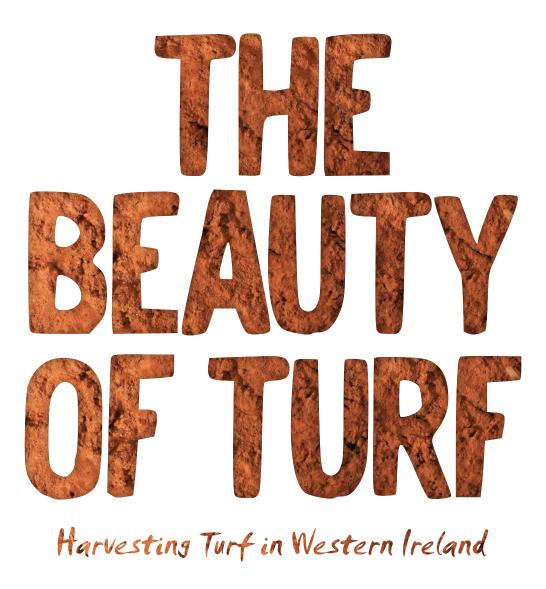
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BY LAURIE CROWLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF TOURISM IRELAND

n the summer of 1977, my parents sent me to Ireland to spend time with my grandmother, my great-aunt, and my great-uncle. I was excited, scared, and a little mad—I would be missing the opening of *Star Wars*. (I knew even before the movie came out that it was going to be huge.) But I was sixteen years old and it was legal to drink alcohol in Ireland—Luke Skywalker would have to wait. I left Boston at 7 o'clock in the evening and woke in a new land. I was now more scared than excited and I didn't care if I ever went to the movies again; I just wanted to go home. When I saw my grandmother at the baggage claim, my nerves were suddenly calmed. I was exhausted as I climbed into the VW Beetle my grandmother had come to collect me in with her neighbor, one of the few men in her village who had a car.

s we left Shannon Airport and headed to Renvyle, a small village in Ireland's western region of Connemara, I intermittently dozed and stared out the backseat window as I listened to my grandmother and her friend chat. They seemed to speak in quick, short bursts of unintelligible words, followed by sudden deep breaths and a long sigh, and then the cycle would continue. Were they speaking English, or was this an alien language? (I would later find myself taking deep breaths mid-sentence and saying words such as 'tis' and 'grand'.) The cadence of their comfortable conversation became a hypnotic drug that sent me into a dream state, and the winding roads acted as a child's swing rocking me to sleep. I was helpless.



I am not sure to this day at what point between Shannon and Renvyle I was suddenly released from my brogue-induced stupor, but I do know the antidote that raised me to consciousness. It was the sweet, unfamiliar smell of turf burning. I asked my grandmother what 'that smell' was, but she just laughed and said she didn't smell anything. I was insistent that something strange yet aromatic was burning; it was smoky and ethereal, alerting me to take note. I soon came to cherish the smell of a turf fire and then, in an instant, I didn't seem to notice it any longer. Had I become accustomed so quickly to the smell that only days

before I had found strange? Was this the spell it had on me? Had the Connemara countryside enveloped me, alongside generations of my family, and cloaked me in the centuries-old warmth that defines its people?

On a recent stay in Ireland, I asked a dear friend and neighbor, Martin Joe Coyne, to take my children out into his bog for an up-close look at cutting and drying the turf and hauling it home. This process takes many months, so we got the abridged version that afternoon; since it was August, the turf was nearly dry and ready to bring home and store for the winter's fuel. For kids from New Hampshire who are accustomed to adjusting the thermostat when they are cold or adding wood (delivered to our house already cut, split, and seasoned) to the woodstove, this was an eye-opener. As Martin Joe had been born and raised in the area, he provided the authentic experience—he has been cutting turf since he was a young boy.

With a quiet, humble tone, he demonstrated the process that has continued for hundreds of years. He made sure to emphasize to the kids that if done for many hours each day, this back-breaking work would 'make a man out of ye'. Walking the bog with ease, Martin Joe had my children stack the turf into a 'proper footing' to ensure optimal drying, but he emphasized that the stacks are always at the mercy of the weather—there is not much that can be done about the rain! He explained that for most of the summer the turf is turned, stacked, and readied for hauling home and storing for the upcoming winter.

TURF

Turf (or peat) is partially decomposed organic matter formed in areas of poor drainage and wet, mild climates. Peat is 90 to 95 per cent water, but when cut into blocks and dried, it becomes a fuel source that burns easily with a distinct smoky aroma. Traditionally, turf is not cut until after St. Patrick's Day. Early May is generally the turf-cutting time in Connemara, but depending on the length of winter, it could be earlier. It typically takes a week of cutting to lay down enough turf for the coming year. Turf cutting is done with a sleán, a long-handled turf

Turf was the primary fuel source for heating and cooking in Ireland as far back as the seventeenth century.

spade with a shaped steel end. Similar tools dating back thousands of years have been found preserved in the bogs. Turf was the primary fuel source for heating and cooking in Ireland as far back as the seventeenth century. Today, many homes in the west of Ireland continue to use turf as a secondary source of heat and often for nostalgia.

If you get a chance to visit the west coast of Ireland, be sure to take time for a cup of tea in front of a turf fire. I'll not promise you'll fix the world's problems, but I dare say you will have a sense that you've come home.

That wonderful summer of 1977 was nearly forty years ago, and I have been back to my family's home many times since, the almost four-hour drive from the airport has been pared down to a little over two hours, thanks to improved roads and highways. The bigger towns have changed over the decades, but as you leave the cities and head out to the country, time has stood still. It is as if that magical smoke seen billowing out of every chimney along the way has enchanted the land. The old-world cottages and the rolling hills and the fierce sea have remained unchanged in my eyes, and my mother before me said the same. It is unusual for so much to stay untouched, but that is the beauty and the mystery of Connemara.





Martin Joe Coyne teaches Bobby Crowley the tradition of turf harvesting in Derryherbert, County Galway. Photo by Laurie Crowley

O, to be sure, Connemara natives are modern folk, same as any one of us, but they have found a way to seamlessly adapt deep-rooted traditions with prevailing advances, thus never losing sight of who they are and where they came from.

To watch life unfold, juxtaposed between the ancient and the modern, is a rare gift. Visit Connemara and experience for yourself the simple gift of life the way it was meant to be lived.

Connemara National Park Visitor Centre, located near the village of Letterfrack, is open from March to October and has a wonderfully informative living museum dedicated to preserving the history of the turf bogs, with tools and preserved artifacts reclaimed from the bogs themselves. Visit connemaranationalpark.ie to learn more.



ART IS ALIVE in Connemara

By SEAN AND ROS COYNE • Photography by AOIFE HERRIOTT

THE WEST OF IRELAND IS HOME NOT ONLY TO BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES AND A STORIED HISTORY BUT ALSO TO A RICH AND VIBRANT ARTS CULTURE. WHEN IT COMES TO MUSICAL, VISUAL, OR LITERARY ART, THE PEOPLE OF CONNEMARA TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR WORK AND STRIVE TO MAINTAIN QUALITY ART AND PERFORMANCES FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THEIR AUDIENCES. ONE ORGANISATION KEEPING THE ART OF THEATRE ALIVE IN CONNEMARA IS THE CURLEW THEATRE COMPANY, FOUNDED IN 2009 BY EAMON GRENNAN, TEGOLIN KNOWLAND, AND SEAN COYNE.

Curlew Theatre Company, based in Renvyle, County Galway, reaches out to local audiences and those from around the world, performing six 'plays for voices' devised, written, and directed by Eamon Grennan. Each play takes a crucial element in Irish history and explores it in depth.

The aim of the company is to produce performance pieces that rely almost solely on text and voice. Each year, the Curlew Theatre Company has produced a new play using only two actors (playing many voices), a minimum of props, and not much stage 'business'. These dramatic pieces explore their chosen subjects in an immediate way, seeking to provide a close, intimate relationship between players and the audience. By so doing, the issues (big, small, historical, political, or personal) gain a recognisable human face and, most importantin the constant flow of talk, of language-an intensely human sound, making them very accessible to the audience.

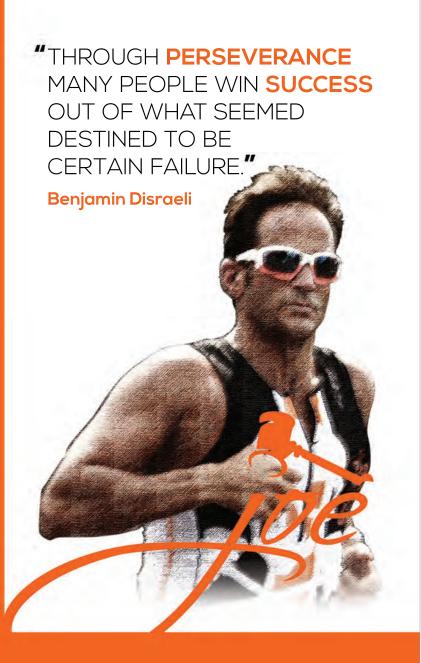
The adaptation of John Millington Synge's Aran *Islands* offers the audience a glimpse of island life. The piece on the Great Famine, Hunger, uses documentary evidence to give audiences a dramatic feel for what has been such a silent and traumatic element in Ireland's history. Emigration Road explores a number of iconic

elements in the great wave of emigration from Ireland to the United States as well as that wave's presence as an aspect of contemporary Irish life. Ferry features five strangers, played by two voices, revealing fragments of their lives now left behind them, forming a collage of meditations on life, death, and memory. Between short exchanges and longer soliloquies, we get to know a little about these different, wounded lives. The Muse and Mister Yeats presents, one by one, the various women with whom W. B. Yeats was romantically involved, sketching a portrait of Yeats in love. The Curlew's newest play, NORAMOLLYANNALIVIALUCIA: The Muse and Mister Joyce, is a one-woman piece that depicts James Joyce's wife as an older woman sharing her memories and snippets from the works of her husband.

The Curlew Theatre Company completed a very successful tour of the East Coast of the United States, where performances were given at the following: University of Connecticut (Storrs campus), Trinity College, and Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut; Framingham State University in Massachusetts; SUNY Geneseo, Le Moyne College, and the American Irish Historical Society in New York; Villanova University in Pennsylvania; and the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. This was their third tour of the United States; the previous two included parts of the Midwest and the East Coast.

Last year, the company performed at the Universities of Stuttgart and Munich, and there are hopes for a 2016 tour that will take them to Chicago and surrounding areas. The Curlew Theatre Company was especially pleased to be invited to give a special performance of The Muse and Mister Yeats at Lissadell House in County Sligo for the Great Yeats Birthday Party on 13 June this year.

To learn more or to see a schedule of events, visit www.curlewtheatre.com.



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EFORE VISITING CONNEMARA, MY IDEA OF A PONY WAS A MINIATURE HORSE MOST COMMONLY SEEN AT PETTING ZOOS AND CHILDREN'S CIRCUSES. THE CONNEMARA PONY, HOWEVER, WOULD TAKE GREAT OFFENCE AT BEING COMPARED TO SOMETHING AS TINY AS A SHETLAND.

A majestic creature hailing from Ireland's rugged west, the Connemara breed should hardly be classified as a true pony. Nonetheless, as you sit atop your brawny and robust steed, you soon realise that they are indeed ponies at heart. Their friendly disposition and obedience make them perfect for riders of all ages and abilities. Well-mannered and calm, this particular variety of pony can be found grazing peacefully along the steep and windswept slopes of western County Galway. Their strength and athleticism are quite astounding; Connemara ponies compete in show jumping, dressage, and even endurance riding contests something that further challenges my traditional view of them.

Historians differ as to what precisely influenced the Connemara pony's genealogy, but many believe it was a mix of some of the toughest breeds from around the world. Some say Scandinavian ponies introduced by the Vikings first shaped the Connemara pony's stock, while others argue it was predominantly

the now-extinct Irish Hobby that strengthened the breed. Evidence also exists to suggest the arrival by sea of Spanish Andalusians after the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588. Even stocky Arabians are said to have arrived in Connemara. Regardless of their historical bloodline, it is safe to say these beauties developed their agility and resilience in the harsh terrain of western Ireland. My first experience trekking with Connemara ponies began here—in the hills southwest of Oughterard.

Under an unseasonably warm spring sun, we set off from the Knockillaree Riding Centre and Stud with our equine companions, Jim and Patches. Leading us was the talented Roger Joyce, a seasoned veteran of the Connemara pony community. Well-versed in the surrounding countryside's history, he promptly began pointing out numerous seemingly innocuous objects. 'You see that there? That's an old coffin stone where pall-bearers could rest when heading up the sloping track here.' Roger motioned to our right as



ROGER GAVE US AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SITE, HIGHLIGHTING THE VARIOUS CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND METHODS THAT HARKED BACK TO DIFFERENT HISTORICAL PERIODS.



we ascended. 'Over there, that's where Bob Hope's daughter used to live.' He shifted our gaze from one point of interest to the next with his commanding gestures. There is much more to these hills than meets the eye.

As we passed dense, golden swathes of gorse under lapis lazuli skies, our elevation steadily increased. Sweeping tracts of blanket bog appeared below us on all sides. Roger pointed out the bogs cut into straight edges to create turf. The resulting plateaus resembled rich, half-eaten chocolate cakes. Taking my mind off sugar, I noticed Jim keenly eyeing the tall grass by his hooves. Promising him a reward at the top, I encouraged him to keep up with the rest of our party as we recommenced our skyward trot.

Climbing higher and higher, we saw countless peaks along the surrounding ridgelines. Roger's arm shot out once more, this time pointing out a ridge to our left. He brought our attention to a series of mounds jutting out of each hilltop. These were not simple stacks of stones erected by hikers but ancient rock cairns and overgrown burial mounds dating back centuries, if not millennia.

I soon began to feel I'd need to return for one of Roger's extensive six-hour hill treks, as today's journey would only let me brush the surface of this diverse corner of Connemara. Furthermore, on a clear day like today, the longer ramble provides views south across the hills right out to the Aran Islands—an opportunity not to be missed.

