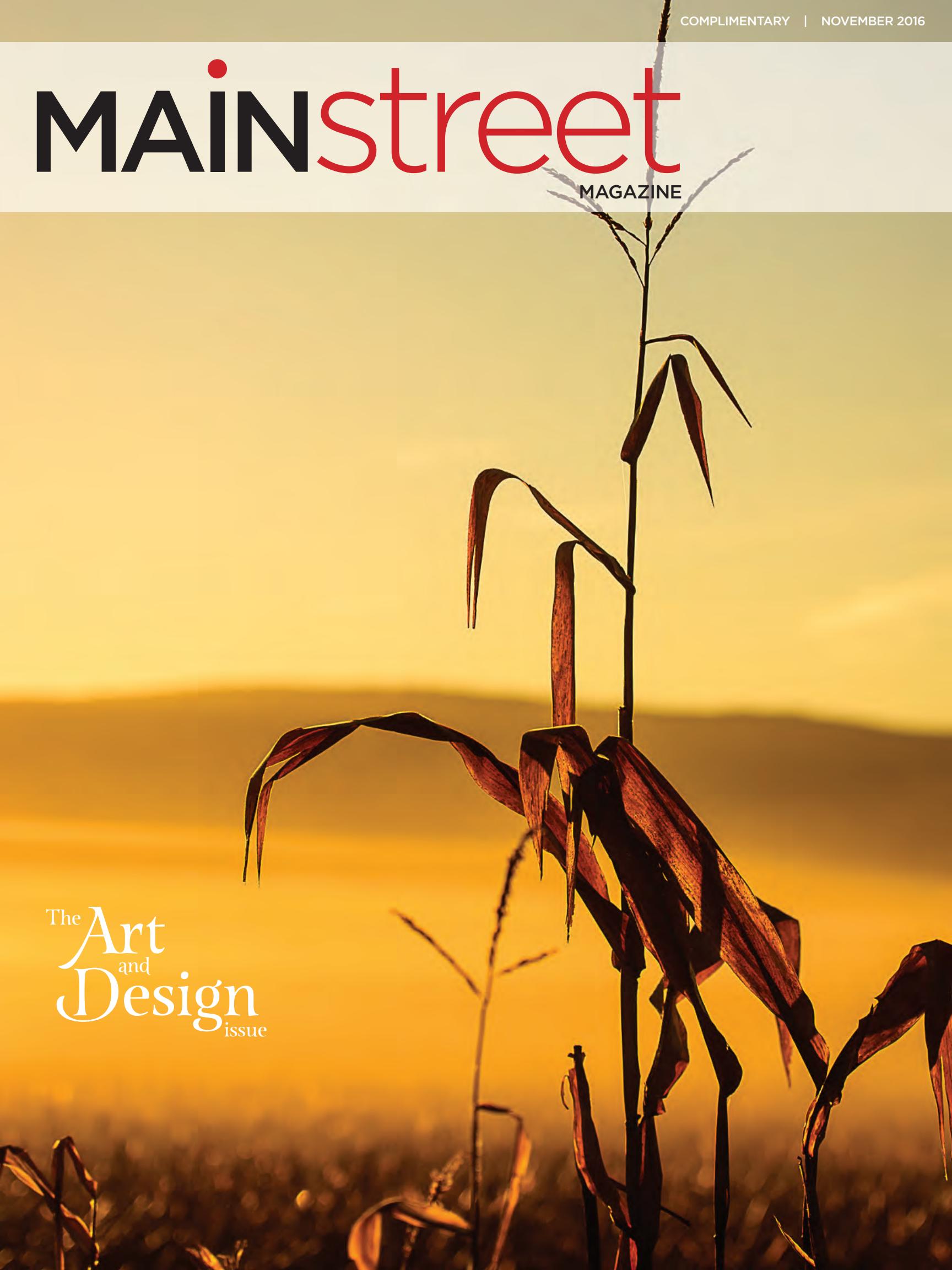


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MAGAZINE

The Art  
and  
Design  
issue



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## ALL ABOUT ART & DESIGN

We premiered our first "Art & Design" issue last year, which I personally quite enjoyed. It allowed us a different perspective on a subject matter that touches most of us. And let's be honest, what qualifies as art and or design is a very relative subject and it is something that each and every one of us has to judge and decide for ourselves. With that being said, the focus allows us at this magazine to look at subject matters with a broad scope because to each of us, the notion of art/design means something very different.

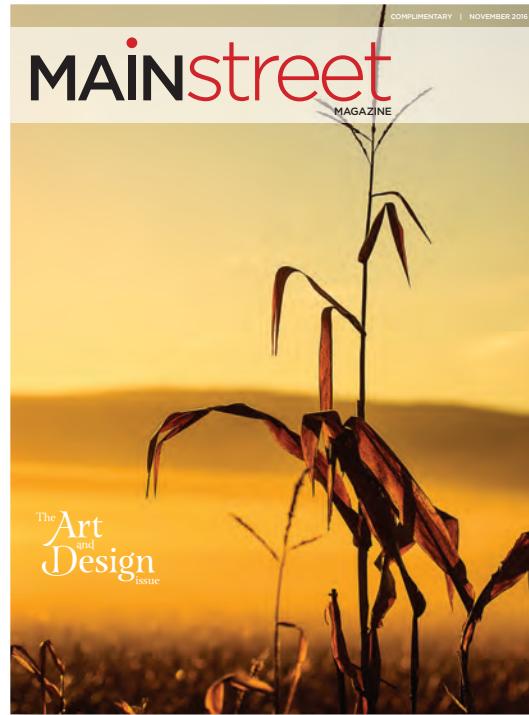
In this issue, I've been quite impressed with the angle and or perspective that my writers took with their stories. For starters, CB's artist profile features local photographer B. Docktor. CB also interviewed a very artistic couple for his couple's profile, a ceramic artist and a rock 'n' roller. I guess all is fair in art and love, right?

Christine took quite the creative approach with her two features, examining the impact of working with an architect and how it impacts your real estate, real estate purchase and or sale. She also interviewed a local entrepreneur who's take on business is synonymous with an artistic and designer's life and perspective. And when it comes to designing your life, Carol Ascher took a unique look with her feature on a few local families. You see, the forefathers and mothers of these families fled Europe and Jewish persecution and moved to our region and began farming the land here. Today, a number of their descendants are still farming the same land. Neat, huh?

Dominique introduces us to what some might consider a Renaissance woman when it comes to art and design: Carrie Chen is an interior designer, landscape architect, and creates/designs/manufactures the most beautiful scarves and throws. Mary on the other hand dove into the world of coffee table books and what they're all about. She also brings us the story of mavisBLUE, a local company that took a personal need and creative outlet and turned it into a thriving business. And speaking of artistic creativity, Claire brings us a piece about a local couple who spent years designing the landscape around their home.

We also have a number of other features in this issue, but as you see, I've run out of space. Regardless, I hope that you enjoy the issue and our numerous features – there's sure to be something for everyone. We thank you for your readership, and I wish you a very happy month of November and a happy Thanksgiving as well.

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



NOVEMBER 2016

Sunrise in the autumn cornfield in the Ancramdale, NY hills.

