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Ask Connie

Connie Antoniou answers all of your real estate questions, please email me at questionsforconnie@gmail.com

What should prospective homebuyers consider for 2024?

Opportunities:

Lower Mortgage Rates: Although interest rates are at a 10 week high, the prospect of lower mortgage rates can make ownership more affordable for borrowers. Reduced interest rates can lead to lower monthly payments, potentially improving your overall financial situation.

Challenges:

High Home Prices: While lower mortgage rates can increase affordability, they may also drive up demand for homes, thereby keeping home prices high or even causing them to rise further. This can make it challenging to find a home within your price range.

Competition: Increased demand for homes can result in stiff competition among buyers. You may find yourself needing to make multiple offers on different properties before one gets accepted.



Tips to Prepare for Homebuying in 2024:

Financial Preparation: Begin by getting your finances in order. Lower mortgage rates are advantageous. You should aim for the lowest rate possible. To improve your credit score, consider paying off or paying down high-interest credit card balances. This can also lower your debt-to-income ratio, which lenders consider when determining your interest rate.

Explore Mortgage Options: Investigate mortgage options tailored for first-time homebuyers, as they often come with more favorable terms and lower down payment requirements. Government-backed loans, such as FHA, VA, USDA, and special programs from lenders like Citi bank or Wintrust, can offer down payment assistance.

Avoid Rushing: While timing can be important, don't rush into a decision. Take your time to carefully evaluate your options and make an informed choice. This is a significant financial decision, so avoid making hasty choices that you may regret later.

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Pre-production model shown.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue, I am thrilled to introduce you to Tanya Zaben. Through her many experiences while living abroad in a myriad of countries, Zaben became enamored with the small artisans and their wares that she discovered. A sharer by nature, Zaben created *Interior Monologue*, a website that not only brings unique global crafts directly to the consumer but also shares backstories and videos on the creators. She is uplifting, knowledgeable, and is now bringing her refined sense of style to her first line of products—hand-embroidered throw pillows. Read all about it in *Crafting Stories*.

New to town is Bente Vintage rugs, recently opened by Nicole Kreuze, whose passion for rugs goes back years and years. Get to know her in *Country Loves*. Coming to your doorstep, is

Dr. Alison Duke's in-home health care for pets. A novel business concept and one close to her heart; she shares her story with us in *House Call*.

Barrington residents Michelle and A. J. Gilbert turned their passion for weekend getaways into a booming Airbnb business. With properties across the country, they offer a relaxing weekend getaway for Barrington residents via their Galena property, Frogmore Cabin, named after Queen Victoria of England's favorite country estate, Frogmore Cottage.

Maureen Wright shares her inspiration and top tips in this month's *Country vs. Town*. And *Up Front* details artist Phoebe Dickinson, whom I have long admired for her blend of tradition and modernity in painting family portraits.

Take a trip to fabulous trip Portugal in *First Class* and end with a deep dive on a local treasure, the Barrington Area Library.

Best,

Megan Weisberg
Editor-in-Chief
megan.weisberg@
jwcmedia.com



Relax around the fire pit at Frogmore Cabin this summer.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBYN PHOTOGRAPHY



Nicole Kreuze, founder of Bente Vintage rugs, wearing Farm Rio blue dress, neimanmarcus.com.



Find treasures from around the globe like this Mizar & Alcor Robe at interiormonologue.com

MY WISH LIST

Accessorizing for Spring with Anita Ko's 18-Karat Gold Multi-Stone Necklace, net-a-porter.com



While riding my hunter, staying warm in Dada Sport's Tinka jacket, dadasport.com.

Carrying in my handbag the newest beauty launch—Prada Beauty, Prada Balm, nordstrom.com



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UP FRONT

CULTURE, MURMURS & STYLE

Artist Phoebe
Dickinson

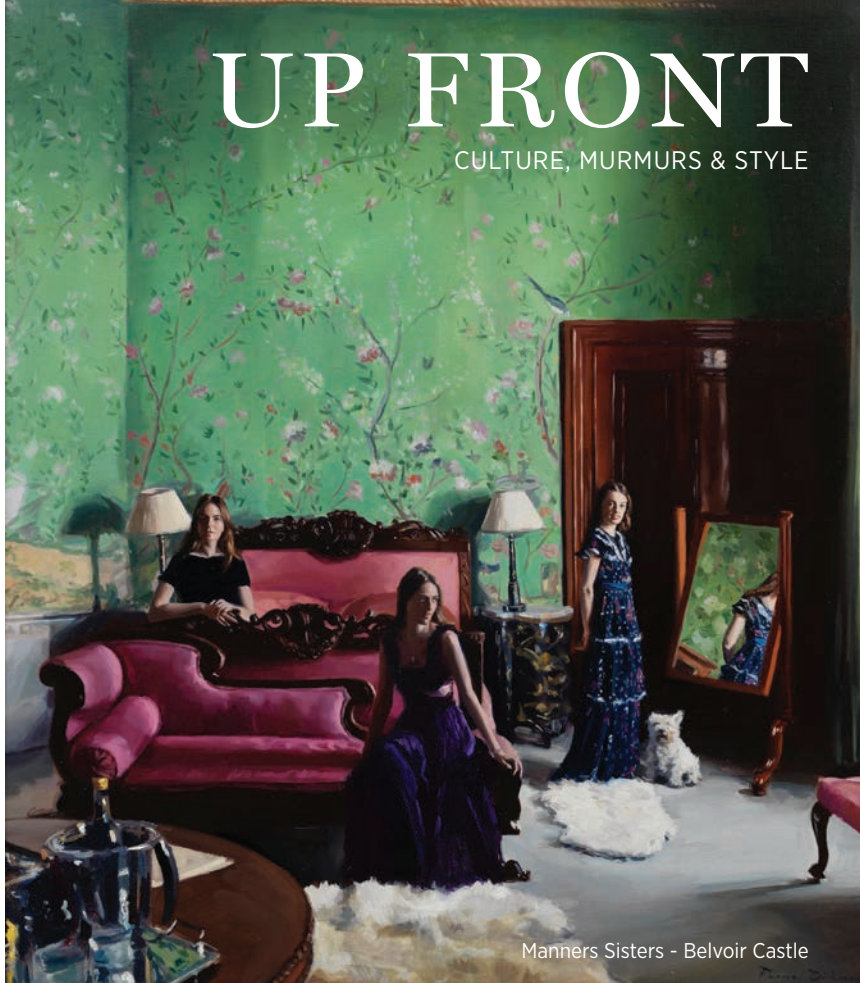
MODERN HERITAGE

Phoebe Dickinson is keeping alive the tradition of portrait painting in a refreshingly current way. The celebrated British artist's portraits have been described as having a style "reminiscent of John Singer Sargent's later years, although in a cool fresh palette which is the young artist's own." The artist has held six successful solo shows in London and New York and exhibited in the Royal Society of Portrait Painters annual exhibition five times. Dickinson's recent solo show *Great Houses and Gardens of England* documented some of Britain's most iconic houses and the people who live in them, exploring how these houses function in the modern day. Simply fascinating. Her work can be found in the collections of Houghton Hall, the private collection of Mrs. Frick, Woburn Abbey, Badminton House, Balcarres, and the private collection of Ronald Perelman. To learn more about Dickinson's work and awards, visit phoebedickinson.com/portfolio. For available works or to commission a portrait, direct all inquiries to studio@phoebedickinson.com.