Rounding another bend, our steeds took us past the remnants of a former stone cottage. Roger gave us an archaeological analysis of the site, highlighting the various construction materials and methods that harked back to different historical periods. Soon after this, we veered right and commenced the cross-country component of our jaunt.

Negotiating the undulating territory, we eventually arrived at an expansive set of ruins that rested on the slopes. Our guide told us that this complex had belonged to a chieftain many years ago, for it comprised a network of internal rooms as well as numerous outbuildings. Dismounting, I set off to explore the





rabbit warren of chambers for myself. When I exited the labyrinthine structure, I was greeted with a stunning scene: the sun bathed the land with golden rays, accentuating the emerald fields and the shining grey stone walls, which were encrusted with white lichens. One pasture stood out in particular, as its soil appeared rumpled in a manner completely new to me.

Roger knew all about the rumpled fields and enlightened me upon my return. It turns out these corrugations are known as 'famine ridges' and appear all over Ireland's west. When planting potatoes, farmers created folds in the soil, which would later be flattened again upon harvesting. These mossy-green corduroy waves indicate a field that was never dug up due to recurring potato blight—one cause of Ireland's tragic famine in the middle of the nineteenth century. Awestruck, it hit me that I could well be gazing upon an area not tilled since its original owners either starved to death or emigrated (often to America) more than 150 years ago. The sombre moment was broken by Jim, who proceeded to nudge my right boot away from a delicious tuft of grass—his prize for the morning's hard work.

Back in the saddle, our trio embarked on the return journey. Descending around a bend, we noticed two lakes shimmering to our left, fully illuminated by the midday sun. Behind the two bodies of water, the Maumturk mountain range poked upward into the clouds. More spectacular than this, however, was the view ahead across Lough Corrib, an immense expanse of water dotted with bushy islands to our north. With some assistance from Roger, we even made out the silhouette of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain, far away on the horizon. Blessed with fantastic weather, we breezed back to the base of the hills. Bidding farewell to Jim, Patches, and of course, Roger, we looked upon the surrounding land with a new understanding of its rich and multifaceted history.



CELEBRATING THE

Connemara Pony

he Connemara Pony Festival takes place every August at the Clifden Showgrounds at the western edge of Connemara. The festival includes a number of different shows and events, the premier attraction being the Connemara Pony Show. The show excites visitors with its in-hand classes, ridden classes, show jumping, dressage, and working hunter classes. Breeders and spectators alike have the opportunity to witness the best this unique breed has to offer.

For the serious patron, the festival's concluding weekend also provides the chance to purchase your own Connemara pony at the local sales. Designed to keep all visitors fully entertained, the programme comprises events such as a dog show, a domestic arts competition, and of course, the requisite Irish dancing. I'm sure you'll be offered a pint of Guinness and some local fare as well—if you ask nicely!







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he Irish and their bittersweet love affair with the potato appeared to have started in 1589, courtesy of the Elizabethan adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh, who brought potatoes to Ireland and planted them at his Myrtle Grove estate in Youghal. Initially, many were sceptical about eating them, believing that the tuber was not meant to be food (because it was not mentioned in the Bible) and even that it caused leprosy and encouraged flatulence.

Despite these early misgivings, the potato was quickly accepted and became enormously popular. By the early 1700s, nourished by this new superfood, the population of Ireland had doubled to two million and by 1843, grown to nearly nine million.

IT FINALLY HAPPENED

IN 1845: THE HARVEST

FAILED MISERABLY,

RESULTING IN WHAT

IS NOW KNOWN AS

THE GREAT HUNGER

(AN GORTA MÓR IN

IRISH GAELIC).

Approximately three million Irish peasants lived off the humble spud; the average adult man consumed twelve pounds to fourteen pounds of potatoes per day. Despite eating mostly potatoes (perhaps with some cabbage, fish, and buttermilk occasionally added to their diet), Irish peasants were quite healthy. Since potatoes contain many vital nutrients—complex carbohydrates, minerals, various vitamins, and some protein—they were certainly more nutritious than bread, which was the staple food of the poor in Europe and England at the time.

The potato had no shortage of admirers. In an 1819 issue of The Gentleman's Magazine, John Nichols wrote of a 'happy, healthy

people, content in their ways' and Friedrich Engels happily declared that the potato was the equal of iron for its 'historically revolutionary role'.

Sadly, this potato nirvana was not to last. It has been well documented throughout history that dependence on a single subsistence crop frequently ended in disaster, and this once again proved to be the case in Ireland.

Crop failure was not unheard of in Ireland, for between 1728 and 1845 there had been at least twenty-four occasions when the potato harvest had failed, and it seemed that it would only be a matter of time until a catastrophe of biblical proportions occurred. It finally happened in 1845: the harvest failed miserably, resulting in what is now known as the Great Hunger (an Gorta Mór in Irish Gaelic). This caused Europe's worst natural disaster since the scourge of the Black Death at the end of the fourteenth century. The legacy left by the blight: over a million and a half Irish died—to put that in perspective, that's one out of every eight people.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the potato of choice was a varietal white potato known as the Lumper. It appeared ideally suited for land poor in nutrients, such as in the west of Ireland. All was going well, until the summer of 1845, when the potato harvest was just about to start. A strange smell began to appear, and on closer inspection farmers discovered that all the potatoes had turned into a black slime.

This was not just an Irish but also a global catastrophe. Potato crops failed worldwide, but because of Ireland's total dependence on them, they bore the brunt of the disaster.

It was up to British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel to remedy the situation. When the full extent of the blight was reported to Peel in October 1845, he put together a commission to deliver aid. He also arranged for a secret purchase of cheap Indian corn from the United States and then moved to repeal the Corn

> Laws—restrictions on the import of foreign other avenues of reform.

> The reform may have been a good and humane gesture, but the cheap imported American corn appeared to have no immediate effect. This was because the few Irish mills in operation were not able to mill the maize. Because of its

yellow colour, and its unpopularity, it became known as 'Peel's brimstone'. Life, particularly in the west of Ireland, was getting steadily worse as starvation began to take hold.

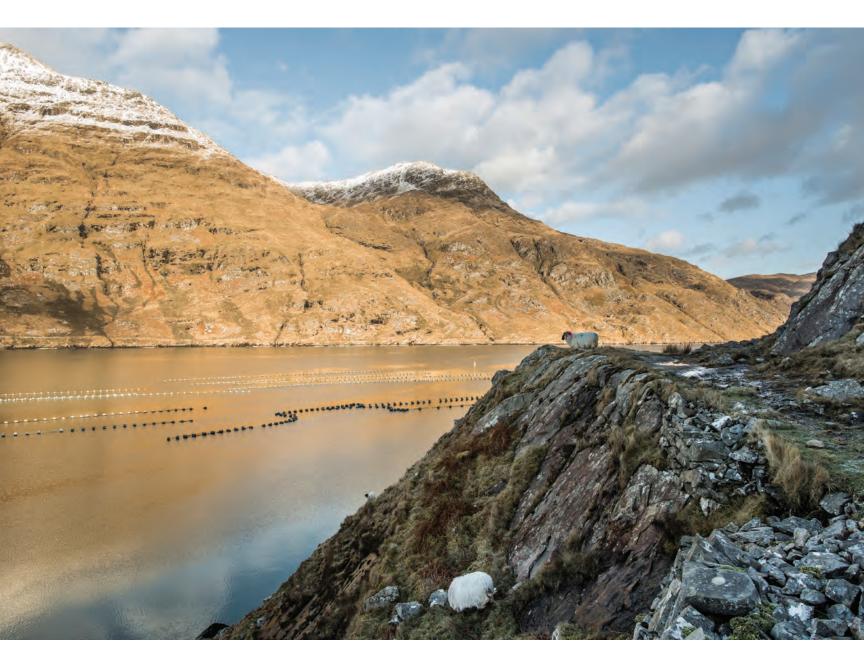
This sorry state of affairs forced one of the biggest mass emigrations in European history. Between 1845 and 1855, over a million Irish left for the United States. Despite the horrific events that compelled them to emigrate, their love affair with the humble spud did not waver. The Irish and their potatoes had become so interwoven in the collective consciousness that the Boston police force, which had always had a high Irish contingent, became known as the Blue Potatoes.

Much was written about the supposed cause of the blight. Letters to *The Times* postulated on volcanic eruptions, 'aerial taints' from outer space, steam locomotives, the evils of alcohol, sulphur matches, and God's will. The whole thing seemed unstoppable.

But cometh the hour, cometh the man. A country clergyman, Rev. Miles Joseph Berkeley of Northamptonshire, was the first to discover the culprit. After the blight was found in potato fields near his home, Berkeley examined samples of the pathogen under his microscope. What he saw was a moisture-thriving fungus, which was later given a scary-sounding name—Phytophthora infestans.

grains—which had been a source for debate in Parliament for decades. Landowners in Parliament wanted the tariffs in place so as to keep their agricultural prices high, while the opposing industrialists believed that if grain prices were lower, people would have more money to spend on consumer goods. The debate wore on and the famine worsened, but eventually the Corn Laws were repealed and free trade became the policy, opening

IN CONNEMARA, THE FAMINE ULTIMATELY CAUSED THE RUIN OF THE FOUNDERS OF CLIFDEN—THE D'ARCY FAMILY—AND FORCED HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE, LEAVING FROM CLIFDEN QUAY, TO EMIGRATE TO AMERICA, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRALIA.



In Connemara, the famine ultimately caused the ruin of the founders of Clifden—the D'Arcy family—and forced hundreds of people, leaving from Clifden Quay, to emigrate to America, England, and Australia. Sadly, many others, who had neither the strength nor the resources to leave, spent their last days in the workhouse. In an effort to mitigate the effects of the famine and ease the suffering of the poor, Quakers set up soup kitchens in the area. Perhaps the most well-known of the Quakers were James and Mary Ellis, who moved from England to Letterfrack and used their

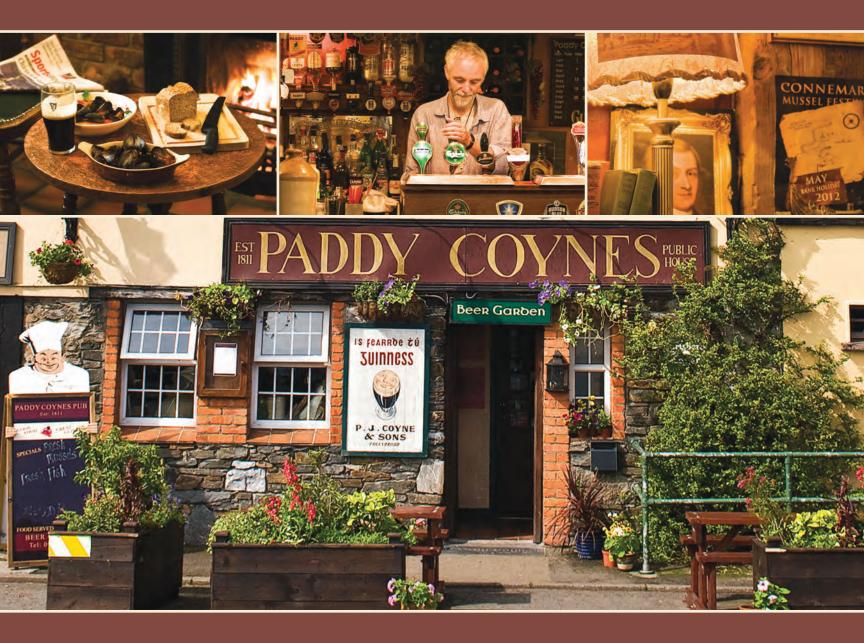
resources to help prevent future famine. They leased nearly a thousand acres and reclaimed it for farming, built a schoolhouse, set up a shop for tradesmen, and more.

The Great Famine was a watershed that has had lasting effects on Ireland. For both the native Irish and their relations abroad, an Gorta Mór is an indelible part of the nation's history.

PADDY COYNES PUB

Tullycross, Renvyle, Connemara, Co. Galway

Paddy Coynes Pub is located in the beautiful village of Tullycross, the heart of Connemara & the Wild Atlantic Way. Dating back to 1811, the pub is a hive of local history & artefacts, a treasure trove of discovery. We are in the perfect location on Renvyle Peninsula, for you to enjoy many of the beaches, walks & attractions of the Wild Atlantic Way. Stay in one of the many local accommodation suppliers & enjoy a relaxing home cooked meal with us. We pride ourselves on our food, using local produce & the freshest of seafood. We are the home of the Connemara Mussel Festival which takes place in the village each May Bank Holiday. Call in for a pint of the black stuff, relax by the fire & stay for the craic!













Like turning leaves, it cast a warm golden-orange glow all around us.