Cover photo by  
Olivia Valentine Markonic

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### PUBLISHER, EDITOR, ADVERTISING, WRITING, PHOTOGRAPHY & OTHER DUTIES

**Thorunn Kristjansdottir** Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Designer. **Pom Shillingford** Assistant proof-reader.  
**Ashley Kristjansson** and **Daniel Martucci** Directors of Advertising.  
 Contributing Writers: **Allison Marchese** | **CB Wismar** | **Carol Ascher** | **Christine Bates** | **Claire Copley** | **Dominique De Vito** | **Ian Strever** | **John Torsiello** | **KK Kozik** | **Mary B. O'Neill** | **Paige Darrah** | **Sarah Ellen Rindsberg**. Contributing Photographers: **Lazlo Gyorsok** & **Olivia Markonic**

### ADVERTISING

**Ashley Kristjansson** and **Daniel Martucci** Call 518 592 1135 or email info@mainstreetmag.com

### CONTACT

**Office** 52 Main Street, Millerton, NY 12546 • **Mailing address** PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503  
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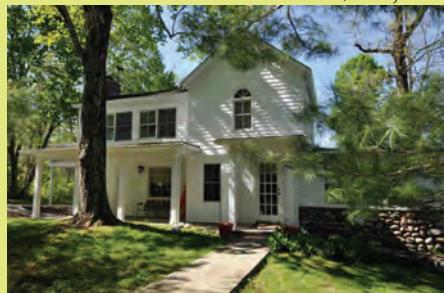
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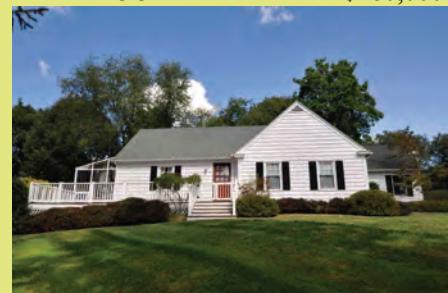
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# b. docktor

PHOTOGRAPHER

By CB Wismar  
arts@mainstreetmag.com

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree ... That may be a cliché, or simply a way of explaining how traits and behaviors pass from generation to generation.

It's also the truth.

B. Docktor, a photographer from Ancram, New York, is very much her own woman. She has a quiet, easy way about her that makes both people and animals feel very comfortable. The former subjects look into her camera lens with an unmasked honesty that encourages the viewer to feel they can know this person well.

The latter subjects are amply captured in her rich, expressive photographs of family pets and farm animals and any other feathered, furred, or finned subjects that find their respective ways in front of her camera.

## Creativity – the family tradition

B. Docktor is also her father's daughter, which allows a bright, artistic flair to inhabit her work. Irv Docktor was a celebrated illustrator

who created over 100 books and book covers in his years of freelance work in the New York City publishing world. His work was distinctive, bold, colorful, and engaging.

Often an illustrator of children's books, Irv used his three children as subjects for book characters and, in Norman Rockwell style, would take photographs of them in various settings and poses to form the basis of his illustrations. It was, in fact, those photography sessions that got a young B. intrigued with what the camera could see and do. The apple didn't fall far from the tree. B.'s approach to photography is far from mechanical. It is distinctive, bold, colorful, and engaging.

As a child, she spent hours in her father's dark room, watching images reveal themselves "in those magical tanks" during the process of turning negative film into lustrous prints.

Awareness of how a camera can capture the soul of a subject blossomed when B. became enthralled with Edward Steichen's *Family of Man*, the volume that was created from the exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, curated by the great photographer.

But, photography has changed. We are now in a day of digital magic being harnessed by expensive cameras ... and ingenious telephones. The photographer's artistic

sensitivity, capacity to adapt quickly, and to understand how technology can be harnessed in the creation of art are as important as were film speed and "f" stops in the days of countless rolls of celluloid and pungent chemical baths.

"My passion is to make photographs of real moments that convey the spirit, joy, and beauty of people, animals, and nature," says B. As a result, her portfolio displays a wide reach of vivid images that belie that passion and give an affirmative "Everything!" to the age old question "What are you good at?"



## The city and the country

B. Docktor grew up in Fort Lee, New Jersey in a house with a view of both the Hudson River and the New York City skyline. Comfortable in the city, she was also drawn to the woods and the elegance of nature. "We had dogs when I was growing up," she recalls, "and my love of animals matched with a love of the outdoors drives much of my work." As an example, John Boy, her highly energetic pit bull, is a perfect subject for her efforts to capture the personalities of the animals she photographs.

By the time she had reached the formative high school years, B. had a very clear sense of the medium she wanted to pursue for her life. With experience, in those young years,

she learned to handle single lens reflex and twin lens reflex cameras. When it came time for college, she was off to Syracuse University and a degree in photojournalism. Her passion was to capture the moment, to push the limits of reaction and response to capture the spontaneity of things that happen only once.

Professional stops in North Carolina and career expansions as a typesetter and graphic designer led B. back to New York, where she established her own graphics and design business.

Like many who live in the pressurized world of the New York business world, B. found a need to escape on weekends. Wandering through the Hudson Valley, she settled in Ancram and found that her sense of design and composition and living in a gentle environment fit into the tasks required when older homes are brought back to "health" and improved. B. learned from the tradespeople that worked on her house and she worked alongside of them. It's simply her way.

It was not too many years of commuting between the City and the country before B. felt the relentless "tug" of living full time in the countryside where morning fog sits lightly in the valleys and the crisp smell of autumn draws us outdoors for long walks to explore the natural

wonders that surround us.

### **Speed and accuracy equals magic**

By her own admission and capitalizing on her formal training in photojournalism, B. has learned to shoot fast and accurately. Those precise disciplines allow her to capture animals in motion and let them create the context for each picture. The results win the admiration and praise of her clients who find great joy in having photographs of the family pets or the denizens of the barnyard to grace their mantels and walls.

"B. has a great eye, especially when it comes to photographing animals," affirmed one client.

But, just as her love of animals comes through in her photography, so does B.'s sensitivity to people and the moments that are unique in their lives. Her portrait work veers far away from the staid, formalized sittings of the past. By her own definition, B.'s portraits are "environmental," and her wedding portfolio reflects her bent toward "photojournalistic," capturing of the moments that make up the complete memory of the special event.

Exploration of B.'s website is a great way to spend more than a few moments appreciating the personalities who she's captured. It is also



The photos displayed on these two spreads show an array of B. Docktor's work, ranging from her environmental portraits, to capturing the essence of animals. B. herself is pictured on the opposite page.

a fine way to dive into her collection of fine art photography ... that elusive fragment of the art world where debate has raged for decades on whether photography can be art since it can be reproduced, again and again.

Savoring her work can be done by exploring a wide range of art pieces. The simplicity of a barn seen through a driving blizzard, or sunlight streaking through morning ground fog on an area farm appear beside the inquisitive looks of a compliant array of goats or the burst of yellow from a field of sunflowers. Waterfalls, snow, sunlight covering a landscape in both morning and evening – they are all in B. Docktor's fine art portfolio.

It can be a very frustrating question to ask an artist why it is they pursue their art. Naturally, people need to make a living, but art can be a challenging occupation. Artists can feel driven to create pieces that represent their raw emotions, their perceptions of the world around

them, or their views of what others look like and feel. B. creates art with her camera "to preserve the essence of something happening now." She loves discovering "the real emotions and the challenge of the spontaneous."

*To embrace her entire photographic portfolio, visit B. Docktor's website at [www.bdocktorphotography.com](http://www.bdocktorphotography.com). It is an exercise well worth the effort and will, no doubt, open doors of imagination and appreciation.*

*Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work to [arts@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:arts@mainstreetmag.com).*



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# friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



**Dana Rohn-Jennings** grew up in her family's antique stores, and by the time she reached her mid 20s she became a fourth generation antiques dealer herself. "It's a seven-days-a-week kind of job, especially with two stores to fill. I'm always on patrol for new items to fill and freshen up the shops." She is excited to celebrate Black Friday with the other fellow Millerton merchants. Dana also likes to reminisce about her days teaching theater arts and poetry blogging. She has always had a love for spending time with her family, traveling, and painting. She told us that when she was in her 20s that she didn't own a camera so she would paint the views that she wanted to remember during her travels. "To this day, I continue to paint wherever I go." Maybe we can see some of those paintings at her store, Montage, on Black Friday?