Bamford Grandchildren Daylesford



Manners Sisters - Belvoir Castle

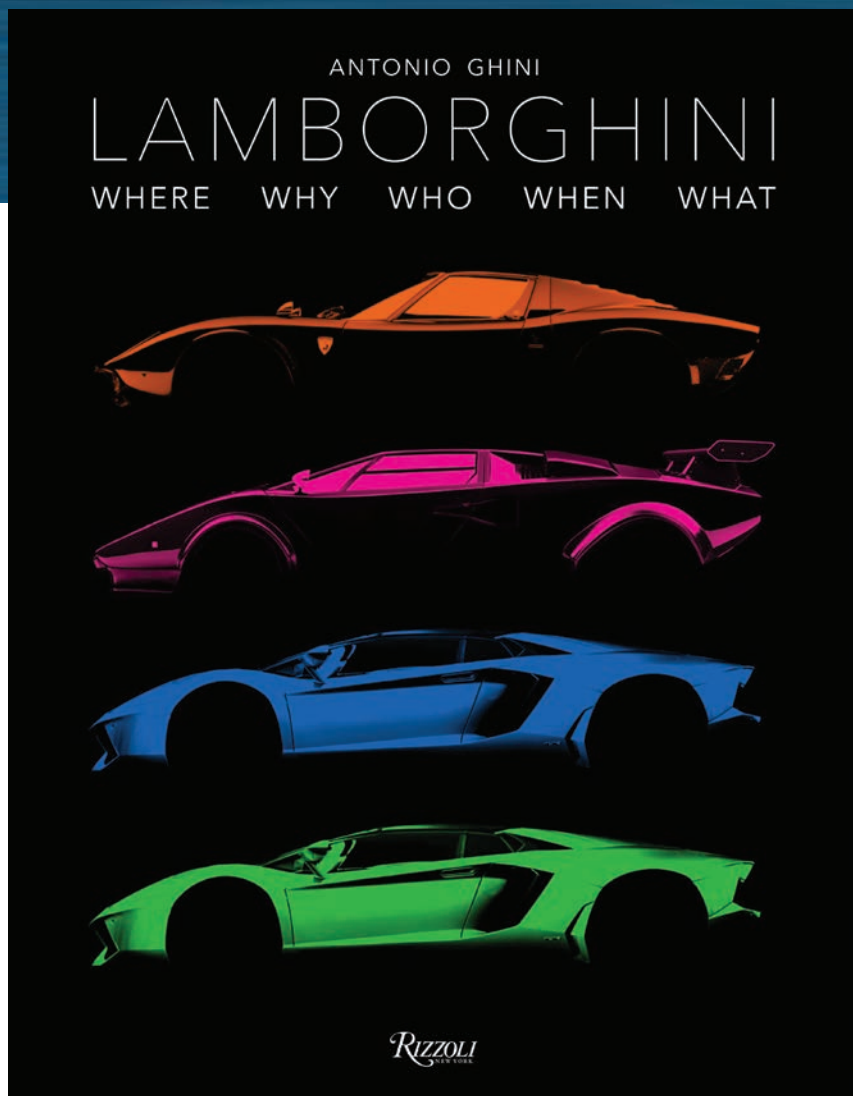


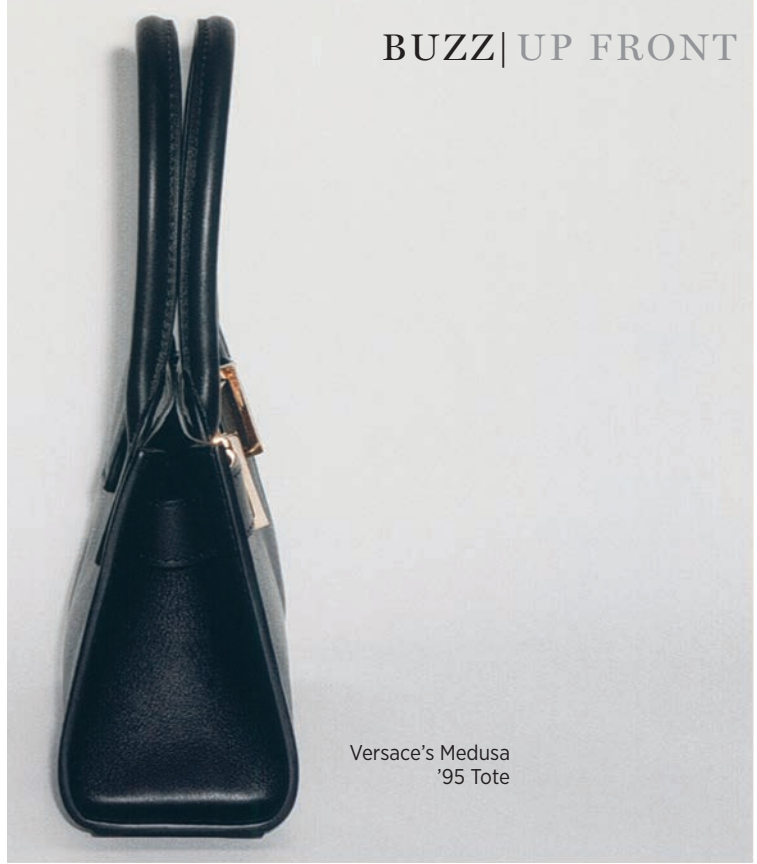
The Cholmondeley Children



LAMBORGHINI: WHERE WHY WHO WHEN WHAT BY ANTONIO GHINI

This lavishly produced volume, newly published this month, features the complete collection of all the models produced by Lamborghini from 1963 to the present day, including special editions, unreleased models, and those that underwent significant evolutions. Stunning photography highlights the exquisite lines and lavish details of the vehicles, along with spectacular archival images and technical information celebrating the glamour and excellence of Italian automotive design. The book also includes information about the prominent designers, including Filippo Perini, Walter de Silva, Mitja Borkert, and Marcello Gandini, who created some of the company's most iconic models, such as the Miura, Countach, Aventador, Huracán, and the new Urus as well as astonishing prototypes such as the Marzal, Egoista, and the Terzo Millenni. rizzoliusa.com





Versace's Medusa '95 Tote

Morel Mushrooms



TUSCANY OR BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA?

Always dreamed of truffle hunting in Italy? Why not forgo the passport and hone your foraging skills this spring while hunting for prized morel mushrooms in nearby Bloomington, Indiana? Morels are only found from late March to May in certain parts of the country. Fortunately for fungi fans, Bloomington has become known for its hidden foraging spots, prized morel mushroom menus, and restaurants featuring the delicacy. The hunt is so beloved that some locals prefer to keep their sourcing spots secret. While it's all quite "hush-hush" and no roadmap for foraging is provided, consider this your first step to truffle hunting success. Insider tip: morel hunting is fair game in the Morgan-Monroe State Forest. visitbloomington.com



VERSACE DEBUTS THE NEWEST IT BAG

Versace's Medusa '95 House code was revealed alongside the fashion house's new bag line for Spring-Summer 2024. Introduced at Versace's Spring-Summer 2024 fashion collection show in Milan, the unique horizontal tote and handbag take inspiration from the Versace handbag carried frequently by Diana, Princess of Wales. Each bag is crafted from calf leather sourced in France for its particular and luxurious powder-like finish and has a soft and warm sensation to the touch. The natural grained leather's semi-matte sheen enhances with wear, becoming more supple and developing a unique patina. In another composition, the Medusa '95 also comes in a crocodile motif expertly crafted through a hot-emboss technique directly onto the soft calf leather—recreating the richness and depth of real crocodile skin. Lined with a rich lamb leather, the interior's edges are hand-painted in tonal colors for an overall harmonious finish. versace.com



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NICOLE KREUZ is the founder and owner of Bente Vintage, a new home store in Lake Barrington. Kreuz is a mother of two, a lover of interior design, an avid reader, and a vintage enthusiast. “It’s important to surround yourself with things you love, it changes the energy in a space,” says Kreuz. She sources her rugs from Turkey and Morocco, using a common theme to shape each new collection. Beyond custom rug sourcing for clients, Kreuz finds joy in yoga, meditating, walking with friends, and playing board games with her family. Her new shop also functions as an event space ideal for hosting book clubs, art exhibitions, and exclusive events. bentevintage.com

EDITED BY **MORGAN HOGERTY**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST**
STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

Nicole Kreuz in her new shop, Bente Vintage, wearing Rag & Bone black wrap dress, neimanmarcus.com

NICOLE KREUZ LOVES

Gadget: We have an infrared sauna, and it is a game changer. Nothing makes me feel more relaxed than a long sauna. During a sauna, I usually read a book or do a meditation, or if I am tired, I’ll put on a movie. Giving myself time to recharge makes me a better mom and wife and a more creative business owner. **Scent:** Maison Louis Marie No.04 Bois de Balincourt perfume oil. It’s woody and spicy, people stop me on the street and ask what I’m wearing. Now the secret is out. **Barrington spot:** Apart from Bente Vintage, I

love grabbing beautiful pastries from Ambrosia for the shop. I’m looking forward to warmer weather for the rooftop at Shakou. **Hostess gift to receive:** Wine or chamomile flowers (they are so cute), peonies, ranunculus, or seeded eucalyptus. **Gift to give:** I love giving gifts (it’s my love language) especially one-of-a-kind items, a little plant in a vintage pot, flowers in a vintage vase, a book I enjoyed. Candles are another favorite, but I’m very particular about the fragrance.

Bringing her passion for collecting rugs to the community, Kreuz wearing Akris red dress, neimanmarcus.com.



What actress would play you in a movie? Jennifer Lawrence. She doesn't take herself too seriously but is also seriously talented. She would be fun to hang around on set (you know I would be on set). She is unapologetically herself, and I feel like she totally shops vintage. **Who from history would you want to travel with?** Amelia Earhart. It would be amazing to spend time with her. We could jet around and visit all the places, and I could get to the bottom of what really happened with her. I'd just need her to pilot a slightly bigger plane so we would have space for all the rugs and antiques we would obviously be sourcing together. **Where do you look for inspiration?** I love going somewhere new; it brings a sense of adventure. In a new location, I'm more present to notice details (architecture, the tile at breakfast, unusual color combinations, local fashion). If I can't get away, I love cracking open one of the many design books I keep around. After reading two or three pages, I'm inspired and deeply happy. I have also curated my Instagram feed with crazy talented designers (some of whom I've worked with—pinch me!) so when I open Instagram, inspiration follows. **Favorite book?** Such a hard question, I am a big reader. A recent favorite was Rick Rubin's *The Creative Act*. It helped me better

understand myself because it's not always easy being a creative. The book is concise, deep, and blew my mind. I wanted to talk about it with everyone, and I still do. **Most beloved cookbook?** *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking* by Marcella Hazan. My kids and I have made the fresh pasta recipes, and I've tried two of her simple sauces (please try the tomato sauce with onion and butter)—they are impossibly good, yet simple. I just keep making them instead of trying other recipes. **Best dinner party hack?** My husband and I premix a pitcher of cocktails and have all the glasses and garnishes ready so we can spend more time with our guests and less time behind the bar. I don't want to have party FOMO. We are known for our margaritas; they are delicious and really get a party going. Also, setting the tone with a good playlist is another nonnegotiable. **What's in your bag right now?** Burt's Bees Vanilla Bean Lip Balm. A pen and notecard for to-do lists. Advil. A small Blueberry RXBAR in case of emergencies for my kids. Under eye concealer and eye-shadow compact (I love Urban Decay 24/7), a mini oil roller for perfume and energy touch-ups. Laneige lip mask. La Roche-Posay Cicaplast Balm B5. An extra set or two of earrings as I am always forgetting them! Hair ties for my daughter and me. Shop keys.