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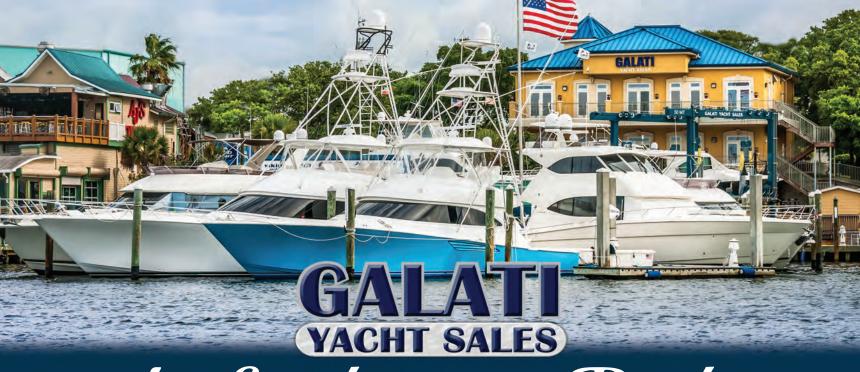
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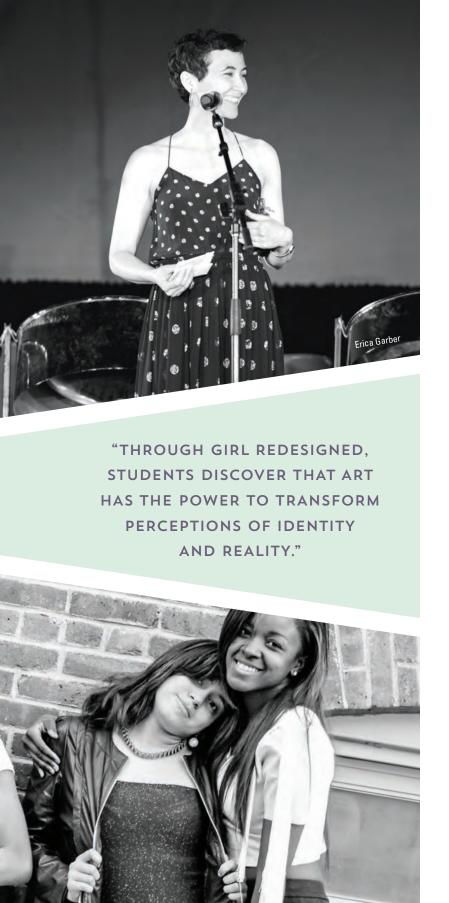


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Main photo: Woodnerline Prosper, Hailey Perez, Emily Delormes, Sydney Dragon, Francesca Appolon, Elizah Callahan, and instructor Sha'velle Davis

hen I asked Trump top model Hartje Andresen what inspired her most about this year's Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week New York, her answer surprised me. "My friend Erica Garber, she is teaching a fashion class to girls in Brooklyn." Hartje was wearing a svelte cream-colored romper and weaving her way through a fashion crowd of New York City's finest at a private event. I followed closely behind her, the reverb from the music beating around us. As we wove in and out of the crowd, Hartje managed an explanation in my ear through her distinct German accent. "Erica is creating a unique fashion week for students in Brooklyn that you should know about." It was as if someone had run a needle across a vinyl record. Coming from a woman who has walked the runway for the world's top designers, Hartje's comment put my first fashion week foray into perspective.

Hartje Andresen was one of four members of the fashion week team enlisted by VIE to cover the Fall/Winter 2015 shows at Lincoln Center. Her photos have graced the covers of the world's most prominent magazines, and her career began as one of the original models at Bruce Weber's famous photo shoot for Abercrombie and Fitch. For Hartje, I would soon discover, it was not her status as a top model at Trump Model Management that defined her character—but rather, her role as a role model.

Along with photographer Aranka Israni, I followed Hartje's inspiration to find Erica Ann Garber, the coordinator of program development in the visual arts for the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF), at Brooklyn's Middle School 61K. She was surrounded by a classroom of young students who were sewing garments using needle and thread. They were exuberant, filled with pride for their one-of-a-kind creations that would soon be walking the runway for a program called Girl Redesigned. Created to build self-confidence and empowerment, Girl Redesigned is an educational course for middle school girls offered through a series of after-school workshops in fashion design, music and vocals, and filmmaking. Erica explains, "Through Girl Redesigned, students discover that art has the power to transform perceptions of identity and reality."

Erica is no stranger to the arts and education. She graduated summa cum laude from Columbia University with a Master of Arts in Art and Art Education and summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology. Erica is back in the classroom, but rather than earning a degree this time, she is using her education to empower girls to become strong women.

The inspiration for Girl Redesigned began with a curriculum Erica developed with the help of Jacqueline Brown, the visual arts coordinator for SASF. They called the lesson plan Gratitude, Grit, and Growth: Making Art, Defining Character. "Middle school girls in Western society today grow up with increasing pressure to meet narrowly defined social ideals," Jacqueline says. "For girls ages ten to fourteen, puberty is all too often the spark for negative feelings and an unhealthy body image; however, there is great evidence to support intervention at this critical life moment."







"I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WHEN YOU PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE SKILLS AND TOOLS TO EXPRESS CONFIDENTLY WITH VISUAL LANGUAGE, WE ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THE STUDENT'S AUTHENTIC VOICES."

Erica's personal teaching philosophy is rooted in the idea that providing a safe environment allows for artistic exploration. "Once young people feel safe to explore, they will feel free to express authentic ideas, and that is where transformation and idea formation can take place," she explains. "My goal is to provide them with the tools to express their ideas through a visual language." Gratitude, Grit, and Growth—and later Girl Redesigned—germinated from this idea. "I strongly believe that when you provide students with the skills and tools to express confidently with visual language, we are given the opportunity to hear the students' authentic voices."

Girl Redesigned challenges students to identify with one exemplary quality they possess and therein bolster the character trait that they aspire to strengthen—represented through music, art, and design. The program culminated at the Museum of Modern Art PS1 Performance Dome on May 8, where the lineup included performances by an all-girl rock band, a spoken word troupe, and a steel-pan ensemble alongside a runway fashion show featuring original pieces from the fashion design students. Projected throughout the show was video footage captured by young filmmakers. Hartje was joined by fashion stylist Allyson Longshore and Fekkai hairstylist Savannarith Chy, who, alongside the SASF team, prepared the girls for their runway debuts.

"At this age, action-oriented programs build confidence and inspire girls to feel better about themselves," Erica continues. "This was the first year for Girl Redesigned, and we plan to make it an annual program. We hope to expand the fashion design classes for next year and also offer the opportunity to more girls for the second annual fashion show." For the

future, Erica also plans to continue pushing forward the idea of exploring character development using artistic mediums. "We want to explore tough issues and inspire the confidence to express and share deeply personal feelings."

At this sensitive age, asking girls to explore insecurities and also form new confidence is no easy task. This was part of the reason for choosing to make this an all-girl program and event. "We felt it offered the security they needed to support one another without fear of feeling misunderstood or judged," Erica says. The mostly female SASF staff was also there to act as mentors for the girls and foster the safe space to ask challenging questions. "This was the core of the program from the start, and I think the show's success at MoMA PS1 was a direct result of this element. Every young woman that participated was offered the opportunity to present her transformation with newly found confidence."

In addition to Girl Redesigned, SASF offers various art and sports programs to more than twenty thousand students in about 120 New York City schools every year. While talent is distributed equally among New York City children, access to opportunity is not. The SASF works to close this "opportunity gap" with high-quality extended-day programming that helps public school students from NYC's diverse neighborhoods develop the resilience, aspirations, and skills needed to graduate from high school and to succeed in college and their careers. Since its inception in 1992, SASF has been improving the lives of youth through a wide variety of before- and after-school programs and Saturday, holiday, and summer enrichment activities—including academic support, organized sports and fitness, visual and performing arts, character development, community service, and college prep programs—that counteract the three greatest threats to New York City youth: low high-school completion rates, high obesity rates, and the rising frequency of teen-on-teen violence.

"Our overarching goal at SASF is to connect students to their education in ways that they might not find in the normal school day," says Erica. "Fashion is a huge component of that; not just because of the skills it imparts, which all tie back to larger trends in education—applied math, project management, etc.—but that's sometimes a tough sell."

Girl Redesigned came with its fair share of challenges. "One of the greatest challenges was the mission itself," Erica explains. "At this life moment, many girls are experiencing negative body image and lack of confidence in their work and their ideas, not to mention fear of the stage and the audience. We worked diligently with the students to overcome these obstacles, but by the end, they did overcome the obstacles and were able to walk with power and grace, and speak so eloquently. Each one of them has touched my heart and has empowered me through her journey. I am so inspired to do this again and so much more. I couldn't have done this without the hard work of visual arts coordinator Jackie Brown, music coordinator Krystyl Maksom, and assistant performing arts coordinator Amara Davila. I am grateful for every day I get to work with such a talented team of inspiring and motivated women."

The greatest reward for the Girl Redesigned team was listening to the girls talk about what the process meant to them. "They hold themselves and speak now with more confidence and grace, more kindness, and more grit. They really did accept my challenge, and they met it," Erica says. "They allowed us to help them grow in beautiful ways. It is my sincere hope that not only did they have one short opportunity to reflect on their character and grow, but now they also know how to do it on their own." If she could ask for one thing, it would be that each of these girls carries that lesson with them and continues to reflect and better themselves throughout their lives with the understanding that they have the power to shape their future. "Their only challenge now is to decide on a path and take it."

The Girl Redesigned fashion show also included guest speakers Genevieve Ascencio, senior director at Factory PR in New York, and *VIE* publisher Lisa Burwell, who spoke to the group about achieving their dreams and celebrated their tremendous accomplishments that night. "We've attended fashion weeks in London, in New York, and in Berlin," Burwell says. "Sitting front row at those shows is incredible, but none of them holds a candle to this one."

VIE would like to thank everyone, especially the students and teachers of SASF, for letting us be part of your big night at MoMA PS1! Schools involved include 522K Mott Hall Eagle IV, PS 308K Clara Cardwell, PS 42Q R. Vernam, MS 61K Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell, JHS 151X Lou Gehrig, IS 116Q William C. Hughley, PS 134 George F. Bristow, MS 354K School of Integrated Learning, and IS 318K Eugenio Maria de Hostos. ■

After attending the Girl Redesigned program at MoMA PS 1 VIE's publisher, Lisa Burwell, learned that one of the students from Intermediate School 318, a member of the all-girl rock band Beautiful Imperfections named Gen Rosario, had her own blog. Gen started her blog, Being Gen, as a response to being bullied at her school. Through Girl Redesigned, she has found new confidence and new friends. VIE is honored to have Gen share her story here.





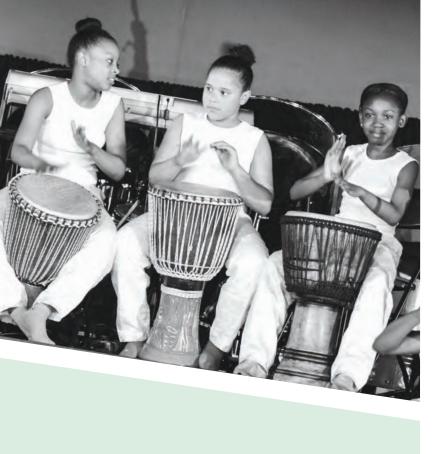


WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE REDESIGNED? FOR AN INTERIOR DESIGNER, IT MAY BE THAT SHE REDESIGNS A ROOM; FOR A FASHION DESIGNER, SHE REDESIGNS HER CLOTHING; BUT FOR US, BEAUTIFUL IMPERFECTIONS MEANS TO REDESIGN OUR INSECURITIES. TO BE MORE CONFIDENT. AND TO BELIEVE IN OURSELVES.

Beautiful Imperfections is the name of our band at I.S. 318. We joined a day of workshops through an educational series for girls where we were able to redesign our self-confidence and overcome our fears through empowerment. Girls who thought that, because of their body shape, they were not going to be able to do a fashion show, and others who thought that they weren't going to be able to sing or play some type of instrument because of stage fright, were able to redesign their mentality. We were able to share our insecurities with girls from other schools; we played games; we conditioned our bodies through yoga; we listened to poetry written by young poets; some of us designed clothing with paper or different types of materials. It was a judgment-free workshop where we—girls—felt empowered. SASF is the name of the organization that gave us middle schoolers the opportunity to learn that art has the power to transform our identity.

Although we, the members of Beautiful Imperfections, have been playing music together in the after-school program since the beginning of the year, we realized that we already have a band—all we had to do was give it a name. After SASF helped us find our own inner strength, we gave our band a true identity. We came up with the name Beautiful Imperfections because we realize that everyone is beautiful, and nobody is "perfect." Everyone is perfect in their own beautiful way. I have a dog who has only three legs, but to me, he is the most wonderful dog one can have as a companion; despite his missing appendage, he has the most amazing personality. People are the same; we all have our flaws.

As a young girl, I have realized that it's hard growing up in a type of society that is very cruel; everyone can see many people being bullied for one reason or another. When we, members of Beautiful Imperfections, are on stage singing together, we feel this sense of empowerment and freedom; all of us have an artistic way of being ourselves. Our teacher, Mr. Healy, has always been the one coaching our voices and instrumental techniques. He has a unique way of guiding us through music. He has always believed in us. He says he once had an opportunity to be a journalist, but I think he has chosen a better career as a teacher changing teenagers' lives. He makes a huge impact in our lives through art, and we want to send that same impact to other young ones when we are on stage. We want others to have the courage to believe that they can be someone; although our band is just an after-school band, we know that someone out there feels insecure being on a stage. We hope that by seeing us, they can get the bravery to be themselves.



We don't know what the future will bring us, as some are graduating this year, but we are thankful for the opportunity to have been able to build our confidence and have each other to bounce ideas with and inspire our strengths. Beautiful Imperfections is who we are, and with our voices we deliver courage, art, and beauty. This year, we were able to do many shows at school, one at the MoMA PS1, and the last one at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. We hope that one day we can get together again and continue to shine on stage.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE SPORTS AND ARTS IN SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

"We offer a diverse range of arts programming, and while fashion design is one component, it's not as robust as we'd like it to be," says Jim Dandeneau, director of communications for SASF. "That is in part because of the costs of materials, and in part because our institutional funders prioritize other programs. With some more attention on our fashion design students, we're hopeful that we can get some support to expand beyond the eight schools it's currently in."

To learn more or to contribute to Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, visit www.sasfny.org.





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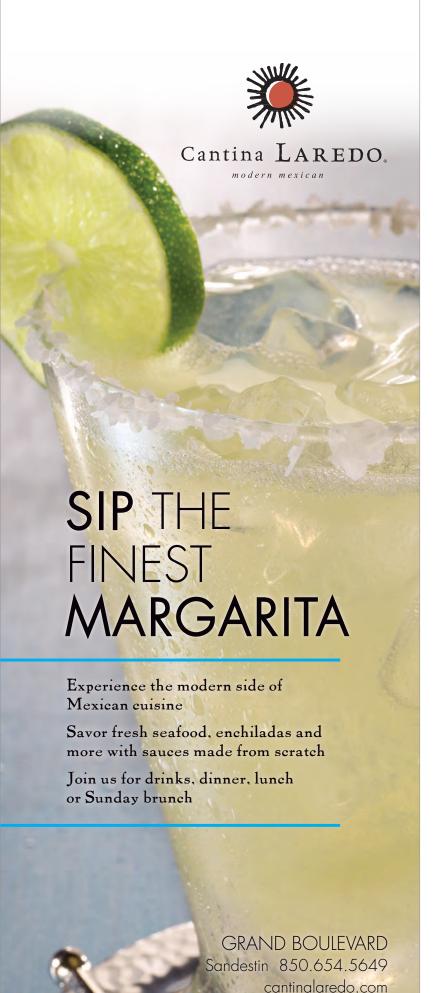
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Passion and Pearls Come Together

BY JORDAN STAGGS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAWN CHAPMAN WHITTY

"Once upon a time, there was a young girl with a very special gift. She could see life's pulsing heartbeat—the very current that connects us all ..."