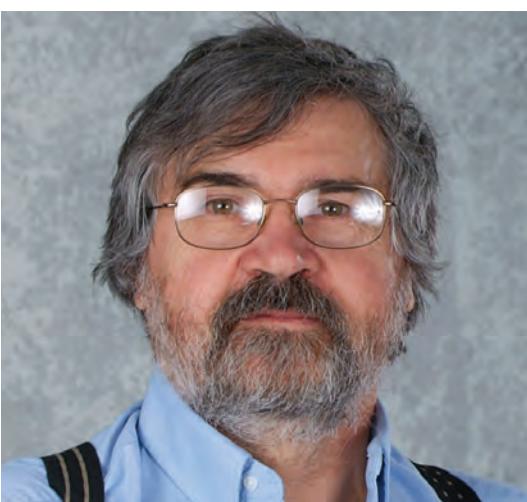
**Frost White** has- and continues to live quite the life! He spent a dozen years on the faculty of the Harvard Medical School studying biochemistry of the brain and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, followed by 20 years of research on Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, and Stroke at Pfizer. "I love knowing that my work has added to our understanding of how the brain works in health and disease." Since retiring almost 10 years ago, Frost spends a lot of his time designing and building custom furniture. "I really enjoy designing a unique piece of furniture that is both beautiful and functional." Frost also likes to bike, hike, ski, and cook, "probably because I love to eat." Of course spending time with his wife, Leslie, their two miniature schnauzers, and visiting their daughters are on top of the every day to-do-list, too!



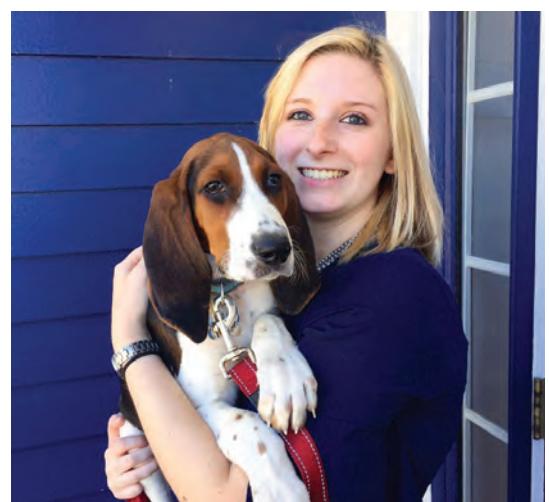
**Sarah Anderson Lock** is the Arts Administrator at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville. She coordinates publicity for the public arts events at the school, manages the Tremaine Art Gallery, designs announcements, advertisements, programs, and posters, writes press releases, and greets patrons at concerts. This is her sixth year at the school, and as a visual artist herself she's happy to have a job that supports the arts. She creates art with digital tools, "It's been awhile since I used a paintbrush!" Sarah loves yoga and kayaking and wants to learn to meditate. She is a native Midwesterner; she grew up in Indiana and Wisconsin. "Autumn is what I love most about living in this region: every season my family goes apple picking to take in the sharp smelling air, the incredible colors of changing leaves, the clarity of the blue skies. The rolling, mountainous setting makes it really spectacular."



**Dana Simpson** works at Hammertown Barn and wears many hats: she works as a buyer, marketing director, and interior design consultant, but her focus has always been on marketing and buying. Over the past decade her role has grown to include interior design consulting with Hammertown's clients. "Outside of work I love to spend time hiking with my dog, playing tennis, and gardening. I also like to knit and secretly dream of opening a knitting store in the area someday (not a secret anymore!). I love being with my family and weekends are a time for us to spend time together. In the autumn, I enjoy to taking advantage of local day trips and this year I'm planning a trip up to the Clark Museum in Williamstown, MA, and farther afield like to Storm King and Dia Beacon." The adventures await!



Some of you might recognize **Lazlo Gyorsok**, a Cornwall Bridge, CT resident. Lazlo, originally hailing from Hungary, arrived in the Big Apple in 1972 and eventually made his way up to the Cornwall area where he owned and operated a painting business for 35 years, in addition to a paint and decorating store in Kent for over 25 years. But Lazlo is a man of many hats; he was the webmaster for the Town of Cornwall for 15 years, is an avid member of the Housatonic Camera Club, and he was a partner in the Northern Exposure Studio in Kent / West Cornwall from its inception, in addition to being a photographer for this very magazine. In his "retirement," Lazlo has kept very busy photographing and "burning up lots of digital film." But when he's not busy snapping pics, his wife Christina, their (now grown) kids, and their two granddaughters keep Lazlo on his toes.



**Taylor Ellis** feels fortunate to work at Elizabeth's Jewelry and Fine Gifts in Millerton and to be a part of their great team. Taylor's responsibilities include sales, ordering of merchandise, jewelry repair, and design. She also works at Trotta's Liquor Store part-time. Outside of work she enjoys spending time with her new puppy, Rueger. She loves the outdoors and likes to go hiking, hunting, and fishing with her boyfriend as well as her grandparents. Taylor's friends are very important to her and she spends time with them whenever she can. Born in Millerton, Taylor finds great satisfaction in the changing of the seasons, and that each season brings different activities and different ways to explore the area. "Being able to go to places like Rudd Pond, Bash Bish, the Rail Trail, and the woods around where I live is very enjoyable," shared Taylor. Well, we concur!

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# ENTREPRENEUR *by design*

By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

*For Main Street's Art & Design issue, we interviewed Matthew White in the teaching kitchen of HGS Home Chef across the street from the Hillsdale General Store in Hillsdale, NY. White talked about the importance of design in his life, which took him from Amarillo, Texas to running three businesses in New York.*

## How did you come to open the Hillsdale General Store?

This all happened later in my life. About twelve years ago my partner and I built a house up here to escape New York City on weekends. I didn't really know that the town of Hillsdale existed until I read a local newspaper article about the veterans in Hillsdale wanting to create a new monument with the names of all of those who had served in four wars. (Note that Hillsdale has the only Civil War monument in Columbia County). I felt the proposed plan could be improved so I volunteered to create a new design and helped raise the money to build it. The larger community pitched in and we quickly raised \$20,000.

Then I became involved in the Hillsdale hamlet committee (see last month's *Main Street* article on Hillsdale and community involvement with town government). We worked on a plan, which spelled out a future vision for the hamlet with

sidewalks, parking, etc. Meanwhile Hillsdale got a new sewer system, which is rare for small towns like ours. Then the historic Hillsdale hamlet committee went to work on creating a nationally registered historic district that included many historic structures. This designation makes it possible for the owners of historic buildings to receive tax credits for restoring buildings like ours. For commercial renovations of historic structures, owners may receive a 40% tax credit.

The Hillsdale General Store building was erected in 1855 as a general store and operated under the same family's ownership for a hundred years. It was a video store when we purchased it. We opened five years ago on October 15, 2011. This was two years after Ken and Kevin opened Passiflora.

## Beyond saving the building, what was your vision for the General Store?

Everything in this store might have been available in the original country department store. We have kitchen items, including china and cast iron skillets, candy, garden tools, picnic baskets, stationery, books and toys for kids. It represents various periods filtered through a designer's eye. The merchandise is about 50% new and



Above: Matthew White, creator of the Hillsdale General Store and HGS Home Chef. Below, left: An interior glimpse of the General Store. Photos courtesy of Matthew White.

50% vintage or antique. I try to stay away from anything made of plastic and items that need to be plugged in.