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WORDS BY JAMES T. GAVRILOS

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impressions are gone forever.

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Our office has been using the 3Shape Trios scanner for a year now and the results have been tremendous. The crowns, veneers, bridges, mouth guards, and implants have seen a significant in-

crease in their quality of fit and finish. The scanner takes approximately 1,500 scans in a three-dimensional mode. The scans are then all stitched together by the software. A 3-D model can then be printed and used for any required restoration. I have been able to use it to measure clearances, preview smiles, and communicate shape and color to the laboratory technician. Our patients have been very vocal about the scanner and they approve.

This technology is not limited to just restorations. Multiple scans of the same patient can be grouped together. This grouping is of different scans over time. The software allows us to see how the patient is wearing down their teeth and how teeth have moved over time. This type of diagnosis helps the patient visualize what is happening with their mouth.

If you are in need of dental work but dread the thought of all those impressions, come see us for a demonstration of our new Trios scanner. Once you have seen how it works, you will never go back.

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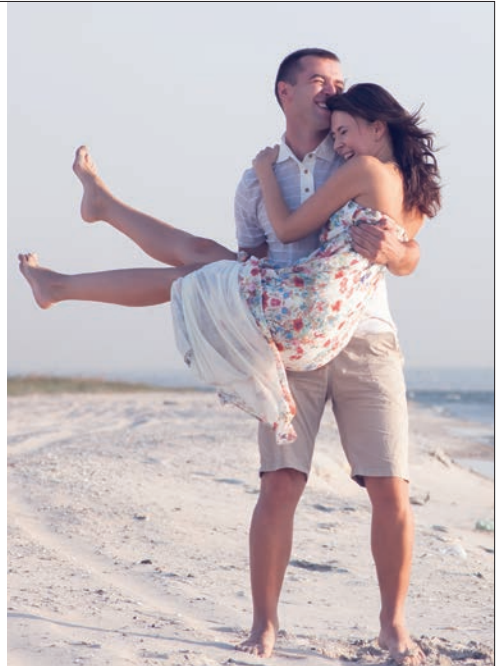
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Floral mania. Wright wearing Oscar de la Renta floral dress. neimanmarcus.com.

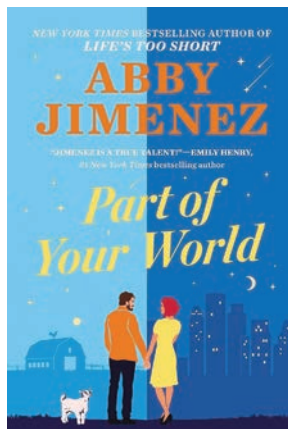
Maureen Wright grew up in Fox River Grove and attended elementary through high school in Barrington. Wright and her husband moved to the Village in 2020, and the couple recently welcomed their second daughter. The Wrights absolutely love living in Barrington, and their favorite thing to do on the weekends is to walk around town and take in all the beautiful historic homes in the Village. A Morgan Stanley Financial Advisor, Wright has been in the personal finance industry for over ten years. She is a dedicated member of the Barrington Junior Women's Club (BJWC), serving on its Executive Board for the past two years. Wright is currently a co-chair of Philanthropy, which oversees BJWC's community grants and academic scholarships. When Wright was a student, she participated and volunteered in BJWC programs like Safety Town, Giving Day, and Meals on Wheels. So, her present involvement is a true full-circle moment. Wright hopes her community involvement will inspire her daughters to follow her example and create a positive impact.

EDITED BY **MORGAN HOGERTY** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST** / STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

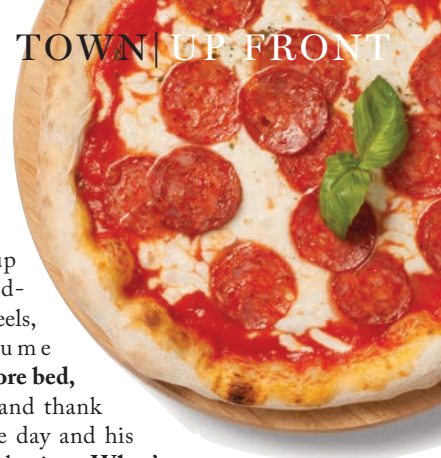


Mantra? You are right where you should be **Best grooming tip?** A little mascara is an instant mood booster

Guilty pleasure? Thrifting, I love a good treasure hunt **Favorite foods?** Pizza **Music you love?** Throwbacks from my high school days (The Fray, The Rocket Summer, Dispatch, Fall Out Boy, Blink-182) **Best advice ever given to you?** There is so much to pick from after working with my father for ten years ... better to be over-prepared than under-prepared **Best advice you've given?** Always advocate for yourself! Don't expect others to do it for you, besides, you are already the subject matter expert **Earliest memory?**



Dressing up in my grand-ma's furs, heels, and costume jewelry **Before bed, you?** Read and thank God for the day and his continued blessings **What's on your bookshelf?** *A Part of Your World* by Abby Jimenez **You can't live without?** My family **Love to escape to?** St. Simons Island, Georgia **Advice you would give to your younger self?** Trust in God's plan for your life



Staying cozy and chic during the last chills of winter, Wright wears alic + olivia vest, A.L.C satin cargo pants, neimanmarcus.com.



WHEN IN THE COUNTRY

Your style is? Athletic chic. In the warmer months, you can usually find me in a golf skirt or sports dress **Can't leave the house without?** My Avryn Co. keychain and cardholder, iPhone, and diaper bag **Transportation?** Audi Q7 **Driving music?** A Libby audiobook or a Pandora station (Quinn XCII has been a favorite) **Place to eat?** gigi Wine Bar & Bistro, Ciao Baby!, and Southern Belle's **Shop?** The Sélectionner, Amazing Gracie's, Estate Jewelers, and The English Daisy **Best thing about country?** Our community! I am so thankful for our close-knit community of friends **Worst thing about country?** The mice **The perfect day is?** Morning walk with the family in the neighborhood to grab coffee, followed by a family adventure to a local park or event, and ending the day hosting family and friends for dinner and drinks at our house



WHEN IN TOWN

Your style is? Business casual, I love a good blazer paired with classic pieces **Can't leave the house without?** A vintage leather Coach crossbody filled with all the essentials **Transportation?** Walking or Uber **Driving music?** Two Friends, Arizona, The Chainsmokers **Place to eat?** Too many to choose from! Aba, Ema, Bar Cargo, or Orso's **Shop?** Dana Rebecca Designs, Tory Burch, Nordstrom's, Gucci (hint, hint...) **Best thing about town?** The possibilities for your day are endless **Worst thing about town?** The Red Line **The perfect day is?** Walking to grab a coffee at Dollop, brunch with friends, shopping Oak Street and Michigan Ave, architecture tour on the Chicago River followed by dinner, then drinks at a rooftop bar

ēma

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Novel Concepts

Treat everyday life like a sartorial adventure.

EDITED BY MEGAN WEISBERG

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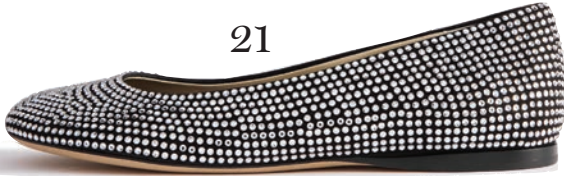


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1 Aje, Shallows Strapless Linen-Blend Gown, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 2 Pamela Munson x Schumacher Collection, Lilla Handwoven Straw Bag, [pamelamunson.com](https://www.pamelamunson.com) 3 Anita Ko, 18-Karat Gold Multi-Stone Necklace, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com) 4 Jimmy Choo, Bing 100 Crystal-Embellished Velvet Mules, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 5 Cartier, Ballon Bleu de Cartier Automatic 33mm 18-Karat Rose Gold, Alligator and diamond Watch, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com) 6 Borgo De Nor, Tatiana Floral-Print Crepe Maxi Dress, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 7 Rosantica, Alice Crystal-Embellished Satin Clutch Bag, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 8 Ganni, Oversized Recycled Wool-Blend Bouclé Jacekt, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 9 Zimmermann, Lace Body Suit, [zimmermann.com](https://www.zimmermann.com) 10 Zimmermann, Matchmaker Structured Mini Dress, [zimmermann.com](https://www.zimmermann.com) 11 Aesther Ekme, Demi Lune Suede Shoulder Bag, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 12 DeMellier, Vancouver Leather Shoulder Bag, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com) 13 Roger Vivier, Mini Buckle Leather Slingback Pumps, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 14 Pamela Munson x Schumacher Collection, Georgia Vine Handwoven Straw Bag, [pamelamunson.com](https://www.pamelamunson.com) 15 Roger Vivier, Viv Rangers Leather Loafers, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 16 A bow moment, straight from the Versace SS24 runway, Gianni Ribbon Hair Bows, [versace.com](https://www.versace.com) 17 LOEWE, Anagram Leather-Trimmed Wool and Cashmere-Blend Jacket, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com) 18 Dada Sport, Delaunay in brûlée, [dadasport.com](https://www.dadasport.com) 19 E.L.V. Denim x The Outnet, Double Two-Tone Twill Midi Dress, [theoutnet.com](https://www.theoutnet.com) 20 Dada Sport, Aska in muscat, [dadasport.com](https://www.dadasport.com) 21 LOEWE, Crystal-Embellished Suede Ballet Flats, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com) 22 Versace, Gianni Ribbon Ballerinas, [versace.com](https://www.versace.com) 23 Paco Rabanne, Leather Chainmail Shoulder Bag, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 24 TOTEME, The Slim Croc-Embossed Kitten-Heel Boots, [matchesfashion.com](https://www.matchesfashion.com) 25 Ferragamo, Hug Small Embellished Textured-Leather Shoulder Bag, [net-a-porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com)

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AT AUCTION

Zack Wirsum, Vice President and Head of Department, for Post War and Contemporary Art at Freeman's | Hindman previews exciting artwork offered at auction this spring.