Thus begins the story of artist and jewelry designer Wendy Mignot, as told through the *Pearl Cinéma* video series that she recently created with filmmaker Arix Zalace. The video *The Mignot Tribe* follows Wendy's life journey, explaining how she harnessed her passion and talent for making jewelry out of anything she could find. She discovered her love first for the sea and adventure, and then for a man named Jean-Noel, who shared her gift for seeing the energy of the universe and finding its power in pearls, beads, sea glass, coins, and any other interesting objects. Together, the artists strung together their findings with supple leather, weaving stories for other people to wear so they too could feel life's energy.

Today, the Mignot tribe has grown by two. Wendy, Jean-Noel, and their children, Violeta and Zachary, live in Seaside, Florida, where they create exquisite pearl and fine leather jewelry and accessories for visitors to their store, La Vie Est Belle (Life Is Beautiful).

Over the years, many have been inspired by Wendy and have imitated her designs, but hers remain the original pearl-and-leather art. Each necklace, bracelet, ring, or other creation is handmade in her Seagrove Beach home workshop. She and her family still select each pearl, each stone, and each strand of leather meticulously, driven by passion for sharing their love of the life each component holds. "That's what makes us stand out," Wendy says. "We did create this style of jewelry, and it really does become a lifestyle. It's that whole idea of natural beauty and living with nature."

From the Bella ring to the three-strand Trinity bracelet, Wendy finds inspiration for each piece in everything she sees. "It's about colors, shapes, and sizes for me," she says. "My designs keep evolving and staying ahead of the curve—or maybe on the curve—it's like the wave of life and I'm just riding it."

Her family and the team at La Vie Est Belle are right there on the wave with Wendy, helping not just with finding customers their perfect pearl bracelet or ring; Jean-Noel is still her partner in the workshop and Violeta and Zachary have grown up modeling their creations. "I love that my kids are the face of my brand," Wendy shares. The Mignot motto, "Live Your Love," could not be more apparent in their bright eyes and the way they embrace the earthbound spirit that their parents have passed on to them.



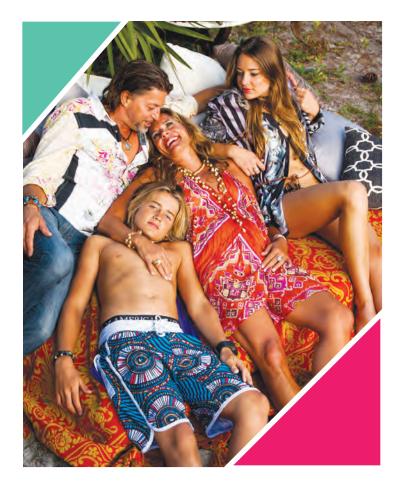
"WE DID CREATE THIS STYLE OF JEWELRY, AND IT REALLY DOES BECOME A LIFESTYLE. IT'S THAT WHOLE IDEA OF NATURAL BEAUTY AND LIVING WITH NATURE."



The Mignot family, along with about thirty other members of the community, exhibited just how versatile Wendy Mignot's pearl and leather designs can be in the artist's Live Your Love runway show at South Walton Fashion Week in 2014. Pieces from Wendy's signature Coastal Freshwater collection went down the catwalk, along with stunning creations including a black Tahitian pearl bikini, pearl-adorned cowboy boots, and a leather-and-pearl mini dress modeled by Violeta. Each model represented a different lifestyle, showing that Wendy Mignot designs can be worn by anyone "from one year to a hundred years old," Wendy says. "It really makes me happy that I'm able to have this art that everyone can enjoy—I feel truly blessed."

"The theme of 'Live Your Love' is so genuine to Wendy's brand and to her life," adds Claire Moss, who came on board at Wendy Mignot in 2014. "The depth and meaning is far greater than the sheer beauty of Tahitian, South Sea, or freshwater pearls. Her artistic inspiration and creativity come from the real lives of the people who wear her jewelry."

Many of Wendy's custom one-of-a-kind creations include personal mementos or charms—such as coins, stones, or shells—brought to her by the client, who can share his or her connection to the token and talk with her about how to incorporate it into a piece of jewelry. One recent project involved a new mother who was diagnosed with leukemia. The woman, Ellen, is a huge fan of Wendy's jewelry. Her husband wrote to Wendy: "There is no other jewelry in existence that she wears with more pride and confidence than yours. This situation has put a huge strain on our young family, but I'm trying to find any way to keep my beautiful wife's spirits high and positive so that she can win this battle and move







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on with her life. If you could do anything to make her smile, I would be forever grateful." Moved by the letter, Wendy selected a very special pearl necklace with healing and uplifting energy just for Ellen.

Always riding the wave of life and finding inspiration wherever she goes, Wendy says creating jewelry feels like putting a puzzle together. The perfect pieces seem to fall into place as her hands make magic, and she often stays up to work into the early hours of the morning. "When the moon, the stars, and the planets are all lined up, that's when great things happen in my studio," she says. From pearl bikinis to pearl skirts and anything else she might dream up, Wendy claims that each and every piece she creates is her favorite. "That's what makes it so fun," she laughs. "What's next? I don't know, but I'll think of something."

Until then, visitors can live their love and shop Wendy Mignot collections at La Vie Est Belle or online, and learn more about Wendy, her family, and her art from the *Pearl Cinéma* video series.

Visit www.wendymignot.com for videos, shopping, and more. La Vie Est Belle is open daily at 25 Central Square in Seaside, Florida.













"Inspiration to me is that some people go through life as if the entire world is a shopping mall for their creativity; though they're not consciously shopping," Lyons says. "Something pops up and they say, 'I'm going to use this for a short story, or a song, or a poem, or a painting'—that's how I am. Everything can have the deepest significance or meaning in this way, and for me this is where the shopping begins."

Matt Lyons's life as an artist began when he was a small child. Though he did experiment with some primitive painting as a boy, he started from an early age with drawing, using simple pen and ink on any surface that presented itself for his expression. While in high school art classes, he developed an interest in detail, shadowing, and perspective. For Lyons, drawing eventually became a kind of hobby, "like playing the guitar—in my idle time, I'd pick it up and do it. With art, it became the same kind of deal. I'd wake up every morning with a cup of coffee, a piece of paper, and an ordinary pen, and I'd doodle or draw. I'd just go at it like that for years and years."

Though Lyons had developed his skills with pen and ink through his early and teenage years, he came of age as a painter while living in Shenzhen, China, where he was inspired by the painters he met. "I'd moved to China to work with a volunteer program at an orphanage. I fell in love with the area and made friends there." One of these friends knew that he was an artist, so he told Matt about an entire village of painters called Dafen Youhua Cun. After some goading from his Chinese friends, the young artist decided to visit this village of painters. The American artist discovered a thriving community that consisted of "stacks and stacks" of centrally located oneroom apartments, not at all like what he was used to seeing in Northwest Florida, where he grew up.

"WITH ART IT BECAME THE SAME KIND OF DEAL. I'D WAKE UP EVERY MORNING WITH A CUP OF COFFEE. A PIECE OF PAPER. AND AN ORDINARY PEN. AND I'D DOODLE OR DRAW. I'D JUST GO AT IT LIKE THAT FOR YEARS AND YEARS."

"It was easy to get lost in there; it was like a maze," Lyons recalls. "By day, the painters worked at these art supply stores within the village, and at night you could see them at work painting in their flats. On any given night there were hundreds of artists painting by lamplight. These artists would duplicate masterpieces like *The* Starry Night or the Mona Lisa, and then they'd ship them to the United States to sell. The talent there was just incredible, and I thought, 'I'm going to try to paint."

With this newfound passion for painting, Lyons discovered that he did not have as much patience as he had thought, and that he had much to learn about color theory. While in China, Lyons developed his patience and the necessary skill of mixing pigments. He then brought these newfound artistic assets back to the United States, where he raided his mother's stash of acrylic paints and supplies. Lyons relates, "I haven't looked back; I've been painting with acrylics since then."

When discussing his developed painting style, Matt Lyons credits inspiration from diverse sources that include everyday sounds, Hemingway short stories, and the street art of London. Lyons has since developed a technique to convey mood more subtly than could be accomplished with black and white alone. "I really love a stark black-and-white theme with a fitting color background. I'm gravitating more toward

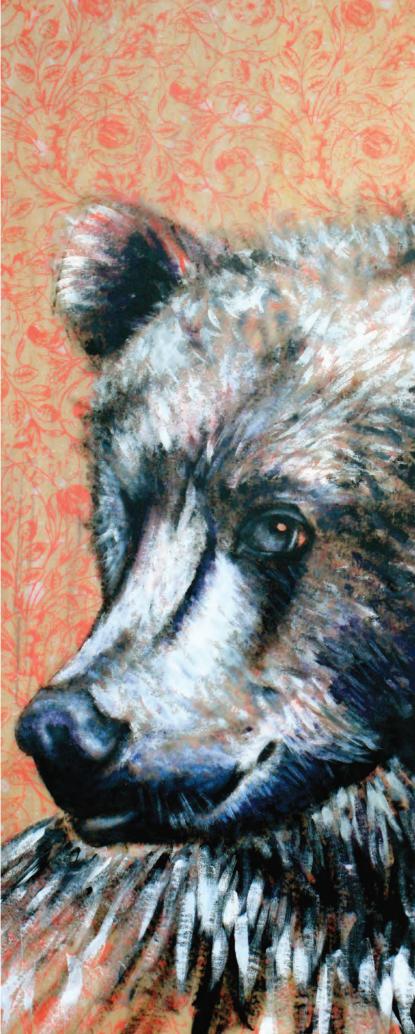
painting the theme monochromatic with just pops of color. This adds a layer of depth to the whole painting, which is what I think it's all about—the many layers."

"I'M GRAVITATING MORE TOWARD PAINTING THE THEME MONOCHROMATIC WITH JUST POPS OF COLOR. THIS ADDS A LAYER OF DEPTH TO THE WHOLE PAINTING, WHICH IS WHAT I THINK IT'S ALL ABOUT—THE MANY LAYERS."

One of Lyons's most thought-provoking pieces, *The Greatest Tragedy in Life Is the Irreversibility of Time*, depicts a young child wearing adult sunglasses and looking up; it shows the perspective of a soul that has no encumbrances—a being with nothing to fret over. Lyons observes, "In this painting, I see my fiancée's little boy, and he's really special to me. I look at him and that is my muse there; I see an innocent baby and then he grows up. I think I've realized that you grow from a toddler to twenty just wanting to be older, and then you hit a point and you see everything the exact opposite. I look at him and I think, 'Don't grow any older!' When you look at life in this way, you realize that it is a tragedy that you can't reverse time, and you're going to have to grow up—everything that that means is encompassed in this painting."

Some of Matt Lyons's work is currently on display at the Homeowner's Collection Gallery in Ruskin Place, Seaside, Florida. He can be reached for commission at hearfrommatt@gmail.com. Visit www.mattlyonsart.com to learn more.









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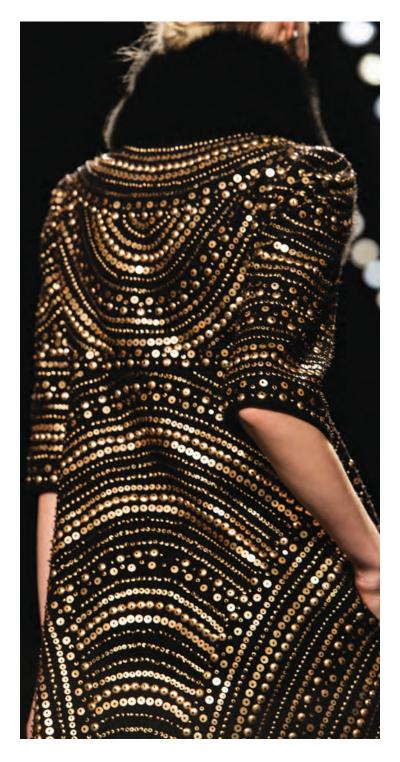
CULTURAL ARTS VILLAGE IN DESTIN

MERCEDES-BENZ



FASHION WEEK

BY JORDAN STAGGS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARANKA ISRANI



Photographer Aranka Israni was on the scene at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in New York this past February to capture the magic on the runway, behind the scenes, outside Lincoln Center, and beyond. Her photographs highlight the true artistic talents and passions of the designers, models, and fashion media as they created one of the world's leading fashion affairs.

With Mercedes-Benz relinquishing its title sponsorship after February's shows, producer IMG renamed the event New York Fashion Week and has many exciting developments in play for the upcoming spring/summer 2016 events, taking place September 10 through 17. Changes include the acquisition of MADE Fashion Week events, which will bring in even more designers to the official NYFW family.

Fashion week events will also bid adieu to Lincoln Center as IMG moves NYFW to Skylight at Moynihan Station and Skylight Clarkson Sq. These historic spaces have been transformed into raw, easily customizable event venues, allowing designers to create unique atmospheres for their collections. "We are focused on creating the best possible experiences that extend beyond a physical location and moment in time," says Mark Shapiro, chief content officer at IMG. "We're looking forward to reintroducing the industry to a showcase of creative talent, style, and innovation that made the New York runways famous. Part of this

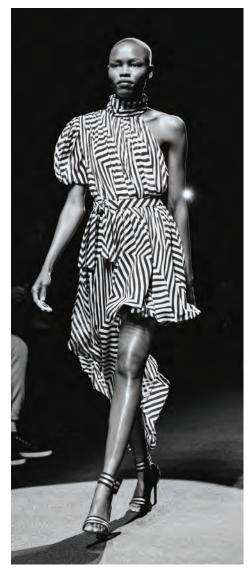




showcase involves staying close to inspirational hubs for fashion, art, and music, and we've found a great new home for that in Skylight at Moynihan Station and Skylight Clarkson Sq."