We feature many products that are made in America such as the hose that Margaret Roach recommends. I only stock things that meet my standards and we try to have very fair prices on our many unusual, top quality items. We have a set of vintage glasses for sale for \$70 – Bergdorf Goodman in New York City has the very same set for \$700!

I'm fighting against the corporatization of taste, the homogeneity that big brands have brought to every aspect of American life where everything is repeated and there are no surprises. Our customers are delighted with what we have and their appreciation means so much to me. Sometimes people come in with their grandchildren and share experiences about an old-fashioned children's toy we may have or our penny candy.

MATTHEW WHITE OF THE HILLSDALE GENERAL STORE & HGS HOME CHEF IN HILLSDALE, NY & WHITE WEBB, AN INTERIOR DESIGN FIRM IN NEW YORK CITY

## What about the CrossRoads Food Shop in the back?

I lured David Wurth, one of our region's early adopters of farm-to-table fare and the first chef at Local 111 in Philmont, to come to Hillsdale and open a restaurant adjoining The General Store (see article in last month's issue). The folks who appreciate the food at CrossRoads are also my clients. It was a natural fit. I also helped in the design of CrossRoads Food Shop. The goal was to create a space that was inviting and casual to compliment David's food, which is simple and delicious.

## What prepared you for opening a retail store?

In the 1990s I had an antiques store in Pasadena, CA, which launched my interior design career. Clients liked what they saw in the store and how I put things together and then asked me to help them design their



Continued on next page ...

homes. The Hillsdale General Store has brought together my talents for design and knowledge of antiques and historic styles with my ability for presentation and merchandizing.

#### **Why did you open the HGS Home Chef across the street?**

This building was even in worse shape than the General Store. It was built around 1875 as a home and had been divided into apartments. The idea was to sell the best kitchen products and offer exceptional cooking learning experiences. The Home Chef has two state of the art teaching kitchens. So far we've had over 60 classes there – plus we offer private, custom-cooking experiences for groups to help celebrate a special occasion.

We've had amazing guest chefs like Ruth Reichel, the former editor of *Gourmet* magazine, who rarely makes appearances, but actively supports local businesses. Madhur Jaffrey, a Hillsdale neighbor, gave an Indian vegetarian lecture to celebrate her cookbook *Vegetarian India: A Journey through the Best of Indian Home Cooking*. Local chefs share their techniques. Some of the food is exotic, like a private event we did which featured how to make Shakshuka – a North African tomato and pepper stew with baked eggs. Customers drive long distances to attend.

I'm not a professional chef myself, but I am a better than the average home cook and teach the knife skills class. Mostly it is my deep love for a beautiful domestic life that drives me, and that includes great food prepared in home kitchens. We focus on people who want to cook at home. I come to every class and every time I learn something new.

I opened both stores because of my commitment to the historic preservation of buildings, my love of Hillsdale and the people who live here. And I'm proud of the jobs my

businesses have created here. You know, in the 19th century Hillsdale was a busy town, a real destination. I would like to help bring Hillsdale back to that time!

#### **Is managing a retail store difficult?**

Maintaining quality is a relentless pursuit and there doesn't seem to be any economies of scale. I'm very grateful for our staff of four who care about the business and help maintain the vision behind it.

#### **What inspires your taste and sense of design?**

I'm inspired by my travels to small towns in Europe – their authenticity and localness. I believe that we in the US are learning the importance of independent voices in small businesses. I want to help bring back those values and the beauty of unique businesses rather than corporate efforts that make the world so mundane.

#### **Any advice to budding retailers?**

Do your homework and understand the investment you are making. Everyone wants a cute store but you have to consider the endless, and not so glamorous part of running a small business. It is not for the faint of heart. Running a small and special business is 1% inspiration and the rest is unrelenting work.

#### **What are your long-term goals for your businesses?**

I want to attract more people to Hillsdale and the Hudson Valley and inspire other entrepreneurs to open businesses here – local independent businesses where the money stays here. One small change can have a big impact in a small town like ours – like the new wine shop that opened here last year.

The hamlet of Hillsdale is amazing. It's a tiny rural hub in between Hudson, the Berkshires, New York City and Boston. There are 6,000 cars that drive by my stores everyday. I want to make them stop and experience something they cannot find anywhere else. •



Above top: HGS Home Chef marks the center of the hamlet of Hillsdale. Above: The kitchen ceiling beam at HGS Home Chef was created from a fallen oak tree and designed by Matthew White. Photos courtesy of Matthew White.



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# Holiday health benefits

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Can you believe that it's almost Thanksgiving time? Well it is, so get ready to find that perfect turkey, and get out your loose-fitting pants. I have to admit that Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, and it is all because of the glorious food. Turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, yams, and cranberry sauce, followed by apple pie and vanilla ice cream – pure heaven! All of my favorite foods in one place, at one time. It doesn't get much better than that.

In anticipation of Turkey Day, I began to think about the foods that are associated with this holiday and how my trusted book *Foods That Harm, Foods That Heal*, written by the *Reader's Digest*, categorizes some of them. So here below I've hand-selected three of the Thanksgiving favorites and share with you their benefits and downfalls. But remember; the key is everything in moderation, especially considering that many associate the Thanksgiving feast with gluttony. We can and should still feast and give thanks, but it can be done within reasonable limits.

## Let's start with the turkey

The center piece of any Thanksgiving meal is obviously the turkey. Turkey is a part of the poultry family and is well-known to be a great source of "high-quality protein, with all the essential amino acids, as well as calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc." And when you compare apples to apples, or in this case, poultry to poultry, the fat content is one of the main differences. "A 3-oz portion of roasted, skinless light turkey is the lowest in calories and fat, with 135 calories, 3 g of fat, and 25 g of protein..."

With all of these great attributes, what's the downside to turkey? Well, like its other poultry cousins, bacteria is a concern so one has to be careful when handling raw poultry and to make sure that it is cooked properly.



## A main side dish

When it comes to the side dishes on Thanksgiving, a lot of them are fruits and or vegetables, and you can't go wrong with fruits or vegetables (for the most part). They are all-natural and chock-full of vitamins and nutrients! Of course when you caramelize carrots, or put marshmallows on top of yams, well then you're obviously changing some of the health dynamics. But as a golden rule, fruits and vegetables are always your friends.

Let's look at yams and or sweet potatoes in particular. "These tuberous roots are among the most nutritious vegetables and are excellent sources of the antioxidants beta-carotene and vitamin C," according to the book. The text then continues by stating that sweet potatoes and yams are not the same thing but are often confused, but it doesn't elaborate on how or why they are different. It does state that you can use them interchangeably in recipes though. Well, that's good to know! But beware that once you start adding marshmallows or butter to them that you're adding fat/sugar to these nutritious veggies.

The list of health benefits for eating yams/sweet potatoes is quite long

and extensive. The book goes into specific details, but here are the highlights: lowers blood pressure, keeps skin and eyes healthy, guards against infections, fights heart disease, avoids diabetes complications, boosts cancer survival, reduces breast cancer risk, helps blood sugar and cholesterol, and it may reduce insulin resistance. Sounds like a win-win to me, so load up on those yams.

## Dessert time

When it comes to the dessert choices, obviously most of them are not just straight-forward raw materials, like an apple. But rather, in the case of the apple pie, the apple has been cut and mixed with cinnamon, brown sugar, and or sugar, placed in dough, and then baked. So the composition of the food and the raw materials gets changed, and you have to factor that into your eating equation. For example, in the apple pie, the apples are the best things for you, but they've been processed to a certain extent with sugar and spices, heat, and are covered in a carbohydrate-full dough, and then probably topped off with whipped cream and or ice cream.