WORDS BY ZACK WIRSUM



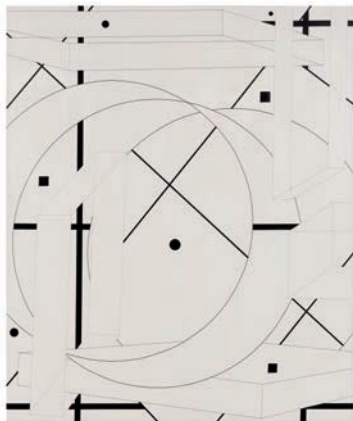
**Louise Nevelson (American, 1899-1988) |
Untitled, c. 1976-78
\$150,000 - \$250,000**

In signature Nevelson fashion, *Untitled* (c. 1976-78) defies dimensional classification by equitably and effectively occupying the realms of both painting and sculpture. Uniformly coated in her hallmark unmodulated black paint, it is the considered arrangement of the geometric structural elements and the shadow play they generate that activate the composition of this wall hanging relief to draw the viewer into the powerful and

pleasing picture plane. The scale and the orientation of the work read as a complex futuristic monolith covered in coded circuitry or as a stately door adorned in alien hieroglyphs waiting to be opened to reveal a portal to a compelling and expansive creative world of Nevelson's design.

Al Held (American, 1928-2005) | Stereo III, 1975 \$80,000 - \$120,000

Stereo III (1975) is an extraordinary example of Al Held's masterful hard-edge abstraction and economic minimalist approach employed at peak power. Perhaps taking a cue from the title, this two-tone painting slickly pairs a flatly applied white background with decisive yet delicate black linework in a cleverly choreographed dance of positive and negative shapes that visually evokes a sense of a schematics for a sound system resonating deeply across all frequencies. Cool and clean without being cold, the painting invitingly pulls you in while dually surrounding you with high fidelity gesture and form.



**Larry Poons (American, b. 1937) |
Untitled, 1976 \$50,000 - \$70,000**

Under Larry Poons' direction and influence, gravitational physics and natural material movement create a heavy, abstract downpour of thick acrylic, painterly and visceral in *Untitled* (1976). The chunky, cascading bands of color, ranging from the pronounced bold yellow to the complementary whispers of violet and purple, both capture the painting process and form the final product as concept and construct on this long, narrow canvas. In the upper portion of the painting, speckled spatters of orange and brief glimpses of base layer white punctate the vertical rhythms allowing breaks in the expressive action.



**Gertrude Abercrombie (American, 1909-1977) |
Giraffe and Moon with Volcano (Giraffe and Volcano #2), 1951 \$50,000 - \$70,000**

Marvelous and mysterious, as we would expect from the affectionately annotated "Jazz Witch,"

Gertrude Abercrombie, *Giraffe and Volcano #2* (1951) depicts an impossibly long-necked giraffe extending upward to kissing distance of a crescent moon in a lonely, surreal dreamscape flanked by a smoldering volcano and a solitary stone, at once out of place and eerily familiar. All or any of the elements are potential surrogate symbolic stand-ins for the artist; herself no stranger to isolation, otherworldly positioning, and the embrace of the magical night. The giraffe, more exotic than Abercrombie's standard signifiers of the cat or the owl, surely appealed to her for the animal's majestic yet awkward appearance, a contradiction aligned with her own self-image. As the giraffe is iconically featured ablaze in Salvador Dali's masterpiece *Inventions of the Monsters* owned by the Art Institute of Chicago in Abercrombie's hometown, her use of the beast could be a nod to one of the foundational figures of Surrealism.

The Post War and Contemporary Art department will present a live and online auction on April 24, with bidding beginning at 10 a.m. Bidding is available via Hindman's Digital Bid Room, bid.hindmanauctions.com or the Hindman app. For more information, contact Zack Wirsum at 312-280-1212 or zacharywirsum@hindmanauctions.com.


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Zaben wearing
khaki dress,
model's own.

CRAFTING

STORIES

Tanya Zaben's Interior Monologue showcases unique home pieces and the people who make them.

WORDS BY **ELISA DRAKE**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAVID LAMER**
STYLED BY **THERESA DEMARIA**
PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY BY
INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

Years ago, while strolling through the Schwabing neighborhood in Munich, Germany, Tanya Zaben stepped into what she thought was a charming old bookstore. What she discovered was a bookbinder's studio. Zaben spoke at length with the owner, intrigued by the woman's craft and her "magical" space. "It had never occurred to me that someone actually binds books, that it's a real career, that this still happens," Zaben notes. "It was this moment where I thought, I wish I could tell the world about this place."

And then she returned to her busy life as a mom and creative director. "I was running big jobs for American Express, the Tribeca Film Festival, the U.S. Open, *The New York Times* International Luxury Conference, hobnobbing with all sorts of people in fashion, media, and design," Zaben says. "I loved my job, but I wished for something more." Zaben thought back to that bookbinder and her beautiful craftsmanship, and she decided it was time for a change. "That's when Interior Monologue was born."

Described as "a website devoted to culling through the masses and picking out the absolute best of the best in handcrafted and artisan-made goods," Interior Monologue tells the stories of the craftspeople and artistry behind the products that Zaben has long admired. Along with personal interviews with the makers, videos, and behind-the-scenes peeks at work in progress, Zaben also curates an e-commerce shop that reflects her tagline: "Handmade is the best made."

Although Zaben is now a dedicated New Yorker, she grew up near Chicago where her parents still live. Her mother, a math teacher, was a Chicagoan and the first woman in her family to go to college. Her father, an engineer, was born in Palestine and grew up in Egypt, moving to the United States to attend school. "It was a layering of two totally different things," Zaben explains. She had her Chicago roots, as well as relatives in Egypt, Abu Dhabi, and Greece.

Trips to Chicago and the North Shore with her family exposed Zaben to art and culture the likes of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, the Art Institute, symphony concerts, and the Bahá'í temple. "I have so many vivid, formative memories of

Cutipol Serving Set,
interiormonologue.com



Stone and Sawyer Heyward Obsidian Lamp,
interiormonologue.com



Bernard Maisner Tanya's Stationery Set,
interiormonologue.com



Tina Frey's Modern Tableware, Cutipol Flatware, Busatti Napkin,
interiormonologue.com





Caption

Zaben wearing Derek Lam 10 Crosby, jean patchwork dress, neimanmarcus.com.

falling in love with art and craft,” she says.

Zaben’s high school photography teacher nurtured this love and Zaben’s creative talent. “Craig Anderson. We’re still in touch. He was such an incredible inspiration to me,” Zaben recalls. “I picked up a camera and was taken by the stories I could tell.” Anderson encouraged Zaben to apply for a scholarship to the photogra-

“I picked up a camera and was taken by the stories I could tell.”

phy program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She earned that scholarship and, as soon as she graduated, she landed a job in London at one of the first big experiential marketing firms. “It was absolutely fascinating for me to take my skill and be part of a team, and to watch something come together in a three-dimensional way.”

With Interior Monologue, Zaben is connecting all these things from her life: her appreciation for handmade craft and design; her love of travel and other cultures; and her passion for telling the stories behind the product. She’s always on the lookout for that unique find, whether at a trade show, art fair, or on travels across the globe. “Having lived in Europe for many years, it’s where I first fell in love with craftsmanship, from the art restoration in a palace in Germany to a shoemaker in Austria, Europe is a vast resource for me,” she says.

Whatever she selects, it has to pass the “Interior Monologue seal of approval.” As Zaben describes, “It has to be entirely handcrafted, ideally by a small maker, using ethically sourced materials or ingredients.” Whether a wax-sealed bottle of hand-tapped maple syrup or a luxurious line of cashmere blankets, Zaben says, “Interior Monologue’s mission is to provide a collection of makers that you can trust.”

While it’s tough for her to pick a favorite artisan or piece of art, she points to a few that have stood out so far. One of them is master calligrapher-slash-stationery artist Bernard Maisner. “I’ve been a fan for years and years before starting Interior Monologue, and I was thrilled when he not only agreed to let us sell his gorgeous stationery but created a unique

set of stationery bespoke to Interior Monologue that he and I collaborated on.”

Another is Busatti, an eighth-generation Italian linen house. “Upon meeting them at a trade show in Paris, we struck up an idea to collaborate on a line of exclusive dinner napkins,” Zaben explains. The world-class craftsmanship paired with Zaben’s unique sense of style produced sets of elegantly simple table linens that often sell out.

Zaben is now expanding to create her own line of products, starting with a collection of hand-embroidered throw pillows. “It’s a true labor of love,” Zaben exclaims. As she launched her design career in photography,

it makes sense the unique pillow designs are inspired by photographs that she translates into illustrations. She says these pillows have always been a dream of hers, but it was a challenge to find the embroiderer who would meet her high-quality, handcrafted standards. When she did find them, she recalls, “It was a serendipitous connection at a dinner party.”