Fashion icons such as Ralph Lauren and Donna Karan had previously opted out of the tents at Lincoln Center, choosing instead to show their collections in more private settings. IMG hopes the move to these rawer spaces will bring some of these top designers back into the main event's fold with the promise they can create shows that are uniquely their own.

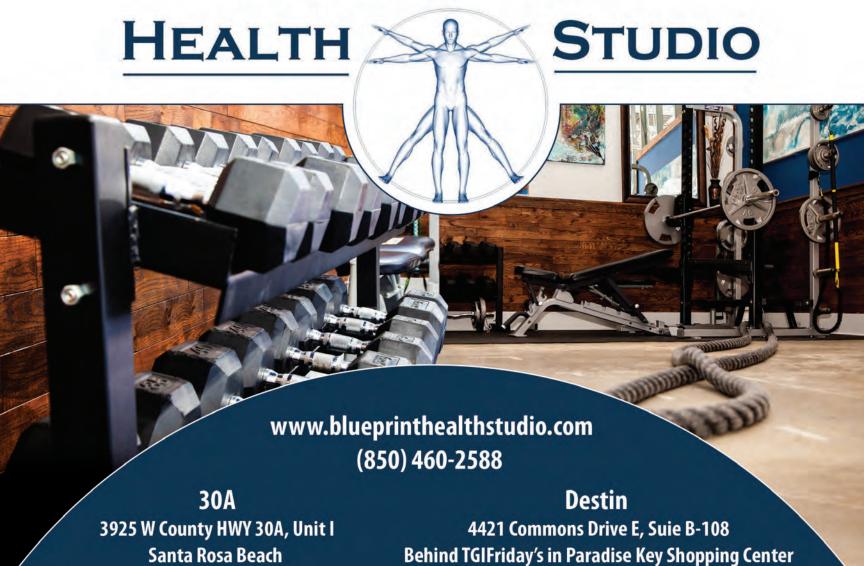
With these exciting developments and more to be announced by IMG, the fashion community at large has much to look forward to this fall!



For more New York Fashion Week news, visit **www.nyfw.com** or follow them on social media @NYFW.



BLUEPRINT



Uncovering Humanity

by Tori Phelps Photography by Aranka Israni

Most artists prefer to be known for their work, but sometimes the person behind it is as compelling as the art. Aranka Israni is one such artist. Her life story is a kaleidoscope of international addresses, and the latest chapter includes an exhibition in Arles, France, alongside a legendary festival that's known as a springboard for the world's top photographic talent.



"My mom has a great interest in art. We visited every possible museum and exhibition that we could find while I was growing up."

The Evolution of an Artist

Israni's exotic upbringing started off in a not-so-exotic locale: Seattle. Her family was soon on the move, and her formative years were divided between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East. She spent the most time in Dubai—a final landing spot of sorts for her father's business and where her parents still reside.

It was during her teen years in Dubai that Israni first developed an interest in photography. She found it difficult to connect with the city, but she could always connect with nature. So she spent nearly every afternoon on the beach, clicking away until daylight gave way to sunset.

The diversion came naturally to Israni, whose family made frequent cultural trips to Europe. "My mom has a great interest in art," she says. "We visited every possible museum and exhibition that we could find while I was growing up."

Israni was always allowed creative outlets: painting, drawing, playing music, and, of course, photography. So when it came time for college, she knew two things: she wanted to pursue a fine arts degree and she wanted to do it in the States.

After a foundation year at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, she finished an undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California School of Fine Arts, focusing on graphic design and digital media. Then it was off to New





York University's Tisch School of the Arts for a master's. However, the wanderer found more than an education; she found a home. She's been in New York City ever since—eleven years and counting.

Here, Israni picked up a camera again, which rekindled a passion that had lain dormant for about fifteen years. Her career had centered on painting and live video artistry, but she believed that photography was the key to capturing the human body, which was a long-held fascination she never indulged through drawing or painting. But now was the time. Her works up to that point were all abstract; she needed something to help her reconnect with humanity. And there's nothing as human as the bodies we inhabit. "There's beauty in the vulnerability of the naked form that you don't have anywhere else," she says.

Israni calls the camera a natural tool to explore the subject matter. It's not that she suddenly decided to become a *photographer*. In fact, she balks at being branded a photographer, preferring to simply describe herself as an artist. Nevertheless, photography is now an inescapable part of her artistic identity; it's increasingly the medium for which she's best known.

Her mastery of the art form led *VIE* to commission Israni for a special project: going behind the lens at New York Fashion Week with a fresh, artistic take on it. Israni took aim at the concept of internal versus external as influenced by the clothes we wear. The question on her mind: do the veils of the body—fabrics, fashion, and design—mask our essence, or do they reflect what's inside?

"There's beauty in the vulnerability of the naked form that you don't have anywhere else." While Israni does capture the apparel, she also captures the person underneath the couture.

It's an example of her ability to find the "moments between the moments" that reveal authenticity—rather than posed perfection.





"Your environment does affect you. But if you remove external influence, our bodies carry our essence. Beauty is universal. My work is universal."

Fashion shows may not sound like a good fit for an artist whose life is spent pursuing emotional truth. In fact, she had done a bit of fashion photography when she was starting out and didn't find it to be a natural strength. Israni's artwork is very intimate, usually created in a one-on-one experience in the studio. Fashion Week, with its crowds and whirlwind pace, couldn't be a more polar opposite from her studio.

But in true artistic style, she couldn't help but investigate that contrast. This left her open to possibilities other than traditional runway imagery. The results are on full, striking display throughout this issue. Israni doesn't like to interpret her photos and prefers to let the work speak to audiences directly. But if she won't say it, plenty of others will:

her images are more than just clothing on a body. While Israni does capture the apparel, she also captures the person underneath the couture. It's an example of her ability to find the "moments between the moments" that reveal authenticity—rather than posed perfection. She has said that she sees essences and souls. And apparently her camera does as well.

A Universal Perspective

These unique gifts have earned Israni the exhibition of a lifetime this summer. In her first solo photography event, she'll exhibit nine black-and-white nudes from July 4 to August 22 at the Anne Clergue Galerie in Arles, France. Her show runs concurrently with the world-famous Rencontres d'Arles, a massive photo festival that attracts nearly a hundred thousand art lovers to Provence every year. The event was launched

in 1970 and includes displays in cultural sites—like twelfth-century chapels—that are only open to the public during the festival.

Israni, however, will be happily ensconced in a more meaningful venue. Anne Clergue is the daughter of her mentor, who had a significant role in the festival's creation. And like her father, Anne saw something very special in Israni's photos and decided to give her father's protégé a solo show as soon as she saw Israni's work.

With this exhibition, it's impossible for Israni to ignore the fact that her star is on the rise. And while she doesn't object to a wider audience for her work, the thrill remains in the artistic process. "It's magical," she says. "Each time I see something I've

never seen before and experience something I've never experienced before. It's always different."

"Different" is the story of her life. Israni has lived in Toronto, Miami, Dubai, Los Angeles, London, and New York City. Her career has included live video performances, online exhibitions, and group exhibitions from Estonia to Colombia. She's lived and worked with people of different cultures, religions, ethnicities, and philosophies, resulting in a knowledge that few of us can imagine and a worldview that few of us possess. She calls it a "universal perspective"—a fluidity and an adaptability that allow her to disregard the outer layer more easily than most. "Your environment does affect you," she concedes. "But if you remove external influence, our bodies carry our essence. Beauty is universal. My work is universal."

She's found a similarly universal outlook in the people of New York City, which may help explain her uncharacteristic decade-plus residence. Israni believes that the city chose her. She thrives on its pulse and rhythm, feeding off the creative energy of her fellow artists. It's the place that, more than any other, has given her a foundation of creative development. In a very real way, the city turned her into an artist.

And yet nothing about Israni is set in stone. If opportunities take her elsewhere, she'll happily decamp from New York City. And when different artistic mediums call to her, she'll answer. Even during this period of photographic success, she still makes works on paper. She doesn't see other mediums as being separate from her photography. Rather, they're different means to the same end: expression. "I love making imagery," she explains. "And right now, the way I know how to express my vision is through a camera."

For Israni, being an artist is both a profession and a way of living. She can't even pinpoint what she loves most about her life right now because when you do what you love, it's all good.

In the near future, she intends to expand the complexity of her imagery, perhaps with the help of the circus performers and contortionists with whom she's working. Her next venture will undoubtedly involve taking her best picture yet. "My favorite photo is every one I've ever made," she confesses. "And it's also the next one that I make."

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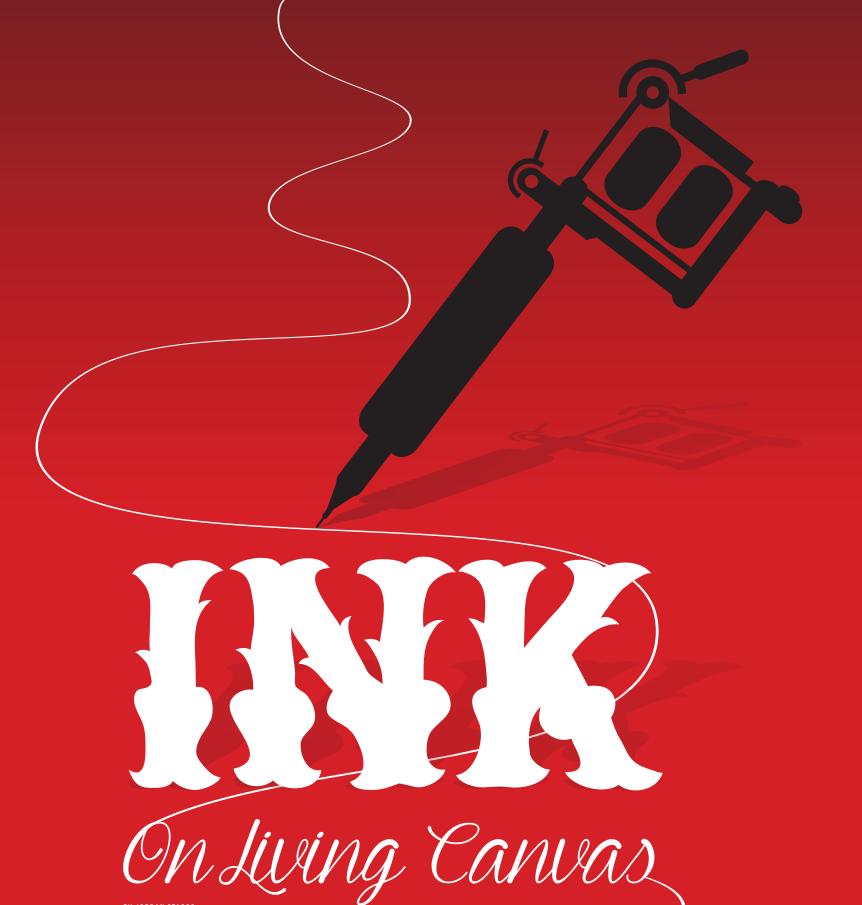
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BY JORDAN STAGGS PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROMONA ROBBINS hen it comes to tattoos, those who don't have any always ask the same question of those who do: did it hurt? "Usually after about the first five minutes of tattooing, the body starts to dump endorphins and the area being worked on tends to numb itself to some degree," answers tattoo artist Eddie Davis. "But make no mistake—tattoos hurt." But getting a work of art permanently etched into one's skin isn't about the pain; it's about the experience and the personal meaning. It's about telling a story, even if you keep it to yourself.

Born in Japan just before his father left for Vietnam, Eddie grew up in a military family and lived in the Philippines and various parts of Europe and Asia while growing up. Eventually, his family settled on the Gulf Coast in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. As a young man, Eddie thought he would follow in his father's path; his father, knowing his son's true passion lay elsewhere, had other dreams for him. "My father, by all measures of what he did, was a successful military man," Eddie says. "I told him I thought that following in his footsteps would be my destiny. He dissuaded me from it. His advice was this: 'Find something you love to do, and figure out how to get paid for it.'"

Though he didn't join the military, Eddie found a way to follow his passion while still holding onto his father's legacy—as an artist. "I can credit my father with lighting the artistic fire in my belly," Eddie says. "He was an art student when he felt it was his duty to enlist during the Vietnam conflict. Although his military career became his way of life, he never let go of his love for art."

When his father was home, Eddie spent a lot of time drawing and painting with him; their house never ran short on art supplies or inspiration, whether from art or music (Eddie's mother was a concert pianist, and he also plays guitar). Some of that inspiration came from his dad's collection of books and comics. "Some of my favorite early influences came from *Creepy* and *Eerie* magazines and *Conan the Barbarian*," Eddie explains. "And even though they are considered comics, they were full of fantastic art from guys like Berni Wrightson, Frank Frazetta, and Boris Vallejo, just to name a few." Admittedly, these influences brought out Eddie's love for darker subject matter in his artwork, and much of his personal work has included horror themes such as skulls and monstrous creatures.

In the late 1980s, Eddie began working as an artist and an illustrator, starting out doing airbrushed T-shirts for tourists in Fort Walton Beach. Though it wasn't exactly a glamorous job, it could be fun at times and afforded him time to learn and hone his craft as an airbrush artist. As his skills grew, so did the recognition he got for his work, and people began to commission him for large-scale projects such as murals and custom detailing on cars, bikes, surfboards, and more.

No stranger to traveling or living abroad, Eddie spent about three years on and off in Limburg, a province in the southern Netherlands, working as an artist and designer at Ateliers Geurts. Many European carnivals sent their attractions there to be decorated. "We worked on projects ranging from roller coasters in Switzerland to decorating parts of Discoveryland at Euro Disney in Paris," Eddie recalls. "The money was great, and the exposure to European vintage art and techniques was amazing. I was floored to be able to work with artisans from England, France, Poland, Russia, and Greece, learn new techniques, and hang out with an eclectic and tight-knit group of artists. We're still friends to this day."



In addition to being sought out for his work and gaining worldwide recognition for his custom automotive paintings on cars and motorcycles, Eddie was sought out as a teacher for up-and-coming airbrush artists. "I became a contributing artist for a few different sponsors at SEMA (Specialty Equipment Market Association), and I was fortunate enough to be an instructor for the Airbrush Action Getaway Workshop programs," he says. "I taught three times a year in Orlando and Las Vegas, with an average student load of about fifteen artists per class." His teaching travels have also taken him to Northern Ireland, and he returns to Mexico City a couple times per year to teach workshops.