With that being said, if we just

look at the apple in its original state it has a great number of health benefits, again the book goes into the specifics but here are the highlights: staves off Alzheimer's disease, protects against colon cancer, prevents high blood pressure, helps keep you slim, evens out your blood sugar, helps fend off heart disease, fights high cholesterol, and boosts dental hygiene. The downsides to consuming apples is that apple trees are often sprayed with pesticides and so it is crucial to clean apples well before eating them.

When it comes to the other desserts, well as we all know we have to be careful with our sugar and carbohydrate intake. So just use your common sense this Thanksgiving. Stick with the foods that are natural, like fruits and vegetables, and double up on the high protein turkey. And when it comes to the dessert, hopefully you'll have indulged in the healthy main course so much that a little dessert sliver should suffice. But above all, have a wonderful and healthy Thanksgiving holiday and give thanks for the joy that surrounds you. •

*I got my copy of "Foods That Harm, Foods That Heal" at Oblong Books.*



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# How to work with an architect

AND HOW IT MIGHT IMPACT YOUR REAL ESTATE AND YOUR LIFE

By Christine Bates

[christine@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:christine@mainstreetmag.com)

Whether you build new, renovate, or simply add a room to your house, working with the right architect can add to the personal enjoyment of your home, and also to its intrinsic value. For Main Street's "Art & Design" issue our real estate article focuses on finding and working with the right architect for you.

## The architect gave us the confidence to buy an absolute wreck

When should you start looking for an architect? There are some clients, like Frank Hayman in Lakeville, CT, who have a life-long relationship with an architect and consult with them before buying a property. "I've worked with Anthony Grammenopoulos as my residential architect since the 1970s and I always show him houses before I buy. He said I'd be a fool not to buy this property."

Pom and David Shillingford asked the Churchill Brothers (when they were a design-build team) to assure them they could afford to buy and then renovate before signing the purchase contract on a house in need of repair in Salisbury, CT. "The Churchills gave us the confidence to buy an absolute wreck in a place where we had never been, and knew no-one."

For most people, first time buyers, renovators, or people new to the area, looking for an architect comes after ownership. Like identifying any professional, a doctor or a lawyer, research is necessary. Real estate agents are often a great resource for all sorts of professionals. Elyse Harney Morris referred the Churchill Brothers to the Shillingfords. Realtor Wheeler & Taylor suggested Crisp Architects to Frank Pringle because of Crisp's approach to the heritage of the Berkshires. Other sources are friends, neighbors, contractors, magazines, signs, Google searches, and websites like Houzz, which also lists contrac-



Above: The architect understood the need for a large, elegant mud room to accommodate the changing needs of an active family. Photo courtesy of Rafe Churchill.

tors, suppliers, landscapers, etc. In short, ask everyone, look everywhere, and be very careful about anyone's relatives.

## Think about your ideal house before interviewing architects

Once you have a list of possible architects, how do you decide which one is right for you? Before interviewing anyone, experienced clients recommend writing down what kind of house you want. This is especially helpful when two people are involved.

Should the design be modern or traditional, formal or casual, sprawling or compact. Will you be entertaining and using caterers? Is your mother-in-law coming to live with you? Determine how large a house you need and how much you can spend. Put together a notebook or a digital scrapbook of houses, materials, details that you like and don't like.

When you are ready to talk to architects make a list of questions you have, and take notes. Ask how they

work best with clients. What is their process? Notice especially the questions they ask you. Is she/he listening? Does their preferred style match yours? Are they excited by the project? Did they come prepared with some ideas? Does the architect have experience with assignments like yours? Ask to see sample plans and specifications from another project. Ask what job they are working on right now and later ask for that name as a reference. Visit the job site of a current project and speak to the contractor about his relationship with the architect. Check the architect's website, education, and qualifications. Are they AIA registered?

"Don't be afraid to tell them what you want," advised one serial home-builder. Notice the architect's style. Does it match yours? Someone once said to Frank Lloyd Wright, known for his low ceiling heights, "Whenever I walk into one of your buildings, the doorways are so low my hat gets knocked off." Wright calmly replied,

"Take off your hat when you come into my house."

Before deciding on Crisp Architects, Frank Pringle interviewed five architects; first at their office and then on the site. He knew he wanted a farmhouse style in keeping with the Berkshires, but with contemporary elements. He wrote down everything he wanted including a big wraparound porch, and a wine cellar.

## Termination clauses are key

Once the choice of architect is decided, the next step is typically agreeing on a contract for services. Architects can be paid either a specified fee for the project, a percentage fee of the entire cost of the project (usually around 13%), or a per hour fee. Some architects, like Frank Garretson, often prefer to work without a formal contract, just an agreement to work together on an hourly basis.

Continued on next page ...

Like any contractual agreement there is always room for negotiation and termination provisions should be clear. The termination clause is very important because things often do not go as planned.

After interviewing ten architects, one retired couple first contracted with an architect whose ideas didn't reflect their vision and whose proposed square footage was double what they wanted. The contract was amicably terminated and the couple rethought the location of the proposed house and talked to more design professionals. They employed a structural engineer to evaluate existing cement garages on the site and completely changed their approach. Then they selected an award-winning international architectural firm which seemed to understand what they wanted but never got around to actually presenting plans. Finally they happily bonded with a local architect who shared their enthusiasm for converting the garages into an elegant home.

#### **Be clear about the architect's role**

The scope of services must be defined, not only in establishing the fee, but also explaining what the architect will do for you. Does it include building permits, planning, and zoning approvals? What role will the architect



Above: The problem of a shower in front of the window was solved by decreasing the size of dressing room and adding a separate shower in this Salisbury renovation. Photo courtesy of Rafe Churchill.

play in selecting the builder? Will the architect build a three-dimensional model of your house? Will junior designers be handling your plans? Will the project be bid out using the architect's specifications? Will the architect recommend builders? How will supervision of the project be handled and by whom? When are fees payable?

Most professionals recommend that you include construction supervision as part of the architect's services. What role, if any, will the architect play in interior design? For example will the architect's firm handle the design of tile in the bathrooms, or help with selection of hardware?

It's also important that the plans are the intellectual property of the owner. "We worked with an architect in Westchester that had developed a house plan that was modified for us. But then an identical house went up down the road because we didn't own the plans," reported one client.

#### **The point where creative collaboration begins**

The hard work of planning your home begins once you have selected your architect. While you have already discussed what's important to you, this is the moment of making choices and trade-offs. How do you want to live? What's important to you? Everyone is different. Is a functional mudroom more important than a grand entrance? Does energy efficiency have greater value than a soaring atrium? Do you want to eat in the kitchen? How many refrigerators do you need? Do you want a chef's kitchen or an Ikea kitchen? Do you need a guest room on the first floor? Should your house be designed with wheelchairs or grandchildren in mind?

This is the point where creative collaboration begins between client and architect. "The whole experience from start to finish was just so easy and enjoyable," remembers Shillingford. "Rafe just got it – us, the house, the project. We started on the same page on Day One and it went from there. We never had to waste time explaining things or justifying things with him. It felt like a real collaboration. Rafe seemed to instinctively understand our ideas of how we wanted to live in the house. As this was a historic renovation, we couldn't just do what-



Above: The pool house of this Berkshire house echoes the traditional style of the main house. Photo by Rob Karosis courtesy of Crisp Architects.

ever. I felt Rafe always listened to me and, even when he probably thought I was being a complete idiot, he was never condescending in his reaction. He had a very clever way of politely ignoring my unrealistic ideas and letting them slip gently to the wayside! However, he was also completely open to changing the plans, even once work was underway if I was adamant something just wasn't going to work."