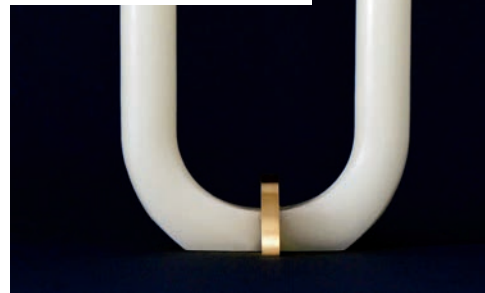
She was at a friend’s house when a beautifully embroidered pillow caught her eye. She learned it was created from a drawing that the friend’s mother had made, translated into embroidery by a company in India. Zaben had found the perfect match. “A multigenerational family atelier in India that produces some of the finest hand embroidery in the fashion world. I couldn’t have asked for a more exciting connection. Thankfully, it didn’t take much to convince them that one-of-a-kind embroidered pillows are also works of art and are like fashion for the home. Thus, our partnership was born.”

Zaben continues to delight in discovering the story and telling the stories behind things both beautiful and functional. She hopes to one day create an in-person selling experience. “I feel a deep connection to the objects I curate. So, to experience the moment face-to-face when a person connects with a product we both admire would be incredible.” In the meantime, Zaben’s full focus is on an amazing online experience in shopping for these beautiful, handmade goods, and she continues to bring design excellence into the homes of her clients. Whatever the future holds, it’ll surely be magical.

For more information, visit interiormonologue.com.



Glaze Studio U Candle,
interiormonologue.com



Klimchi Vase and Les-Few Boxes,
interiormonologue.com



Klimchi Vase,
interiormonologue.com





SHANA VITEK

EQUITY PARTNER
BEERMANN LLP

DIVORCE WITHOUT COURT

Divorce is a very personal and emotional process that often involves children. However, anyone with an internet connection can access most divorce court documents. Additionally, divorce court often takes place on Zoom and is broadcast on YouTube where anyone can log on and watch.

It is concerning that children can go online to read the details of their parents' divorce, or that a nosy neighbor could pull up another family's divorce paperwork on their phone.

There is simply no reason the details of any divorce need to be public. Even the most contentious divorces can be handled without going to court. Better options are available if both parties agree they want to keep their divorce private. Alternative dispute resolution processes like mediation, arbitration, and collaborative divorce are very effective ways to accomplish this goal in the most efficient manner possible.

Shana Vitek is an Equity Partner at Beermann LLP, the largest family law firm in Illinois. For over 20 years, she has practiced family law exclusively and is trained in mediation, arbitration, and collaborative law.

For more information, visit www.beermannlaw.com/team/shana-l-vitek.

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House Call



Dr. Duke wearing Dolce & Gabbana flowered dress, neimanmarcus.com.

Veterinarian Alison Duke brings health care to pets where they live.

WORDS BY **THOMAS CONNORS** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**
STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA** / HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST**

It is not always easy to remember how we got from A to B, when it was that we knew what we wanted to do with our lives. The universe throws a lot of options—and obstacles our way—so it's no wonder if we must stop to think, "How did I get here?" But for Barrington-based veterinarian, Alison Duke, a love of animals has been a constant thread in her life.

"My passion for animals probably started as a toddler, when my dad would wrestle with me and the family dog, Winnie, on the floor," recalls Dr. Duke, who was raised in Indiana, Nebraska, and, since the fourth grade, in Barrington. An early interest in farm life—engendered by the Nebraska school curriculum's emphasis on state history—increased her interest in all creatures great and small. "The image of pioneers moving west in a prairie schooner pulled by oxen is what drew me to veterinary medicine. The pioneers would not have thrived without their relationship with animals."

In the summer before her junior year at Kenyon College, where she would earn a degree in chemistry, Dr. Duke—who by then knew she wanted a career in veterinary medicine—spent three weeks on her cousins' dairy farm in Shawano, Wisconsin. "I drove around with their vet during the day and dove into rural farm life at night—stock car races, county fairs, trips to Fleet Farm." The local vet suggested she subscribe to *Hoard's Dairyman*, the national magazine for dairy farmers, where she later spotted an ad that read: "Do you want to milk cows on a rotary parlor in New Zealand?" Someone didn't have to think twice. "When my Barrington High School friends were getting their first apartments in Chicago and starting glamorous jobs at Accenture and Jones Lang LaSalle, I was milking 180 cows twice a day! I loved it."

Dr. Duke went on to earn a master's



Dr. Duke wearing J. Crew blue satin dress, [jcrew.com](https://www.jcrew.com).



degree in animal science from the University of Arizona and then graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in 2006. After beginning her career as a dairy vet, she launched a practice attending to companion animals, “Mainly dogs and cats,” she says, “but I will work on the random chicken, goat, sheep, pet cow, rabbit, or pig.” Then came COVID.

“After 15 years in traditional practice and then going through e-learning with my kids during the pandemic, I needed a change, and for a bit, I considered leaving the profession altogether,” she shares. “It was time to be my own boss. I had loved the mobile aspect of being a cow vet, so I began to think of how could I be a companion animal vet who goes to the pet. I made a list of the drugs and supplies I would need, set up accounts with veterinary supply companies, and ordered a mobile centrifuge, a fridge for vaccines, scales, and a microscope from Amazon. I had the good fortune of watching my brother and sister-in-law start a business, Avant-Gardenscapes, and they offered helpful advice.”

As a house call practice, Duke Veterinary Services helps reduce stress for both pets and their owners, eliminating the need to transport an animal and allowing it to be treated in a familiar environment, rather than in an anxiety-inducing clinic. “I can do everything in your home—or yard, barn, garage—except take X-rays and do surgery,” says Dr. Duke. “For those procedures, I pick the patient up and go to a quiet clinic about 20 minutes from Barrington where I have privileges. A large portion of my business involves home euthanasia and hospice care. We also go to assisted living facilities that allow cats and small dogs. And I see many large breed dogs and cats, both of which can be very difficult to get into a car.”

Along with her long-held love of animals, Dr. Duke has always been attracted to living on a farm. She grew up in an old farmhouse near Otis and Old Sutton roads in Barrington Hills. Her husband, Grant, whom she first met at Countryside Elementary School, lived two stop signs away. They reconnected after college and today reside on 5 acres in the same area, with their two children, a dog, three cats, seven chickens, a leopard gecko, and a fish. “When we lived in Nebraska, our nearest family was in Illinois. School took me away to Ohio, Arizona, and Pennsylvania, my career to New Zealand and Wisconsin. I’ve always wanted family nearby. Now, my parents are around the corner, and I am surrounded by extended family in Barrington. My children go to school with their cousin, and I pass my brother and his landscape trucks on the road.”

Happily ensconced in her community, Dr. Duke proudly serves as “Nature Lady” at Countryside Elementary School. Established in 1979, with help from the Garden Club of Barrington and Little Garden Club of Barrington, the program provides a nature volunteer to every grade school in District 220. “We discuss topics common to the Barrington countryside with students from kindergarten to second grade,” relates Dr. Duke. “I love school—I was in it until I was 30 years old—so this is my way to be in school and give back to a district that gave me so much.” Following her dream took Dr. Duke far from home. But she never lost sight of where she came from or where she was going. And it seems her life has come full circle—as, dare we say, nature intended.

For more information about Dr. Alison Duke’s in-home health care for pets, visit [dukevet.com](https://www.dukevet.com).

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French Toast Clafoutis with Brandied Plums

WORDS, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND RECIPE BY **MONICA KASS ROGERS**

When our four children were little, Christmas morning had its expected rituals. The kids in their pajamas would impatiently wait for my husband and me to emerge bleary eyed from late night finishes to one or another homemade gift: Adding the hinges to the roof of a dollhouse, say, or sewing the mane on a slightly cockeyed hobby horse. Once the glee subsided, and the wrapping paper had been rescued from further shredding by the family dog, it was time for a festive brunch. Bacon broccoli-cheese quiche, waffles with fresh fruit and whip, mugs of hot cider, and sometimes? A big baked dish of French toast that had soaked in creamy custard overnight.

Thinking of that tender toast put me in mind of two other favorite things: Brandied plums and clafoutis, the not-too-sweet French dish of fresh fruit baked in custard. Why not omit the flour from the clafouti custard recipe, quick-brandied the plums and combine the two in a sumptuous version of overnight-soaked French toast? Why not indeed!

For a large family, this festive pan-full of

custard-plummy goodness is so much easier to make than standing at the stove flipping French toast to order when you want to be singing carols with everyone in the other room. And while true brandied plums take weeks to set up, macerating the fruit in sugar and brandy overnight before adding to and baking the toast still yields nicely spirited flavor. I use Italian prune plums (*prunica domestica*—sometimes sold as Empress plums) in this recipe because they hold their shape better than other varieties, but you can substitute any of your favorite plums. Because more is better here, I roast an extra batch of the plums, which, in their rich pink syrup, go very well with the French toast.

A little extra tip: If you'd like to make true brandied plums for a boost through the coming winter doldrums, all you need is a pound of plums, pitted, quartered, and mixed with a cup and ½ of brandy, ½ cup of sugar and a vanilla bean. As my Mom did making rumtopf, I put the mixture in a crock and place it in a dark room with a heavy plate pushed down over the fruit to keep it submerged. Within three weeks, the plums soften into boozy splendor, ready to be enjoyed.