But in 2012, after building a successful career in airbrushing and design, Eddie switched gears, acting upon his desire to learn something new. "Most everything I've painted has a finite lifespan or is, ultimately, expendable," he explains. "I got to a point in my career where I had a real problem with the fact that I was putting my heart and soul into pieces that were basically disposable." That desire to create something long lasting drew Eddie to the art of tattooing. He began to practice tattooing on friends and fake skin and soon found himself working in a tourist tattoo parlor in downtown Fort Walton Beach. Starting out in a high-traffic shop allowed Eddie to log many hours of working on different clients, refining his "bedside manner," and figuring out the styles of tattoos he liked creating the most. "I didn't need to learn art, just how to transition to the tenets of tattooing. There is a whole history and frame of mind I had to learn before I began tattooing in earnest. Even though I devoted myself to and completed an apprenticeship, I still had to learn a lot on my own. And that is what I dig the most—I get to grow as an artist."

In just a few short years, Eddie has put in the requisite hours and refined his tattoo techniques enough to become considered one of the best tattoo artists in the area, now working from a studio at Big Rooster Co. Cycles and Tattoos in Fort Walton Beach. "I was brought into Big Rooster by one of the biggest influences in my tattoo career, Nick Minervine," Eddie says. He now tattoos by appointment only and usually only sees one client per day, allowing more time for personal consultation and to make sure his clients' tattoos are exactly what they want. "In addition to Nick and myself, the other tattoo artists are Kieth Roice and Andrew Barnette. We've all worked in high-pressure, cutthroat shops, and we jealously guard the mellow and laid-back environment we've cultivated here." Big Rooster also offers Harley-Davidson customization and maintenance by resident Harley guru Josh Stafford and expert mechanic Zach Scott. "The tattoo and motorcycle vibe here goes from mild to wild and all points in between, and we love what we do," Eddie adds.

Eddie's client base includes locals and visitors, most of whom have been recommended to him by his droves of happy customers. "Most people find a good artist that they trust and stick with that person," he says. "The Japanese Tebori masters don't treat a tattoo as a simple transaction. The idea is that once you tattoo someone, you are bound by the living art for the rest of your lives. I pride myself on that relationship with my tattoo clients, and I strive to give them singular and hugely meaningful tattoos based on who they are as people. Even if the idea a prospective client wants is simple, I love to design things that are uniquely theirs. The idea of picking a tattoo from a catalog is horrid. Every one of us is different, and we all have a unique story. Our tattoos should reflect that."

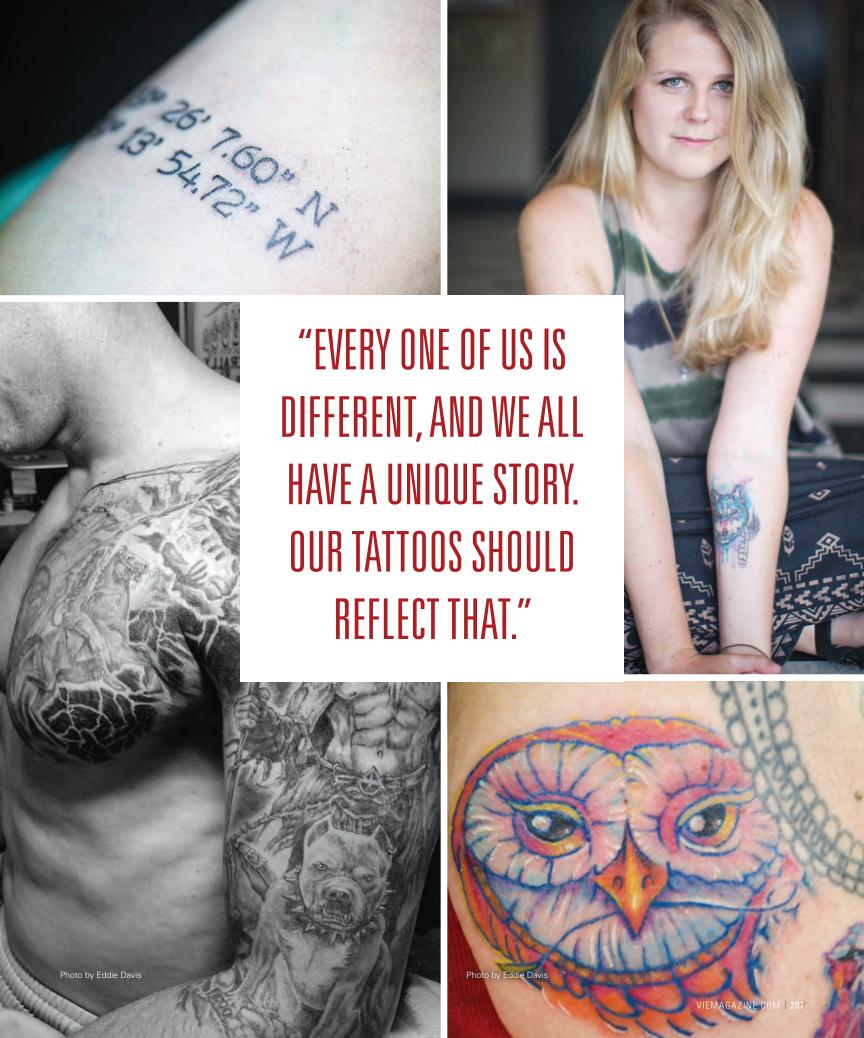
That reflection of inner self is important to any tattoo, Eddie says, from the smallest design to a whole sleeve or back piece. "There are plenty of reasons I love being a tattoo artist, but I think the main one is that I know that, for both genders, having a great tattoo affects the client's self-image," he continues. "And any chance I get to help someone with that, I do."

Isabelle Lara of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, visited Big Rooster in May for her first tattoo, the coordinates of her late grandparents' home—coincidentally located in Mexico City, where Eddie has taught many times. "From the moment I got in touch with Eddie, he was nothing but accommodating and honest with me," she says. "He was very professional but also incredibly kind and patient when explaining the process. Knowing that this was my first tattoo, Eddie explained everything that he was doing and why. My favorite part of my tattoo would have to be what it means to me. Both grandparents passed away in the last couple of years, and their house is the last physical 'thing' I have to hold onto them and those memories. I have so many wonderful memories at that house and want to carry them around with me all the time."

Eddie says he loves helping clients memorialize lost loved ones or past experiences with their tattoos. "I've noticed that a client getting a memorial tattoo gets to externalize the emotional pain during the tattoo and discuss it," he says, "and as the tattoo heals, so does the client. I like the symbolic and literal way my art is helping people. It's the things like this that let me know I am on the right path with my art—when I can see that my talent makes a difference in people's lives." A poignant example of this healing process came about recently when Eddie created a memorial tattoo for a woman who had lost her son and incorporated the son's ashes into the ink he used. "Although that may seem a bit creepy to some, it's literally a way to bring a mother and child back together. The process was arduous and exacting; I spoke with quite a few medical professionals in order to do the tattoo in a safe and ethical manner."

There's no question Eddie has talent, if his loyal clients have anything to say about it. And for the eternal artist, having them return or recommend their friends is one of the best compliments he can receive. He also has fun doing different styles of artwork on different people, such as watercolor- or woodcut-inspired designs and grey-and-black or color realism designs. "I have only one client that I do American traditional-style tattoos on," Eddie says. "He's a military guy who used to tattoo in Venice Beach, California. He draws his own designs but will only let me tattoo them. It's a huge honor."

Continuing to learn and evolve in his work every day still drives him, and Eddie is excited to see what future projects may hold. "I look forward to doing more dotwork (pointillism) tattoos, and also I have some really cool sleeve projects coming up this year," he says. "It's very difficult to pinpoint one thing I love about what I do. Mostly, though, I really look forward to mentoring my son in his tattoo career." As Eddie claims, his son, Arantis, "is a better artist at seventeen than I was at twenty-five." The pair has collaborated on projects such as a mural at Dog House Surf Shop in Fort Walton Beach, and Arantis has already gotten firsthand experience working part-time at Big Rooster. "Of course, the deal is he has to go to school and get a degree, but I can't think of anything better than working with my son and creating a family tradition." With a daughter who is a painter and a wife who does custom



automotive pinstriping and photography, there's no doubt the Davis family artistic legacy is alive and well.

Tattooing, no matter the stigma attached, remains an ancient art form that has gone through phases of the highest respect and the lowest disrespect throughout the years. In recent decades, it seems tattoos have become more appreciated by "mainstream" society as a form of art and self-expression, no different from the clothes a person wears, except that you can't take them off. "When I was growing up, only soldiers, convicts, or bikers had ink," Eddie admits. "These days, it's much more accepted in many cultures to wear tattoos. We all have different experiences and different backgrounds, and anything that helps provide a way to express your individuality is great."

Eddie believes each of his tattooing experiences is unique and creates a special connection between himself and his clients that he values more than the money he makes for his art. "We are all only on this planet for a short time," he explains. "I believe that while we are here we should all strive to leave as large an impression as we possibly can. Make a positive mark and leave people better than you found them. All of our things and money still don't equal our experiences, so collect experiences. If that means getting a tattoo, then get a tattoo. Find an artist you like and make it happen. Tattoos are snapshots for where you are at any given point in your life. When the end is near, have something really cool to remember the ride."



SEE MORE OF EDDIE'S WORK AT FACEBOOK.COM/EDDIEDAVISART OR ON INSTAGRAM (@EDDIEDAVISARTANDTATTOO). HE IS AVAILABLE FOR COMMISSION AT BIG ROOSTER CO. CYCLES AND TATTOOS; CONTACT HIM DIRECTLY AT (850) 305-4001.





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HANDCRAFTED AMERICAN-MADE ACCESSORIES

By Megan Trent
Photography by Fantasia McDaniel – Little Miss Creative Studio

Just over a year ago, in the kitchen of her home in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, Christie Casillo set aside the conventional idea that business should start with an end in mind. Instead, she ran freely with the inspiration she found in the rich, raw materials and the vast colors and textures of the natural landscape in her own backyard. She did not consult with or restrict her concept to a business plan; she embraced a process of her own creation. As the textiles that captivated her became transformed through color and texture of her own design, Coastal Road was born.

look and feel to meet her client's vision. Event design led her to other forms of design; she next worked for a fashion label, which gave her new ways to bring others' visions to life. Casillo was drawn to overseeing the production of goods, and, in managing the process, she began to better understand the importance of cut, pattern, and materials, not to mention the hands and hearts that bring them all together.

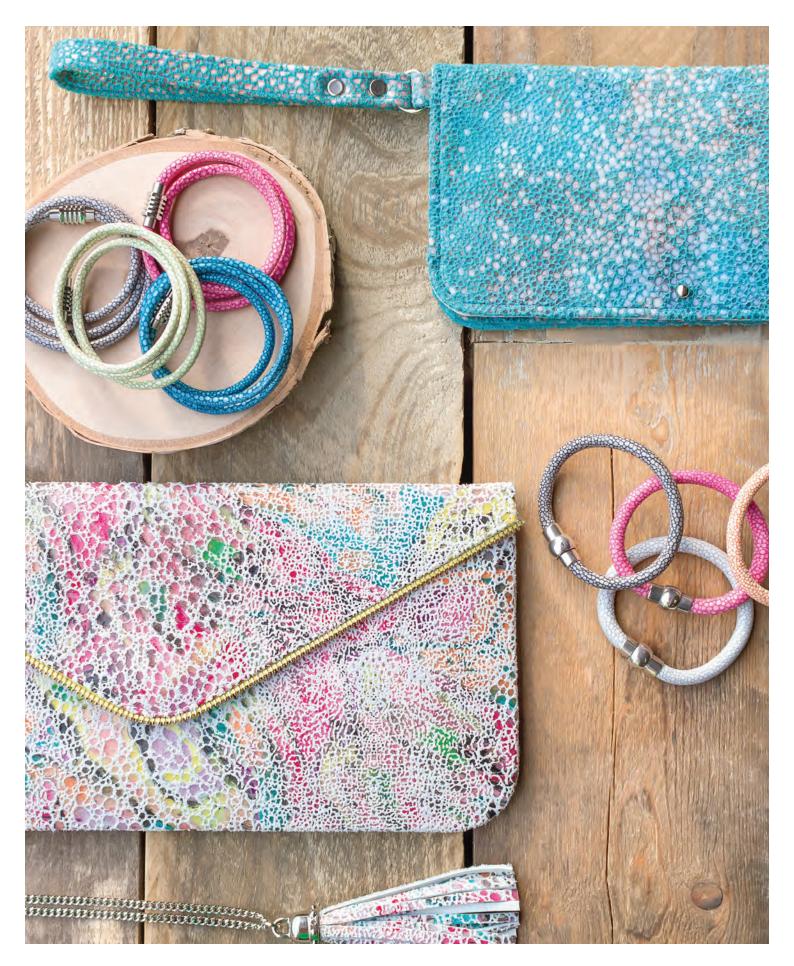
One of the defining characteristics of Coastal Road—being American made—began with this awareness and a desire to retain the quality and heart of the products, which can so often be lost in mass

Coastal Road leather designs are a fusion of a desire to honor the timeless heritage of handcrafting natural leather and the limitless possibilities of new textile technologies. The brand's creation was heavily influenced by Casillo's background in corporate events, her lifelong obsession with artistic details, and her deep appreciation of quality production. All these things, along with a heaping helping of passion, led to the discovery of a way to bring something entirely new into the design world.