Avoiding mistakes and getting what you imagined are two of the key reasons to work with an architect. Jimmy Crisp persuaded Pringle to change the orientation of his house and pool. Rafe Churchill enforced budgetary restrictions on Shillingford. "Having told Rafe our budget, if I ever got carried away and suggested adding something else in, Rafe would have no qualms in saying 'no' on the basis that we couldn't afford it. Or if I really wanted it, I would have to switch something else out. My husband was thrilled not to be the financial killjoy and have Rafe play the bad cop instead!"

#### **Experienced advice**

Asked about what advice they have for others, clients who have successfully worked with architects seem to agree. Pringle advised that, "First and foremost find someone you're really

comfortable with as an advisor, and consultant. Someone who will take your ideas and make them work. They should be committed, engaged, and enhance your vision."

The Shillingfords' take perhaps sums up the ideal relationship: "Trust your instincts and be yourself from the very get-go. Don't pretend to be a modernist if you're a traditionalist at heart just because you think it's what they want to hear. Get to know them as a person, know their values and see how they treat people, especially the people who work for them. Be 100% honest about your budget. And once you've found one you like and trust, listen to them. They know a lot more than you do."

Pringle, who replaced his first contractor, added that the client, architect, and builder must work together as a team. Hayman, a former real estate attorney, concurred that the client, architect, and contractor have to be in sync. And he has advice for clients: "Be patient, have an open mind, don't fly off the handle, understand their point of view, and be prepared to defer to their experience and judgment." •

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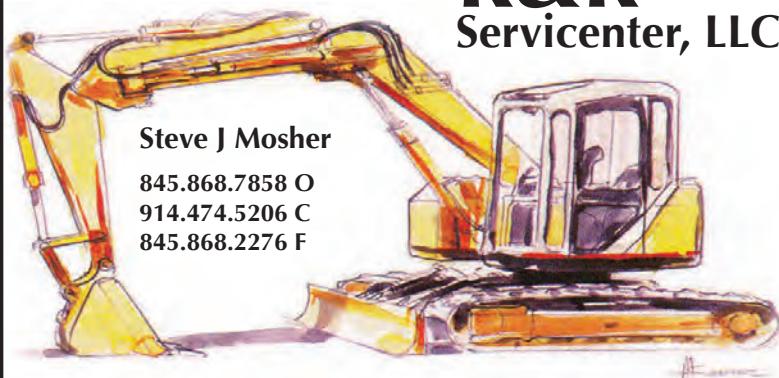
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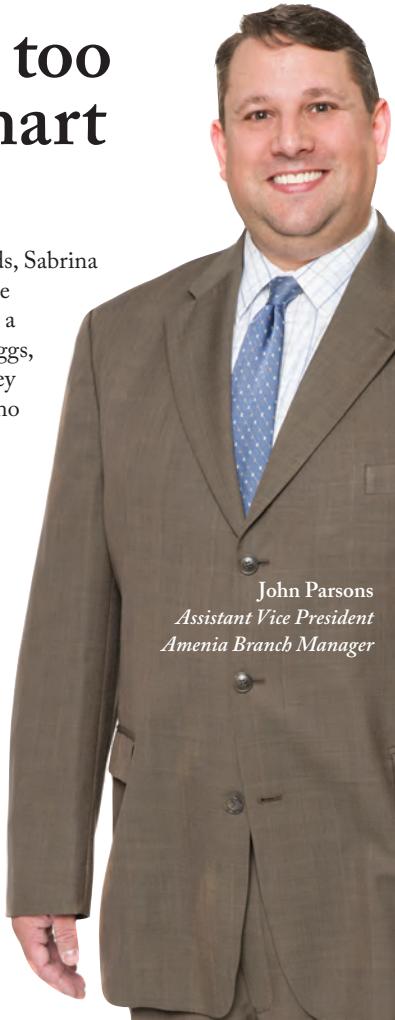
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# mavisBLUE

CREATING PERSONALIZED ART

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Decorating a home can be daunting, time consuming, and expensive, and some rooms require more frequent updates than others. One of those spaces whose personality changes every few years is a child's bedroom. That's because kids grow up fast. One day they're infants, toddlers the next, and then while you weren't looking, teens have stormed the gates.

**Up against the decorating wall**  
At the beginning of this voyage through childhood, parents decorate their child's room based upon their own preferences. Making these early *décor* decisions is fun and exciting, and it's easy to get carried away. The sturdy yet chic crib, the functional but stylish changing table, and the bedding that will be oh-so-soft

against baby's delicate skin. Let's not forget the organic rug that your precious bundle will spend hours rolling around – and drooling – on.

At the end of the process, as you finish fluffing the pillows and tying back the matching curtains you look up to realize that you forgot the walls! There they are. Freshly painted and naked as your newborn's bottom. And your piggy bank – nearly empty.

Enter mavisBLUE, the online high-end print company that provides personalized, whimsical prints at a price you can afford.

The mavisBLUE process is easy as 1-2-3. Go online and select your desired print. Then, print it out yourself or have a custom matted print sent to you. Next, buy a frame – all mavisBLUE prints fit standard



frame sizes. Once you've done that you're ready to finish off that room with art that's both unique to your child and affordable for you.

As your child grows and his or her personality emerges, get back online to mavisBLUE and change out those prints. Add a few more. Create a gallery wall. *Voilá*, another quick and easy room redecoration done and dusted.

## A signature gift

mavisBLUE prints also make unique baby shower gifts. And if you want something more bespoke for those occasions, you can work with mavisBLUE to create your own print. Their frame-able and hang-able birth announcements highlight, against a lively backdrop, the baby's full name and the specifics of his birth.

In a year, when the endless stream of children's birthday parties

Above: mavisBLUE also creates bespoke art for adults that commemorates travel and life milestones. Left: Will at work hand sketching future prints.



Continued on next page ...

begins and you cycle through all the usual gift ideas, mavisBLUE can provide the perfect alternative that's inexpensive and high-end. A framed print tailored to fit the child will capture a fleeting moment in her life.

### A force of Will

mavisBLUE is the creation of Salisbury, CT resident Natalie Will. Now a mother of two young daughters, Will is a formidable blend of artistic creativity and can-do efficiency.

When she and her husband Andrew bought their first home together it was time to ditch the milk crates and hand-me-down furniture for something more "adult." Yet, they were still on a tight budget.

It was then that she had the idea that with her graphic design and advertising background, she could produce her own art. It could reflect who they were and the things they had done together. However, working a full-time job prevented her from going beyond producing art for themselves and their friends and family.

She regrettfully tucked the business idea away for another day. Will reflects, "I've always been drawn to paper stores and gift shops and

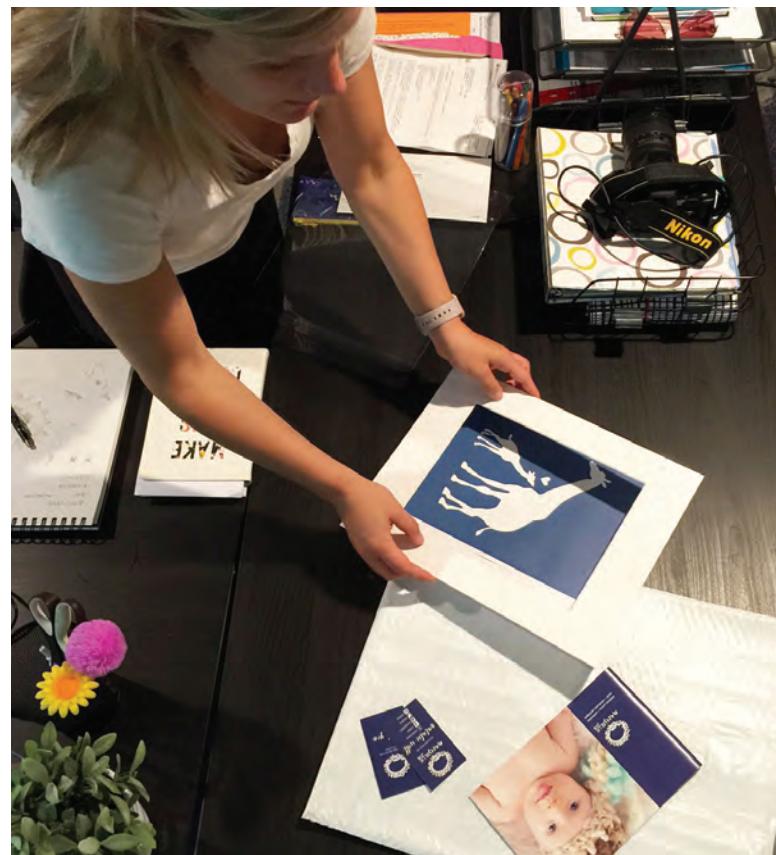
loved prints, stationary, and all things cute and creative. When I was young, I dreamed of one day creating my own line of greeting cards for Hallmark, or having my own line of prints and paper products."