SERVES 6 TO 8

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE FRENCH TOAST

- 1 lb. loaf of brioche, cut into thick slices
- 3 Tbsp. softened butter, divided, plus more as needed
- 6 large eggs
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup cream
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla paste
- 1/4 tsp almond extract
- Pinch of salt
- Confectioners' sugar, to dust finished toast

FOR THE MACERATED BRANDIED PLUMS

- 12 Italian prune plums, pits discarded, cut into quarters
- Zest of one fresh lemon
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup brandy
- 1-½ tsp vanilla paste OR 1 Madagascar vanilla bean

FOR THE EXTRA BRANDIED PLUM SAUCE

- 12 Italian prune plums, pits discarded cut in HALVES
- Zest of one fresh lemon
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup brandy
- 1-½ tsp vanilla paste OR 1 Madagascar vanilla bean





METHOD

PREP THE CUSTARD AND BRIOCHE

Evenly coat the inside of a 2-quart baking dish with 1 Tbsp butter. Spread remaining 2 Tbsp butter on the tops of the brioche slices, using more butter if needed. In a large bowl, whisk eggs. Add milk, cream, sugar, vanilla paste, almond extract and pinch of salt. Whisk again until smooth and well incorporated. Working one slice at a time, dunk the buttered brioche in the custard and, starting at the back of the dish, shingle the slices (upright and tilted slightly backward) in the dish, overlapping as needed. Pour the rest of the custard over the bread. Press tops down a bit to squish them down and help them soak up the liquid. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

MACERATE THE PLUMS IN BRANDY

In a medium-sized bowl, mix 12 quartered plums with zest of one fresh lemon. In small bowl, whisk 1/3 cup brandy with 1/3 cup brown sugar and 1-1/2 tsp. vanilla paste (OR if using a vanilla bean, split bean, scrape seeds

into brandy mixture and add bean to the fruit.) Pour liquid over the fruit and mix well. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

MAKE EXTRA BRANDIED PLUMS TO SERVE WITH FINISHED TOAST

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. From second brandied plum recipe listed above, mix 12 quartered plums with zest of one fresh lemon. Whisk 1/3 cup brandy with 1/3 cup brown sugar and 1-1/2 tsp vanilla paste. (OR if using a vanilla bean, split bean, scrape seeds into brandy mixture and add bean to the fruit.) Arrange halved plums cut side up in a 9-inch pie dish; pour brandy liquid over all. Roast in oven for 40 minutes, occasionally basting the tops of the plums with the juices. Remove from oven. Cool.

BAKE THE FRENCH TOAST

In the morning, an hour and a half before you want to serve the toast, place oven rack in

center of oven. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place a pan that is larger than the 2-quart baking dish of French toast on your counter; center the French toast dish inside the larger pan. Remove and discard plastic wrap from macerated plums and custard. Carefully pry apart the slices of soaked bread and insert the macerated plums between slices. Cover the top of the French toast baking dish with foil and place in the larger pan. Place pan on oven rack. Carefully fill the larger pan with boiling water until it comes halfway up the outside of the French toast baking dish. Make sure the foil doesn't touch the water. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Remove foil. Continue baking for 20 to 30 minutes until custard has completely set (poke down to the bottom of the dish to check,) plums are tender, and toast is golden brown. Remove from oven. Once cooled a bit, dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve warm with the extra roasted plum sauce and dollops of whipped cream, if desired.

UMA PAIXÃO POR PORTUGAL

Traverse the diverse landscapes of a European country's capital city, mountaintop palaces, and coastal resorts.

WORDS BY **DUSTIN O'REGAN**

Occupying the west coast of Europe's Iberian Peninsula, Portugal offers a bit of everything—rich history, stunning architecture, glorious terrain, delicious wines, traditional fare, and a color wheel of sea hues. We began our tour of the country in its capital city, Lisbon. Founded by the Phoenicians and one of Europe's oldest fortifications, Lisbon was later expanded by the Romans, Moors, and Crusader knights. Their influences can still be experienced within this bustling city, where streets painted with the patina of time artfully beckon visitors past stately, statue-filled squares.

For repose, we chose the Tivoli Avenida Liberdade Hotel. The Tivoli brand has perfected hospitality for nine decades. Its journey began in 1933 with this hotel, which quickly became a local landmark and a haven for celebrities, heads of state, artists, and royalty. The grand entrance is intoxicating with its white marble and gleaming gold, while the lobby resembles a palace living room with vignettes of upholstered furniture meant for huddled discussions. The curated artwork lining the wall speaks to the hotel's longstanding support of regional artisans.

Tivoli Avenida Liberdade is located on the city's most renowned avenue, nicknamed Lisbon's Champs-Élysées. Its central location makes it easy to explore this "city of seven hills," each offering panoramic views of Lisbon's red roofs and the Tagus River. I always love to discover a city on foot, however, if you prefer "wheels to heels," hire an electric tuk-tuk for an exhilarating trip around the city. Or if you are looking for a short bypass to the hills, take a ride on the Santa Justa Lift. Designed by Raoul Mesnier du Ponsard, a student of Gustave Eiffel, the creator of Paris' greatest landmark, a trip on this neo-Gothic, wrought iron, vertical lift allows you to experience a bit of living history.

View of Lisbon's red roofs. Photography by no limit pictures





Algarve's Seven Hanging Valleys. Photography by Jacek Sopotnicki



Mini Bar's Algarve Prawns. Photography by Boa Onda

Whichever way you choose to explore, be sure to visit the charming neighborhoods nearby. Baixa Pombalina is home to a magnificent, harborside plaza—the Praça do Comércio. Next to Baixa Pombalina, you will find my favorite and Lisbon's most elegant neighborhood—Chiado. A hub for shopping and theater, a stroll down Chiado's narrow cobblestone streets makes for a lovely afternoon. I highly recommend a visit to Claus Porto, home to perfumes, soaps, and creams wrapped in Belle Epoque-inspired designs. These fragrant treasures make the perfect gift for those awaiting your return, while the shopkeeper's tales of the brand's 133-year-old history will beguile even the most reluctant shopper. Another long-lived Portuguese brand is Leitão & Irmão, a 200-year-old company that once served as the Crown Jeweler to Portuguese and Brazilian royalty. Today, its delicate jewelry and fine home accessories make for the most treasured of tokens.

A short walk from Chiado leads you to the Príncipe Real neighborhood, known for its 19th-century mansions boasting beautiful ironwork balconies and Lisbon's signature blue and white tiled facades. The trendy neighborhood, filled with art galleries and fashionable shops, lives up to the translation of its name—"Royal Prince."

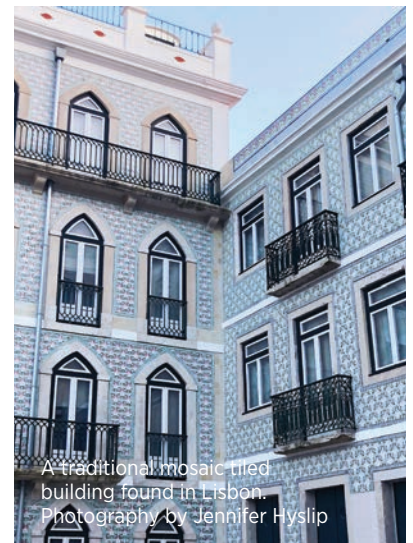
Alfama, one of Lisbon's oldest areas (with a history dating back to the Moors) is a delightful maze of steep narrow passageways lined with quaint shops carrying traditional crafts. In this neighborhood, you'll find many of Lisbon's most iconic buildings including the Lisbon Cathedral and St. George's Castle. Alfama is also famous for its fado venues. Fado, translating to "fate," is a traditional form of

Portuguese music featuring poignant, moving lyrics accompanied by soulful guitar.

After a day of strolling Lisbon's streets, visit the Tivoli Avenida Liberdade's Anantara spa for the brand's signature massage that combines Thai stretches and techniques (in honor of Anantara's roots) with moderate pressure. Your limbs will be forever grateful.

Hungry? Portuguese cuisine embodies the country's history of exploration, with flavors and recipes influenced by its outposts in India, China, Africa, and South America. If you are a bit tired from touring, Tivoli Avenida Liberdade boasts two outstanding restaurants. Cervejaria Liberdade is perched high above the tree-lined Avenida da Liberdade, offering the perfect vantage point for people watching between savory bites of seafood from the Portuguese coast. Don't miss the traditional bacalhau (salted cod) or the fresh oysters. Another hotspot for fantastic cuisine is SEEN Lisboa by Olivier—a Portuguese, Brazilian, and Asian fusion eatery with art-deco décor, a hopping rooftop bar, a resident DJ, and stunning views of Lisbon.

Looking to dine off campus? Lisbon presents numerous exquisite eateries including Mini Bar, owned by Portugal's famed Chef José Avillez. Located in Chiado and



A traditional mosaic tiled building found in Lisbon. Photography by Jennifer Hyslip

hidden behind a false “library” wall, nothing is what it seems at this inventive gastro pub. We “kicked” off the evening with Mini Bar’s famous Kinky Boots cocktail—a divine blend of Beefeater Gin, ginger, lemongrass, spearmint, and agave! We partook in all 6 “acts” on the menu, with each course presented in very unexpected ways, and left the establishment as huge fans of the talented Avillez.

Before leaving Lisbon, you must try its famous pastel de nata—custard tarts first created by Catholic monks in the 17th century. There is no shortage of places that offer these tasty, traditional treasures, and you’ll want to order a thick bica, the Portuguese espresso, to complete the experience.

SINTRA

Leaving the capital city, we journeyed to Sintra. For centuries, the eerily beautiful mist hovering over this mountaintop town has played a prominent role in romantic legends and mystical encounters. Once the beloved summer retreat of the Portuguese royal family, this charming village boasts more palaces per square foot than anywhere else in Europe.