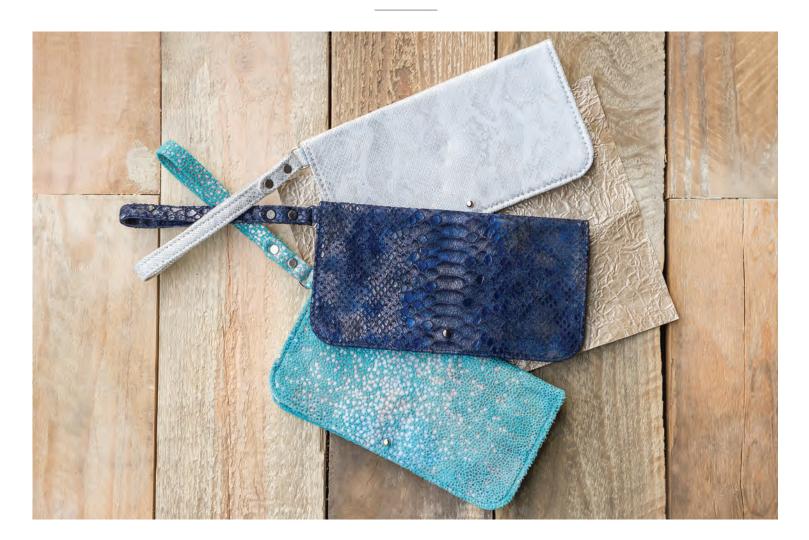
"All of my life experience has kind of funneled into this expression, and when I am designing and creating things, I am at my most peaceful," Casillo said. "I am acting with true joy."

Working in event management, Casillo fell in love with the creative process whereby she would transform the shell of a space, producing a new





The process of bringing together visual and tactile elements is as important as the product to both Casillo and Coastal Road—the two are inextricably linked.



production. The design process and most of the production of Coastal Road's smaller leather goods take place in the studio in Santa Rosa Beach, while some larger pieces are constructed in the heart of the Garment District in Manhattan.

With a vision and a lot of heart, Casillo learned to trust her instincts when creating her initial designs and sample pieces. The first sample to arrive back on her doorstep as a finished product was a crossbody bag, which, with some revisions, is still a customer favorite today. Holding in her hands a product that had previously only existed in her heart and mind was one of the first tangible successes in the journey of Coastal Road.

When her collection included enough samples, Casillo assembled a visual presentation to show to a retail buyer. This meeting resulted in her first wholesale order and a validation that Coastal Road was, in fact, something sought by her target market.

Since then, Casillo has continued to trust her instincts both in creating collections for Coastal Road and in making business decisions. She has expanded to a new studio warehouse and hired a supportive creative team to help with all aspects of the business, from design and production to marketing and sales. Above all, she continues to support American-made, quality craftsmanship and inspired design. The process of bringing together visual and tactile elements is as important as the product to both Casillo and Coastal Road—the two are inextricably linked. She says this is crucial for the future.

"I have seen what happens when people step away from the process and get too distant," Casillo explains. "With success, they forget all the hands, minds, and talents that drove that success. I will never let that be part of our story."

An exciting development for Coastal Road was the brand's selection as one of only seven brands nationwide to be part of the FedEx Big Box of Small Goods campaign, whose aim is to grow small businesses through the exposure of industry experts. The offer to become part of the campaign came after Coastal Road was a finalist in FedEx's small business grant program.

The Big Box of Small Goods campaign includes a Coastal Road product, along with the products of the six other selected small businesses, placed in a special box handcrafted by a Brooklyn artisan. The boxes will be sent to national brand influencers: Guy Kawasaki, Michael Williams of *A Continuous Lean*, Justin Livingston from *Scout Sixteen*, Alexa Jean Brown, Ashley Rodriguez of *Not Without Salt*, and Rita Mehta of *The American Edit*. Coastal Road was specially paired for engagement with *The American Edit*, a site focused entirely on finding the best American makers and brands. FedEx.com will feature the campaign for three to six months. "We are beyond appreciative that FedEx would create such an amazing program and that our growing business is a part of its initial phase," Casillo says.

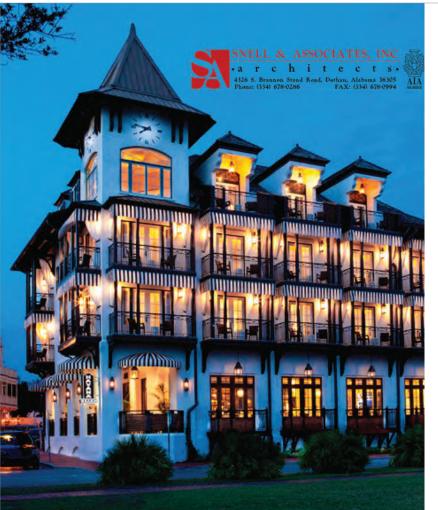
Casillo shares that she also hopes the program will help her endeavors to "Support Local" and give back to the artistic beach community that provided the inspiration and the first steps for Coastal Road. "We hope that in shining a light on our locally made brand at a national level, we can share that gratitude with the other small businesses—shops, boutiques, and publications—that have helped us grow," she says.

The growth of Coastal Road has brought with it a lot of personal growth for its founder. "I am more fearless," Casillo says. "I now know I can trust, go, work, and connect without limits. It has changed my whole thought process about business and passion and how neither should ever hold the other back."



To learn more or to shop Coastal Road, visit www.CoastalRoad.net.

Megan Trent is the business developer for Coastal Road. Portions of this story are from the essay she wrote when applying for the FedEx small business grant program.





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THE HAND

THAT FEEDS YOU

BY CHAD THURMAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROMONA ROBBINS

If you've ever spent any amount of time in southern Walton County, Florida, you may have visited the iconic Red Bar of Grayton Beach (see *VIE* March/April 2015, "From Belgium with Love") and marveled at the tremendously detailed and richly colorful mural that adorns the front door of the building. You may have even waited for the crowd to clear so you could take a photo by the door before entering what is verily now a cultural landmark in the area. The central theme of the mural is an image of the Hindu deity Ganesha, whose four arms and hands present to those who pass the offerings of a dinner plate of crab cakes, a glass of wine, a drumstick (of the instrumental variety), and a Stratocaster guitar. This mural is the creation of the fertile imagination, deft hand, and keen eye of artist Bryan Hand.

Hand is a largely self-taught artist who also credits his mother, an oil painter, with teaching him how to draw. Since the young artist was old enough to grasp a pen, his mother directed him to hone his sense of vision. If he wanted to learn to draw something, his mother would draw it for him and then show him how to do it. "I was always provided with something to draw with and on," Hand recalls. "I was encouraged as a kid by both of my parents; they would give me coloring books, but I would fill up the inside covers with drawings. When I was a kid, I would rather draw than color."

Hand continued to draw through his college and military careers, filling up stacks of sketchpads along the way, which he still has and readily references to this day.

"What changed me as an artist was meeting the folk artist Woodie Long," Hand says. "I'd never painted ever in my life; I just drew. I met Woodie at a folk art festival at the House of Blues in Orlando. He encouraged me very much to paint." Long hailed from Northwest Florida just as Hand and his wife, Alison, did, and Hand was excited to have the opportunity to learn from Long when they moved back home.

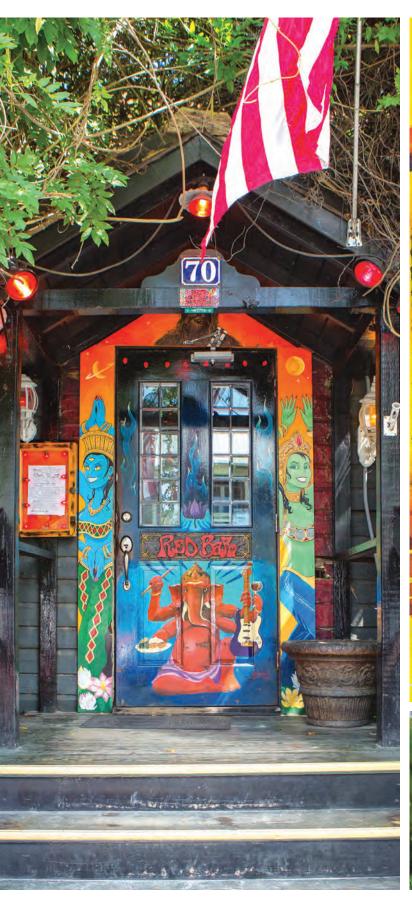
Hand remembers the first time he tried painting as a day that began with him and a friend hanging out. They were at Long's Santa Rosa Beach studio and, recognizing the immense talent Hand possessed, Long directed him to get started on a painting. Long cautioned him "not to spend money on the expensive paints" and to "always use any surface that was presented." Hand left Long's studio that day and purchased a drop cloth and some cheap acrylic paints. With his landlord's blessing, he proceeded to paint a portrait of the Beatles on a column outside the house he was renting. This was the first painting by the artist now known as B. Hand, and it now stands in his living room.

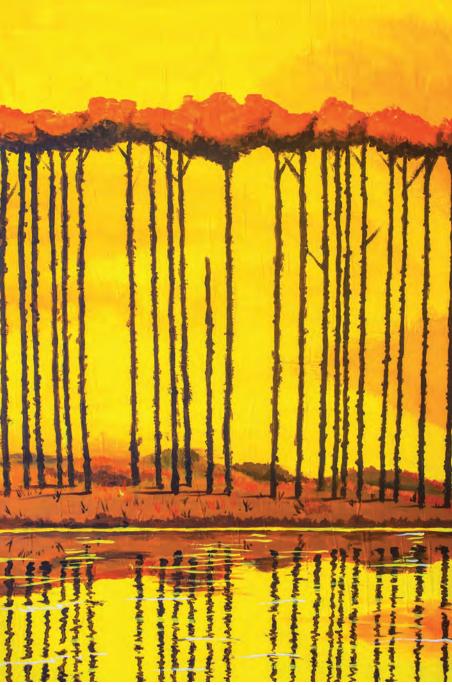
Hand graciously recognizes Long as his inspiration and mentor, but he credits his wife, Alison, as his artistic muse and creative guide. "I always want my wife's opinion, and if I don't get it, or she doesn't say much, or is like 'hmmm' as she cocks her head ...," Hand trails off laughing about his wife's preeminent role in letting him know when something isn't working. "I count on her for that."

In the past seventeen years since learning to paint, Hand has also been part of the Red Bar family as a server. Much of his art can be found throughout the inside of the restaurant—some of it prominent, some pieces inconspicuous. Red Bar proprietor Oliver Petit credits Hand's art as being an integral part of the bric-a-brac style that has become the Petit family's restaurant signature. Hand has recently completed several pieces for Petit's new Destin Diner. It doesn't require a keen eye to recognize the unique style that Hand creates; in a sense, his style recognizes and greets *you* the moment you walk through the door.

Most of Hand's early pieces at the Red Bar were created when he was afforded a break from waiting tables. The wooden bar tops that Hand developed over the past decade are well preserved and cared for. They portray different musicians, actors, artists, writers, and cartoon and movie characters, among many other images that people instantly













recognize. This large collection of bar tops is affixed together as a collage and is currently hanging as a single installation in the southern dining room. As a bonus, next time you're driving through Grayton Beach on the way to the Red Bar, take care to notice the unassuming sign that simply states "Welcome to Grayton Beach" in margarita-inspired colors—that's the work of B. Hand, too.

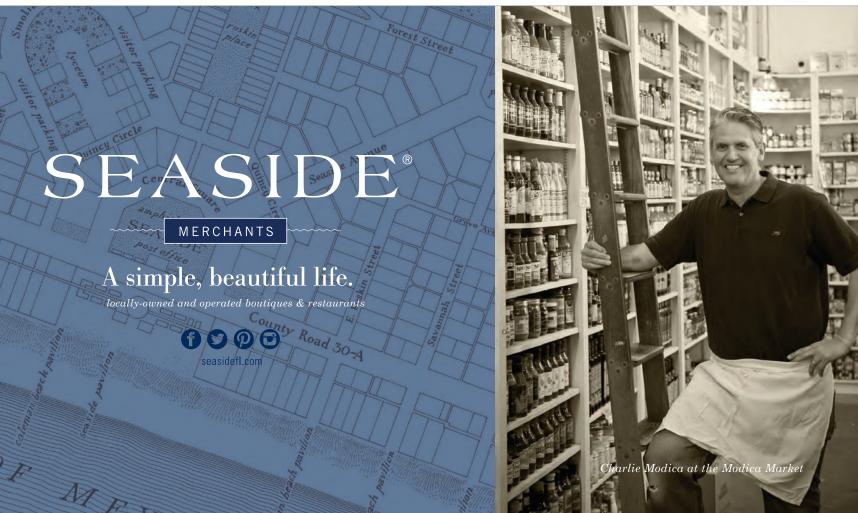
Hand's works are best described as snapshots of Americana. Whether it is a painting of his interpretation of the Bob Dylan song "Visions of Johanna," a scene from the 1998 Coen brothers cult-classic film *The Big Lebowski*, a painting of Bob Marley frozen for a moment in time onstage, or a light-hearted caricature of an organ grinder's monkey wearing a fez and holding a martini, all of these scenes evoke the spirit of American pop culture and the essence of what living and experiencing life is like in the USA.





B. Hand may be contacted for commission through his website, www.bhandart.com.





OBSERVING THE BSERVERS

Our eyes are not only viewers, but also projectors that are running a second story over the picture we see in front of us all the time. — Jim Carrey

"Use a picture. It's worth a thousand words," said William Randolph Hearst's friend and newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane. And so it is. Through his or her lens, a photographer sees something about a subject that no one else in the world sees. To capture that moment visually and tell an impactful, wordless story is what makes photography art.

"Everyone takes pictures," says owner of A Gallery for Fine Photography in New Orleans, author and collector Joshua Mann Pailet, "but there's only a handful of photographers." Pailet, who met famous landscape photographer Ansel Adams, says, "He shaped me, and I began collecting fine photography in the early '70s."

Anna Walker Skillman, owner of Jackson Fine Art in Atlanta, says, "You find out a lot about yourself," referring to the personal journey you make when discovering more about the photos that resonate personally.

Both Pailet and Skillman suggest doing some homework and note the importance of seeing an original photograph in person. Skillman says, "Make note of those images that stop you in your tracks."

Jackson Fine Art and A Gallery for Fine Photography are members of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD), which has its annual mid-April show in New York. AIPAD also has an excellent free publication called *On Collecting* Photography. As your interest, knowledge, and aesthetic perception grow, Skillman suggests going, if possible, to the AIPAD show or to Paris Photo, an international photographic art fair. Pailet advises visiting such excellent photography programs as those at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland, Florida. Both dealers recommend working with someone trustworthy to ensure authenticity, quality, and collectibility.