mavisBLUE and Will's first daughter were conceived – and born at around the same time. After the baby, Will saw the opportunity to create a special place for her new daughter through colorful, clean, clever, and sassy prints. She blends vivid graphics with phrases that are adorable, affectionate, inspirational, and yet possess her own brand of moxie.

For Will, becoming an entrepreneur has been important to her on a number of levels. There's the obvious creative outlet, but just as importantly, "I wanted my daughters to see me as a positive, hard-working female role model. What better way to do this than to just go for it!" Now, with her second daughter along for the ride, Will has doubled down on her creative and entrepreneurial efforts and the mavisBLUE product line.

### Climbing the wall

mavisBLUE has already garnered recognition. It was featured as

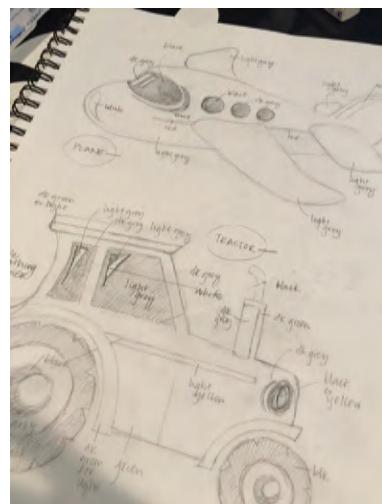


one of Vistaprint's Magnify Micro Business, and is a nominee for the Liebster Award for Will's blog on creativity, motherhood, and living your vision.

In addition, Will has been working with the Women's Enterprise Initiative (WEI), a Litchfield County-based non-profit that provides expertise and advice to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses. Part of the business plan WEI helped Will to conceive and execute is placement of her mavisBLUE prints in local shops. That's where Will is now. Her prints are carried in the Salisbury Pharmacy in Salisbury, CT and she's hoping more will follow.

There's a lot of walls in this world, and Will is climbing them and decorating them at the same time. •

*For more information and to order prints, visit [www.mavisBLUE.com](http://www.mavisBLUE.com) or visit the shop on Etsy. Follow mavisBLUE on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Main Street readers will receive a 25 percent discount on their first order. Use promo code MAINSTREET when ordering.*



Above top: Will hand mats and wraps all custom orders. Above: Detailed hand sketches. Left: Gallery wall of mavisBLUE children's collection. Photo credits: Andrew Will.



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*White Hut, oil on linen, 24 x 36, Jeffrey L. Neumann © 2016*

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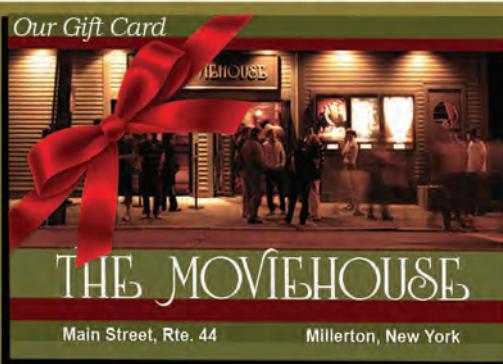
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THE DESIGN WORLD OF CARRIE CHEN:

# *Elegant, earthy, ethereal, & exquisite*

By Dominique De Vito  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Can you remember the last time that you used the word “lovely” to describe something or someone? Can you remember what inspired its choice? If you look up the word in the dictionary, lovely is defined as “exquisitely beautiful.”

Something is lovely when it blows you away with its very presence and being. Well, *Main Street* readers, if you’re looking for lovely, meet Carrie Chen and her fashion business, Casana. Carrie and her creations are, in every sense of the word, lovely.

## Finding a new home

I met with Carrie at her studio in the hills of Copake, Ny, where she moved with her partner about a year ago. She greeted me with a warm and genuine smile, and here, in the country, in her studio, she wore a little black dress and a necklace of beautiful jade stones. She had on simple red flats, and she moved with elegant ease between the worlds of her energetic yellow Labs on the deck (Calvin and Hobbes) and the serene space of her office/studio (where her Maltipoo, Lelah, has the run of the place).

Her eyes twinkled. She talked about what brought her to Copake and Columbia County – her and



her partner’s search for a house in the country away from their offices in Manhattan; a place that was naturally beautiful; a property with an expansive view; access to a deep and engaging community of art activities like theatre, art, dance, and music. They found all that and more right here.

“It’s been the people that form the local community that have constantly surprised us with their talent in many different fields,” Carrie added, “and their warm, generous spirits. I thought I would be in Manhattan more,” Carrie mused, “but I really love being in Copake.”

## The Casana Collection

Carrie was eager to show me what is currently the primary focus of her creative talent. In her large, light-filled space was a wall adorned with a stainless steel fixture upon which hung a breathtaking collection of cashmere scarves and throws. These represent her Casana line, which she’s developed over the past several years after a transformative visit to Nepal. She was there looking for a custom rug for a client of her

interior design business, and she noticed that the women always had something wrapped around them. She learned about the Nepali people’s cultivation and use of cashmere, and became intrigued.

Cashmere is not a wool, but a hair. It grows on the throats and undersides of Himalayan Mountain goats, whose range is from Mongolia to Northern China to Afghanistan. It is not sheared off of the goats, but instead is combed out from their fur almost hair by hair when they begin to molt. The collected hair is separated by color, then spun into a super-fine thread that is then dyed (if desired) and woven into a garment. Cashmere is prized for its softness and warmth.

“Cashmere is a jewel in fabric,” Carrie explained to me as she lifted a sample scarf off the display. “All of these are made by hand,” she went on, “so they are not only beautiful, but they are exceptionally lightweight while still being warm, and they can be worn in many different ways.”

She stood me in front of a full-length mirror and demonstrated on

me, wrapping and tucking pieces across my shoulders and around my neck, explaining the delicate manufacturing processes and the sources for her inspiration as I basked in the look and feel of these wearable pieces of art. For they are truly that.

The Casana collection’s scarves range in color and style from the soft earth tones of natural cashmere to patterns and designs that are both simple – colors that slowly get darker, for example – and complex – patterns ranging from animal prints to botanicals – and even embroidered – scarves with threads that have been dipped in metallic dyes to sparkle or scarves that have lacey patterns hand-sewn onto them.

The scarves are light as a feather yet warm, and are super-soft, yet strong at the same time. They are fashioned to complement everything from the ubiquitous little black dress to jeans and a T-shirt. When you put one on, you feel

Continued on next page ...



Above top: A selection from the Casana Collection. Above: Carrie in her light-filled studio, a great stage for showing off her Casana creations.

wrapped in a heavenly cloud. All of the colors, designs, and patterns are hers, and they are ... well ... lovely.