We chose Palácio de Seteais—a gorgeous example of neoclassical architecture reminiscent of the Age of Enlightenment—as our resting place. This boutique hotel is a UNESCO World Heritage Site overlooking gorgeous gardens, a valley, and the Sintra Mountains. The gardens and citrus groves are made even more enchanting by the peacocks visiting from a neighboring property thought to be owned by a descendant of the tragically beautiful Austrian Empress Sisi.



Tivoli Palacio de Seteais Resort guest room

One afternoon, we enjoyed an al fresco lunch on an expansive balcony, dining from Portuguese porcelain inspired by the hunt—a sport once popular with the king and his men. That evening’s dinner in the glamorous main dining room, nibbling on a perfectly prepared sea bass while surrounded by hand-painted frescoes, could only be described as an exquisite affair.

I was thrilled to realize that the palace is very popular with Americans—Lake Forest’s very own James Lovell stayed here—and out of the 25 weddings hosted at the property last year, 21 were American couples heading to the altar. The dreamy property is a draw for celebrities as well counting Johnny Depp, Bono, and Brad

Tivoli Carvoeiro Algarve Resort exterior view of Picnic Experience





Tivoli Palacio de Seteais Resort exterior facade

The National Palace of Pena in Sintra



Pitt as guests who laid their heads to rest in this most perfect place.

I suggest staying a few days to enjoy the hotel, visit nearby palaces, and explore the picture-perfect downtown with its colorful buildings and winding stone walls draped in capes of emerald moss.

The area's main attraction is the Pena Palace, a masterpiece of 19th-century Romanticism. The palace is set within the nearly 500-acre Parque da Pena, a dense woodland that features trees from all over the world—including California redwoods. This “wild” landscape was purposefully designed to complement the palace's extravagant architecture—a madcap mishmash of design styles featuring colorful terraces with breathtaking Atlantic views and ornamental battlements adorned with mythological creatures.

If we had more time, I would have visited the Moorish Castle and the Quinta da Regaleira, known as the “Palace of Mystery” for its labyrinthian underground tunnels and hidden passages. However, we had to dash for our next destination—the coast.

THE ALGARVE

We visited two very different resorts in Portugal's southernmost region known for its Atlantic beaches, golf resorts, and golden cliffs. The first, Tivoli Marina Vilamoura, is perfect for the traveler looking for beachside fun, a marina vibe, excellent cuisine, vast views, and an expansive gym and spa. Located next to the harbor, the resort is a gateway to oceanic adventures.

One afternoon, we visited Purobeach for lunch. Situated on the beach, the modern restaurant sports stunning ocean vistas. For dinner, we traded ocean scenes for marina views with a visit to Pepper's Steakhouse. We paired our hearty, dry-aged steaks with the sommelier's choice of Portuguese wines. Before the meal, we visited The Argo Bar for a drink. I chose the bar's namesake cocktail, “The

Argo,” named in honor of the vessel built for the Argonauts who searched for the Golden Fleece. One sip of this combination of co-coa grue-infused tequila, melon liqueur, grapefruit bitters, and soda made me feel like I had indeed found the coveted fleece.

The second Algarve destination, a cliffside haven riding on the Atlantic's mesmerizing shoulders, is Tivoli Carvoeiro Resort. The recently refurbished retreat is within walking distance of the region's biggest draw—the Seven Hanging Valleys Trail. The nearly 4-mile coastal route is known for its breathtaking views of golden cliffs set against turquoise water. We hiked the trail with a knowledgeable guide from Algarve Fun, who showed us fascinating formations—sinkholes, arches, and sea caves—created by centuries of ocean erosion.

Famished after our trek, we cleaned up and headed to The One Restaurant for a seafood bonanza! I devoured delicious tuna carpaccio, delicate scallops, and for my main dish, a delightful John Dory filet all paired with fabulous Portuguese wine. Delicioso!

I highly recommend the wine tasting with sommelier Francisco Meira, which is like a master class in regional wines. Portugal's diverse landscape allows the country to produce a broad range of high-quality wines. We loved both ends of the spectrum from the light, delicate, and fizzy Vinho Verde (green wine) from the north to the more robust vinho do Porto (port) from the Douro Valley.

Portugal's many paradises—each one brimming with history, culture, culinary adventure, five-star accommodations, and natural wonder—are sure to charm you. Enhance your experience by booking the Tivoli Timeless Tour—a tailor-made tour of the brand's Portuguese properties designed to surprise and delight while creating unforgettable memories. Saúde!

Palácio de Seteais recently changed ownership from Tivoli to Valverde. For more information about Tivoli Avenida Liberdade Hotel, Tivoli Marina Vilamoura, Tivoli Carvoeiro Resort, and the Tivoli Timeless Tour visit tivolihotels.com and 90years.tivolihotels.com.



Main lobby of Tivoli Palacio de Seteais



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HOUSE & HOME

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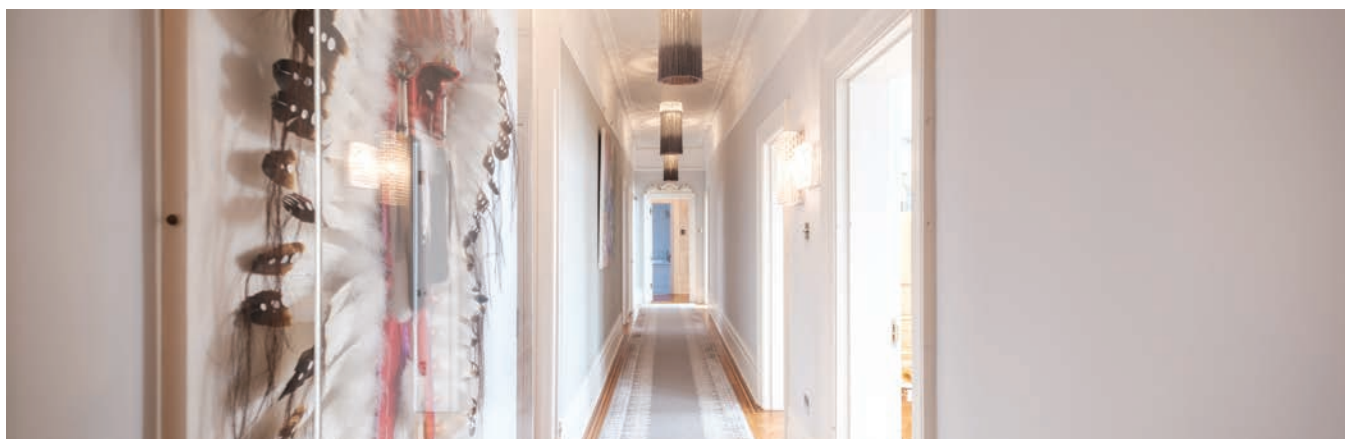
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A classic *London* apartment, a *Barrington Hills* estate, to a charming home in *Germany* ... all could be yours for close to **\$2.6 million**.

WORDS BY **MEGAN WEISBERG**



LONDON \$2.891 million

ENGLAND

Located in St. James' Mansions, a Victorian residential building dating back to 1894 in West Hampstead, the apartment has served as both home and an exclusive showroom for acclaimed interior designers Robbie Spina and Joe Zito of Spina Design. A 40-foot-long hallway opens onto three bedrooms, three bathrooms, library, kitchen, and an impressive double reception

The Details: 3 Bedrooms, 3 Baths • 1,815 square feet, \$1,592 per square foot • The private residence of Spina Design, who count Madonna, Nicole Kidman, The Beckhams and more among their celebrity clientele. **Contact:** Alexander Broadfoot, Engel & Völkers London, alexander.broadfoot@engelvoelkers.com

room, which forms the heart of the apartment. Grey-blue marble walls inlaid with silk, wood paneling, mirrored display cabinets, and a beautiful, cast iron fireplace reflect the elegance of this space. A one-of-a-kind living room chandelier is made of handcrafted glass and Swarovski crystals; it is one of most expensive chandeliers in London valued at more than \$375,000.



UTTING AM AMMERSEE
 \$2.4 million
 BAVARIA, GERMANY

The Details: 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths • 2,002 square feet, \$1,198 per square foot • 4 car garage, energy-efficient home with a log wood heating system, solar thermal installations for hot water **Contact:** Don Holland, Engel & Völkers, 0049 8152 908070

This exceptional property offers the rare opportunity to combine living and working in one of the most picturesque regions of Bavaria, just a ten-minute walk from Lake Ammersee. On three floors in the front private house, there is a spacious living space, while the adjacent building extends over two

floors with an impressive 3,700 square feet of commercial space. This unique home features travertine bathrooms, an architect-designed kitchen, and hardwood floors. The primary suite has a private balcony, a spacious living area opening to a terrace, and ground floor offices with a separate entrance for work-life balance. Photo Credit: Christian Boehm / Engel & Völkers Starnberger See





273 DONLEA ROAD
\$2.625 million

BARRINGTON HILLS

The Details: 7 Bedrooms, 4.1 Baths • 11,900+ square feet, \$220 per square foot • Built in 2007, stately gated entry with circular brick paver drive and motor court, sits on 5 acres
Contact: John Morrison, @properties Christie's International Real Estate, Barrington, 847-409-0297

Priately tucked away, this French Provincial home has rich architectural details, custom mahogany woodwork, arched Marvin windows and doors, and state-of-the-art technology. A main floor primary suite as well as two additional first floor bedrooms allow for one-level living. An inviting family room, formal living and dining rooms, and

private study provide ample space for entertaining. The second floor features three spacious bedrooms, a full bath, and a massive bonus room in addition to unfinished attic space for future expansion. The walk-out lower level has a theater room, rec/game room, play and exercise rooms, and a custom safe room. The large deck and multiple patios provide great space for outdoor enjoyment and equestrian lovers can enjoy the nearby horse-riding trails.