Getting to know the work and the motivation of fine photographers close to home is an unparalleled way to begin an education. The following summary comprises information on five photographers, all of whom live in Northwest Florida or have a connection to the area in some way. Welcome to their stories.

RAPHYE ALEXIUS AND THE PHOTOGRAPHY LIFESTYLE

At six years old, Michigan native Raphye Alexius (pronounced Rafee) couldn't possibly have known how meaningful her grandfather's gift would be. It was a little plastic 110 camera. "He was really the first person to introduce me to photography," Alexius says. "I remember my first photo, and I remember him. He captioned every single picture in the family albums, usually with something corny."

Albeit via a circuitous route, all roads kept leading to photography for Alexius. Living a mile from a power plant when 9/11 devastated the country, the then twenty-year-old woman sold all her belongings, packed a basket of clothes, bought a Greyhound bus ticket, and left for Los Angeles. She says, "Based on the rumor that terrorists would fly planes into power plants, a fear of dying motivated me to leave." Alexius waited tables and played keyboard in a band while completing a BA in English at Cal State LA. For her senior English project, she took photos and wrote a single sentence for each one. "It was a different kind of project with subtext," she explains.

Alexius met Sean Murphy when he took photos of the band she played in. She says, "I never put it together that someone got paid to take those photos." Murphy was smitten, and Alexius thought, "This guy's way out of my league." That was eight years ago, and now the couple is engaged and lives with Murphy's three sons in what they refer to as "the Compound" in Deep Valley, Los Angeles. "He didn't keep me separated from the rest of his life," Alexius says. "He is so generous and taught me a lot about photography and shared his family and friends."

Today, Alexius's work is all self-assigned, which, she says, "generally translates into money." In addition, she owns and operates 98 West Productions, a photo shoot production company that manages location scouting, budgets, catering, expense reports, and more.

"Photography is more a lifestyle than a job," Alexius says. With that attitude, it's no surprise that she enumerates easily what it is that she loves about what she does, "One, I get to make friends and form new relationships; two, there's instant gratification in this creative process, and I don't always critique myself as a result; and three, every day I get to choose what to do." It's obviously working for her. Alexius was listed in ImageBrief Blog's "Eleven Photographers You Need to Know About: L.A. Edition." Find her work online at www.raphyephoto.com and www.98westproductions.com.









ALL CYLINDERS FIRING: LEE CRUM

Once he realized that being a photographer was a real job, Nashville-based Lee Crum says, "I was hungry for it. I knew what I was going to do." The Arkansas native was driving a van at night for a film-processing company while attending the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He's been known to say, "My first four freshman years were my favorite." The purchase of a thirty-five-millimeter camera in 1975 and six months' worth of shooting landed him, rather serendipitously, a post as a photojournalist at the *Arkansas Democrat*. "Daily newspapers—remember them? That was my school," he recalls.

Completely self-taught with no mentor guiding him, Crum moved to New Orleans, where his photojournalism skills transferred beautifully into a career in advertising and editorial portraiture. "No one was shooting with lights then," he says. "I began to blend artificial light with portraiture on location. I loved it; it was very pure and simple."

During the era of big media and big advertising budgets in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, Crum was shuttling regularly between New York and Los Angeles and had the attention of top magazine photo editors and leading art directors at advertising agencies and publishing houses. "The West Village was glorious," he recalls. "New York City really looked like it does in *Taxi Driver*. All the photographers were in the Flatiron District. You could look out the window and see other photo studios in every direction."

Crum's work has been published in the pages of *Sports Illustrated, LIFE* magazine, and *Esquire*, to name a few, and it has been featured in ad campaigns for many household brands, including Nike, Apple, and Starbucks.

Fine photography has consumed Crum's world for the last five years. "I'm constantly making new work, things that I like," the father of two says. A longtime collector of vintage frames, especially Victorian ones, Crum describes his latest work: "It's all about color and moving objects, something I haven't ever seen." For a photographer whose work has been dominated largely by moody black and whites, he delights in saying, "The switch is turned on. I'm very much into printing techniques and totally into color. I wake up excited. Color's where it's at." Crum's new outlook was influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's silkscreen transfer process, he says. "I love space, and I love to find out how to define that space with imagery that is 'wow' to me, in a way that vindicates my idea."

Crum is also an admirer of modern architecture and often works closely with interior designers on commissioned installations. "Art can completely change the mood of a room," he says.

With an extraordinary archive from which to draw, Crum cautions, "I'm making the art I want to make, and I feel like all cylinders are firing." Watch out, world.

Crum's work is in numerous private collections as well as the permanent collection at the New Orleans Museum of Art. You can view more at www.leecrum.com.

STEFAN DAIBERL, A HANDYMAN OF ANOTHER SORT

"Every hand has a story," artist Stefan Daiberl says. Stefan Daiberl, a German-born former economist, is here to capture those stories. His project emerged from a handshake shared with a hotel maintenance worker who, he says, "had paws for







Left: Photo by Lee Crum
Right: Photos by Stefan Daiberl
Photos opposite by Lee Crum

hands." His mitts spoke volumes, and Daiberl was compelled to represent the stories he saw in the janitor's hands. Hands and Lives was born, and a challenge was unearthed. An otherwise solitary man, Daiberl had to learn to interact with people, something that made him uncomfortable. He had to ask for a hand—literally.

Daiberl's black-and-white photo series of hundreds of people's hands has evolved from powerful stand-alone images to pairing these images with color close-ups of meaningfully chosen local flowers. And, he records his subjects speaking during their hand portraits. "There's some really great stuff people tell you when you take their picture," he says. The juxtaposition of bright textural blooms and black-and-white hand images is a profound union. Moreover, the words of the storytellers transport the viewer to something fully experiential.

Daiberl recalls, "My friend Sara's plain gold wedding band intrigued me. She had melted her parents' wedding bands together. Her father had committed suicide." With Sara's photo display, from a motion-activated player above the photography, one can hear, "I don't know where the suffering comes from. All the men on his side of the family are alcoholics. Seventy-five percent of them kill themselves. If things aren't going well, they just check out. For my dad, all of that was so difficult for him. He suffered so much from drinking and trying to escape his own reality. When he took his own life, I mean, he shot himself in the heart. That just says to me that his heart hurt so badly that he couldn't be here."

An image of a water lily is paired with Sara's hand. Water lilies are in the lotus family, and lotuses are significant flowers in Buddhism. Daiberl, a student of

Buddhist philosophies with a meditation practice, says, "Like the lotus, growing and blossoming above the murk, we too can rise above our sufferings in life. That's what Sara did." Despite a tragedy-laden aura surrounding her family, Daiberl's friend thrives as a wife, a mother, a yoga instructor, and a spiritual companion. No other flower than a water lily would do.

Daiberl, the father of preteens Sophie and Gabrielle, is adding new layers to *Hands and Lives*. He has been making casts of his subjects' hands, including his kids'. To validate its evolution, he hopes to exhibit the hand–flower pairs and a related hand-cast installation. "I love the human sculptural quality of the casts and want to display them. It's not so much about the beauty," he says.

Conceptually, Daiberl seeks a large warehouse location to show his work. He relates, "I see a long corridor of hand and flower pairs hanging and people walking along, pausing to hear the voice of the hand's owner and learning firsthand who these extraordinary people are. It's about a visualization of humanity." For now, viewers can see more of Daiberl's work at www.handsandlives.com and www.stefandaiberl.com.

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF BRIGHT TEXTURAL BLOOMS AND BLACK-AND-WHITE HAND IMAGES IS A PROFOUND UNION. MOREOVER, THE WORDS OF THE STORYTELLERS TRANSPORT THE VIEWER TO SOMETHING FULLY EXPERIENTIAL.











Photos this page by Colleen Duffley

INTO THE WOODS: ON THE RUN WITH COLLEEN DUFFLEY

Colleen Duffley began her career in the mid-1980s shooting lifestyle, food, and home interior photos that have graced the covers and pages of *Elle Decor, Traditional Home, Better Homes and Gardens, Coastal Living,* Neiman Marcus catalogs, and many more.

"I shoot pretty," Duffley says. Lest anyone be fooled into thinking that shooting pretty means she's a lightweight, Duffley is a former competitive cyclist who participated in Olympic road cycling trials in 1992 and 1996. It became problematic, however, to transport expensive cycling equipment to train while on photo shoots. A pair of sneakers was easy to carry, so she trained by running instead. "Running is my Prozac!" she claims.

Early on, Duffley was running in the Presidio of San Francisco when she saw a homeless man covered in pigeons sitting on a bench. She knew she had to run back to her hotel, grab her camera, and get that shot. "Remember," Duffley chides, "there were no camera phones then."

Thereafter, the Pennsylvania native took a point-and-shoot camera wherever she ran or biked. The pigeon-covered man was the beginning of her *On the Run* photo series, an extraordinary inventory of people, animals, places, and things she encounters on the way. Today, Duffley uses a camera phone, and *On the Run* has become a personal journal of sorts. She memorializes private moments. "I've run trails here that other locals don't even know exist," the Northwest Florida resident says about footpaths and bike trails near Scenic Highway 30-A. Most mornings she's running by dawn and captures through her lens the best that Mother Nature offers: a heron taking flight, a translucent jellyfish awaiting a wave, or an empty path through the woods beckoning.

Recently, the WaterColor Inn commissioned several of her images, which now hang in guest rooms and tempt visitors with the beautiful flora and fauna that lay just beyond their doors.

In early June, Duffley went to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where she ran seven marathons in seven days, a journey made with On the Ground: Project Congo.

Women play a crucial role in the coffee-farming families of the DRC's Kivu region, where sexual violence at the hands of rebels is used to destabilize communities. Project Congo's initiative raises money for local medical centers lacking supplies, as well as awareness about victims' strife. Of her time spent there, Duffley says, "It was life changing, scary, and emotional. It's a dangerous, lawless place where rape is a weapon. Victims walk for four or five days seeking medical attention at limited facilities. Their return home is a catch-22; raped women are shunned by their communities and sometimes forced to marry their rapists." Duffley says she was honored to have participated in such a worthy campaign but is also thankful to be back running on Florida roads and paths and working toward the publication of a photo book of chairs, aptly called *Sit*.

See more of Duffley's work at www.ontherunimages.com, and learn about Project Congo at www.onthegroundglobal.org/project-congo.



HANG TEN WITH SEAN MURPHY

Sean Murphy shies away from nothing to get the perfect shot. He says, "I'm very restless, and my attention span is short. Looking constantly for new experiences and subject matter is my day-to-day obsession."

The son of an Air Force pilot, Murphy had lived in Ohio, England, and Arizona before his family settled in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Murphy describes himself during his formative years in the sleepy beach town as "a local skateboard rat punk who loved surfing, fishing, and swamping." Graduation from high school—a near miss—was followed by a brief move to Hawaii to be on a surf team. Then, in Orlando, where his brother lived, Murphy enrolled in a community college photography class, and serendipity struck. The instructor was a former LIFE magazine photographer who told Murphy that he had "something special" and suggested he go to Boston or New York to pursue a career as a photographer. Within a month, Murphy left Florida, moved to Boston, and enrolled in the New England School of Photography, a two-year professional program. "I was obsessed from day one," he admits.

"I'M VERY RESTLESS AND MY ATTENTION SPAN IS SHORT, LOOKING CONSTANTLY FOR NEW EXPERIENCES AND SUBJECT MATTER IS MY DAY-TO-DAY OBSESSION."

"I was a hotshot and thought I was the next big thing," Murphy says. He waited tables, surfed, and shot editorial in Hawaii and later worked for local magazines and small record labels in San Francisco. Eventually, he built a portfolio in Los Angeles while Getty Images paid him. About eight years in-not quite the ten years an influential teacher had said it would take-Murphy was making his mark in advertising by



Photos this page by Sean Murphy







Photos this page and opposite by Sean Murphy

shooting famous musicians and ad campaigns for Ford, Chevy, Old Navy, PlayStation, Walmart, and Hard Rock. His first ad job came as a result of a DUI; an ad agency wanted a photographic representation of the experience. Paradoxically, Murphy recently celebrated his fourth year of sobriety, something he says matters more than his work or recognition ever could. "The most important thing I can do is put that out there."

Despite being pursued by galleries to exhibit his fine photography, Murphy says, "I'm scanning a decade's worth of images. Right now, I'm less focused on money and what I thought the world owed me and more focused on service "

The father of three sons—fifteen-year-old Ozzy and fourteen-year-old twins, Tripp and Milo-Murphy records their road trips between California and Fort Walton Beach, where Murphy's mother still lives. His fiancée, Raphye Alexius, is the woman he says "is worth trying to be a better man for." They are excited about moving to Florida one day, though Murphy admits he never thought he would. "Reconnecting is exciting," he says. "There's so much more to that part of the U.S. than anyone realizes." It's something he anticipates showing the world, one frame at a time.

See more of Murphy's work at www.seanmurphyphoto.com.





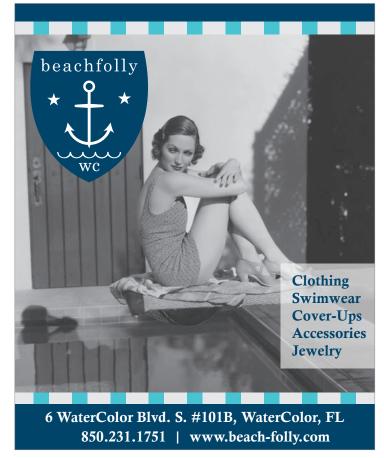
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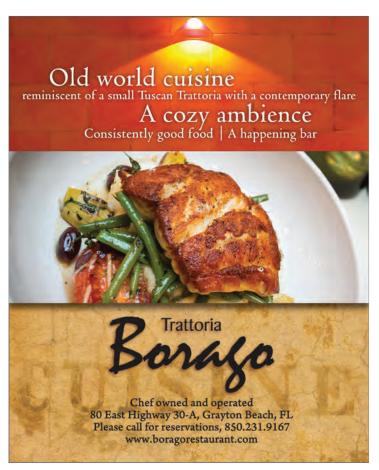












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