LIGHT IT UP

With new accent lamps and colorways.

EDITED BY MEGAN WEISBERG

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8





1 Cabana, Demetra Small Glass Oil Bottle, net-a-porter.com 2 Torrent Pendant, jaysonhome.com 3 Dolce & Gabbana, Color-block Murano Champagne Glass, net-a-porter.com 4 La DoubleJ, Bubble Gold-Plated Printed Porcelain Vase, net-a-porter.com 5 Completedworks, Recycled-Glass Tumblers, net-a-porter.com 6 LOEWE Home Scents, Honeysuckle Small Scented Candle, net-a-porter.com 7 Kinsey Sideboard, jaysonhome.com 8 Archivist Hand Soap, jaysonhome.com 9 Tom Dixon, Glass Tea Cups, net-a-porter.com 10 Ollie Lamp, jaysonhome.com 11 An elegant morning with Hudson Grace's Latte Bowls and Vintage Tea and Coffee Set, hudsongracesf.com 12 Eloise Lamp, jaysonhome.com 13 Dawson Lamp, jaysonhome.com 14 Mud Australia, Round Porcelain Teapot, net-a-porter.com 15 Louise Roe + Sophia Roe S.R. Collection Tall Glasses, net-a-porter.com 16 Presley Lamp, jaysonhome.com 17 Yolo Journal Issue 14, jaysonhome.com 18 L'Objet, Gold-Plated Brass, Wood and Marble Chess Set, net-a-porter.com 19 Georgia Chair, jaysonhome.com



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Views over the Galena hills from the open kitchen and dining room layout of Frogmore Cabin.

Wishing for a Weekend Getaway

A.J. and Michelle Gilbert Create Magic for Others Via a Booming Real Estate Portfolio.

WORDS BY **TRICIA DESPRES**

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**

CABIN PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ROBYN PHOTOGRAPHY**

STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST**

The Gilbert Family has long known the importance of a vacation getaway.

“I grew up with a second family home in the Ozarks, right on the lake,” recalls longtime Barrington resident A.J. Gilbert. “It was just a complete escape for us to get away, but still be with each other. It was amazing. It



The Gilberts standing tall in Brunello Cucinelli suit and Sandro black dress, neimanmarcus.com





The bunk room.



Outdoor entertaining space.



A relaxing bedroom.



A deep soaking tub.

truly just became a part of who I am.”

Now, with his wife Michelle, and their two children, Gilbert has continued to find places to go to get away with his extended family and essentially escape the chaos of the real world for a little while.

And in 2022, Michelle and A.J. went to Galena.

“One day while we were there, we just hopped in the truck and started driving around,” remembers Michelle. “We saw this crazy old ‘for sale by owner’ sign, and we rounded the corner and there right in front of us was the most majestic cabin in all of the territory.”

And soon after, they made it theirs.

And now, they share it with others.

“We want to make this feel like you’re on a royal getaway,” explains Michelle of one of the three Airbnb properties that she and her husband currently own. “I always had this idea of what would it be like if a royal person was going to their country estate; what would that feel like? And so, that was the guiding principle.”

Hence, their Galena property is now known as Frogmore Cabin, named after Queen Victoria of England’s favorite country estate, Frogmore Cottage.

“There’s a magic there, but you have to experience it,” says Michelle of the stunning luxury cabin offering five bedrooms, four and a half baths and an eight-person hot tub with a panoramic view of the rolling Galena Territory hills. “When our clients arrive, they get it. It’s all about creating an experience that you can’t get anywhere else.”

Indeed, it is this idea that serves as the backbone of what A.J. and Michelle like to refer to as their ‘trendy side hustle,’ which also now includes rental properties in not only Illinois, but also Texas and Georgia.

“We pick our rentals so that they are close to major metropolitan cities, often just under two hours away so that we’re getting all those people looking for a weekend getaway,” explains Michelle. “People always want to have a getaway.”

But often, what begins as a getaway turns into so much more for the families who spend their time there.

“These homes are the backdrop of memories that will be emblazoned in these people’s minds forever,” says Michelle, who graduated from the University of Illinois with a bachelor’s degree in ad-

vertising and a master’s degree from Miami Ad School for creative copywriting. “So, when we’re creating the spaces and picking even just the rugs and the curtains, I want to make sure this backdrop is a part of something that they always remember.”

However, creating and maintaining this magical backdrop often involves much more work than many might realize. “It’s been a wild ride, there are so many things that go into it from making the deal, to delivering on the hospitality, to being totally digital-centric,” Michelle explains. “It’s this crazy merging of all the skills one could possibly ever have.”

Indeed, with Michelle’s skills as a full-time advertising exec and A.J.’s skills as a full-time real estate professional, the couple have truly discovered a way to adequately merge their talents together through their Airbnb business.

“Listing copy and doing all of the digital things are my strength,” says Michelle. “That’s how my creativity shines through. Whereas A.J. is very technical and handy, so he’s able to actually go to the properties, do all the repairs, build things, install things. He’s also a home inspector so he can deal with all the nuts and bolts.”

She laughs.

“So, he’s doing all the ‘hands on’ with the property, and then I’m often doing all the design and polish,” Michelle continues. “It’s been a really cool combination.”

It’s this combination that the couple wants to continue for many years to come. “We hosted 1,256 guests last year across three cabins,” Michelle remarks. “Our goal is five vacation rentals in five years, and that’s what we’re charging towards. We ended up getting three properties within 10 months, so we are way ahead of schedule.”

And there is always that possibility that the two may make one of these properties their own home one of these days.

“A hundred percent, we think about that,” Michelle concludes. “You do get emotionally tied to them. And our kids are emotionally tied to them. Just the other day, our 5-year-old told us that when he grows up, he wants to live in the beach house. That’s just what he knows.”

To book your weekend getaway, visit purelivingvacationhomes.com/frogmore.

THE MAGIC WITHIN

Karen McBride *shares the Barrington Area Library's exciting next chapter.*

WORDS BY **MIRA PATEL**

ILLUSTRATION BY **ROBERT RISKO**



With endless bookshelves, welcoming staff members, and free weekly events, the Barrington Area Library is a magical place where seven days a week the community can unite in the pursuit of new ideas and shared experiences.

As an extensive renovation begins, longtime library employee Karen McBride looks forward to “a new page” for this local treasure.

McBride has been the Barrington Area Library Public Information Manager for 12 years. In this role, she communicates with the broader public through the library’s website and by creating engaging social media posts for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. “The Barrington Library is a very special place that serves a surrounding community of 47,000 people across 72 miles,” McBride observes.

Although her background is in English literature and she holds a Master of Library and Information Science, managing the library’s expansive digital resources requires McBride to delve into marketing, public relations, and graphic design.

McBride notes that the 84-person library staff prides itself on innovation and strives for continuous improvement. Thus, technology has been embraced over the last few years. In turn, robust programming—ranging from live music to the very popular weekly story times to a Seed Library—demonstrates a commitment to providing personal and meaningful encounters.

Post-pandemic, the library reports cross-generational increases in

attendance, circulation, and use of resources. For example, local teenagers have begun to book private rooms to study with their friends, especially during high school exams. Meanwhile, senior citizens come in with their iPads to use eBooks and digital magazines.

“This is a place you would want to come to with your family,” explains McBride. “We have learning experiences for people of all ages.”

Over the next six months, the library will undergo a renovation that will only widen its already broad appeal. Creatives will delight in the updated MakerLab with 3D printers and other technology. Doers will relish the expanded “Library of Things” that contains nontraditional library items available to check out.

“Customers are asking for anything from a sewing machine to ukuleles, cameras, telescopes, garden tools, etc.,” says McBride. “We want to provide some of those things for people to borrow.” The prospect of the new “Baby Garden,” a space where infants and toddlers can safely play, is being applauded by staff and parents alike.

The library will remain open during the project—a fact that attests to its vital role in everyday life. McBride urges library patrons to continue to visit and use existing resources during this exciting transformation—one that will allow the magic to shine even brighter.

For more information, visit balibrary.org.

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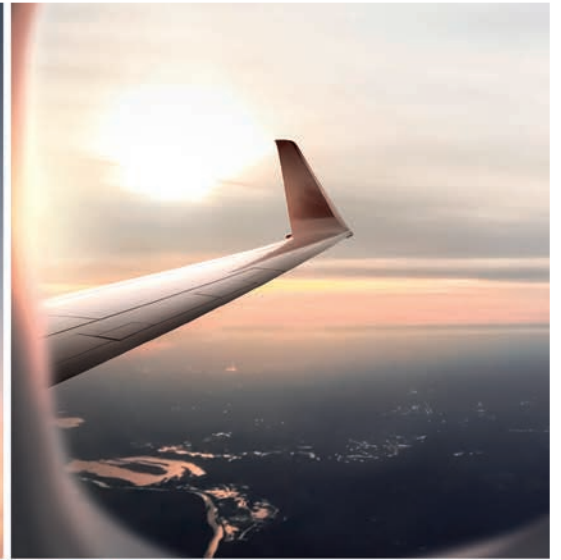


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