### **From inside to outside**

The Casana Collection was formed in Seattle, WA and launched in 2012. It's an outgrowth of Carrie's long-time love and success in the fields of interior and then landscape design. Itching to make more of herself than she thought possible in her native Taiwan, Carrie moved to Seattle after graduating from Tunghai University to study at the Art Institute of Seattle. She became an environmental space designer for a company based in Seattle, and from there transitioned into interior design, specializing in the application of Feng Shui to create spaces that captured and expanded upon positive energy and flow. She has always had a strong interest in combining the styles of both East and West, especially as they relate to natural beauty, and her philosophy soon transitioned from interior to exterior spaces. She added landscape design to her already impressive accomplishments, and then came the trip to Nepal where she fell in love with cashmere.

Creating her wearable works of art is the most natural extension of all, for her. "Interior and landscape design are masculine," Carrie told me, "and the Casana lines are feminine. It's great that I get to express both of these sides of

myself," she continued. "The word 'Casana' itself is a design term that refers to something made of the highest caliber," Carrie said, adding, "I called my brand Casana because it celebrates the high qualities of life itself. Casana is about the essentials: the love between mother and child, the freedom that we have and embrace in our existence and community, the confidence in our own choices and individual styles."

Carrie continued: "As I learned more about what was being made by hand in Nepal and for whom, I wanted to create something similar for women all over the world. I want women to have something of great beauty and quality that they can appreciate every time they wear it and that makes them feel beautiful inside and out," she explained. "The pieces are as limitless as the creativity of the person wearing them," Carrie noted.

### **Luxury as a vehicle to better lives**

Carrie is a stickler for the organic process, and is adamant about the integrity of everything from the well-being of the artisans making the pieces to the naturalness of the dyes (80% are vegetable dyes) to the sustainability of the production. Casana supports profit sharing for its workers, which in turn contributes to their health and education.

The ethical and sustainable aspects of the business are as



important to Carrie as the quality of the pieces. "I'm committed to producing fashion that uses the purest, most luxurious cashmere from the Himalayas and ensuring it's processed using the most natural methods," Carrie explained. "I've partnered with local artisans in Nepal and Mongolia who use ancient weaving techniques that I want to help preserve for generations to come. There is a legacy to Asian craftsmanship that is important to me," she continued, "and I want to help others improve their lives."

Carrie has a deep appreciation for the interconnections that make things happen in the world. You can almost see things coming together under her fingertips as she handles her scarves and the expanding line of wraps and throws being made for Casana, as if she's there at the looms with the weavers, or handling the fine cashmere hairs as they're separated, woven, and dyed. You can sense the influences that move her

— fine shifts in the shades of colors that are reminiscent of shadows on a landscape, patterns as vibrant as a garden in bloom, designs that speak to her love of jazz — playful and alive. All of it is ultimately — and simply — lovely. •

*Learn more about Casana (and Carrie) online at [www.casanadesigns.com](http://www.casanadesigns.com). The website is a complete resource for the product line. You can learn about how everything is made, what colors and styles are available, purchasing, and shipping, and there's even a video that demonstrates different ways to wear the scarves. And I can't complete this piece without mentioning that Carrie is also a great cook. Check out some of her recipes and techniques on YouTube under "Cooking with Carrie." She leads classes throughout the year at HGS Home Chef (at the Hillsdale General Store, see related article on page 11).*



Above top: Another piece from the Casana Collection. Above: Carrie is also an interior and landscape designer.



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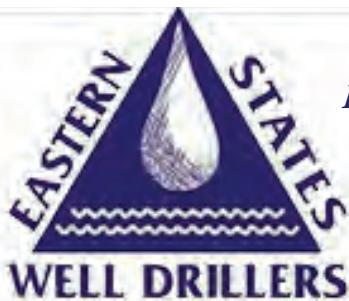
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# Jim Carroll

Artist • Designer • Illustrator • Author • Dad

By Allison Guertin Marchese  
[info@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:info@mainstreetmag.com)

Jim Carroll has spent most of his life creating. Though he says on his website bio that he prefers to be outside playing, his work, which keeps him indoors, includes creating art, designs, illustrations, books, websites, and animations for individuals, not-for-profits, and large corporations. For his efforts, Jim's uniquely creative art work has been honored by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, the New York Book Awards, and The Port Authority of NY-NJ, to name just a few. His work has also been exhibited at museums including The Leonardo DaVinci Museum of Art and Technology in Milan, Italy.

#### The creative process

The creative process is elusive for some, but for Jim Carroll it's clear, concrete, and simple, "I loved making things as a kid, and I just haven't stopped," he said. "I like gluing cardboard, I like the smells of paint, and making things out of wood."

He feels strongly that the artistic impulse is not unique and that everyone has the power to create. "I make a living making designs and illustrations, but I believe for the most part, we are all creative beings at our core. We were created, and we want to create. The real chal-

lenge is whether we're able to get through the distractions."

When I asked him about creativity being universal, he said, "It takes creativity to survive, and sometimes just how to figure out your day, make dinner, make a home, build a building, making lunch for your child, or writing a story. It's all a natural manifestation of what we want to make as human beings ... we want to see the world, play with it, try to explain it, or see what the possibilities are."

In our interview, Jim offered some thoughts on what the purpose of being creative might be. "I don't think that can be explained any more than we can explain why we're here. If we're alive then I think we want to make things. That may not be making a picture ... it might mean laying out a day, or a week, or a conversation ... we are constantly creating ... that's what we do. Some folks are trying to simply create good health. It's all primary and it's all about making."

#### A personal outlook on art

To explain Jim Carroll's unique outlook on his ideas on making art and creating designs, you first need to imagine a big, beautiful sprawling oak tree.

"I see graphic design, design,

illustration, painting, and photography as all the same creature," said Jim. "For me, you can direct the art into different aesthetic areas with different intentions; whether it's for beauty or commerce, I just see them as the same visual creature or plant, like a tree, with different branches."

In Jim Carroll's tree branches are some of the most fascinating illustrations you'll ever find. His technique in making illustrations combines many different elements. "Most of my illustrations are created through a collage. I'll usually start with traditional drawing and painting methods, pen and ink, gouache or charcoal. Next, I'll look to nature for the raw materials to 'paint' these pictures."

Jim uses his love of nature, his photography, and his computer skills as a graphic designer to help him pull together various elements creating something that jumps off the page. "I will photograph weathered wood and use that as texture for the image of a tree. Sand with water-dropped spots serve as the main resource for the face of a moon. This all comes together in the liquid environment of Photo-

Above: *Papa's Backpack*, picture book illustration.

Continued on next page ...

shop where the finished work is completed. There are also a few pieces here that were simply done with a brush or pen."

In approaching a new project Jim said that, "I try to go in with naïveté." He continued, "I like to make art with no constraints ... I don't know what can happen. Making a mistake is making something happen. The best things I can do is throw things against the wall, and see what sticks." He continued, "Sometimes I paint and see what it tells me. By being open to those fortunate mistakes, by playing ... I find something that I like ... just by engaging and disengaging my mind."

Though it's hard to imagine traditional paintings being created on a computer screen, Jim Carroll finds a seamless transition between manipulating an image on a canvas and creating one on a screen. "Painting digitally on a screen is just like painting on a canvas with oils," he said.

Often Jim will step away from the digital world and grab a brush, "I still paint with ink, oils, and anything. I'm always trying to think about what might look cool in this situation. In my book, *Papa's Backpack*, all of the textures are very organic."



Above, right: Bindlestiff Family Circus poster.  
Above: Louis Armstrong House Museum poster.

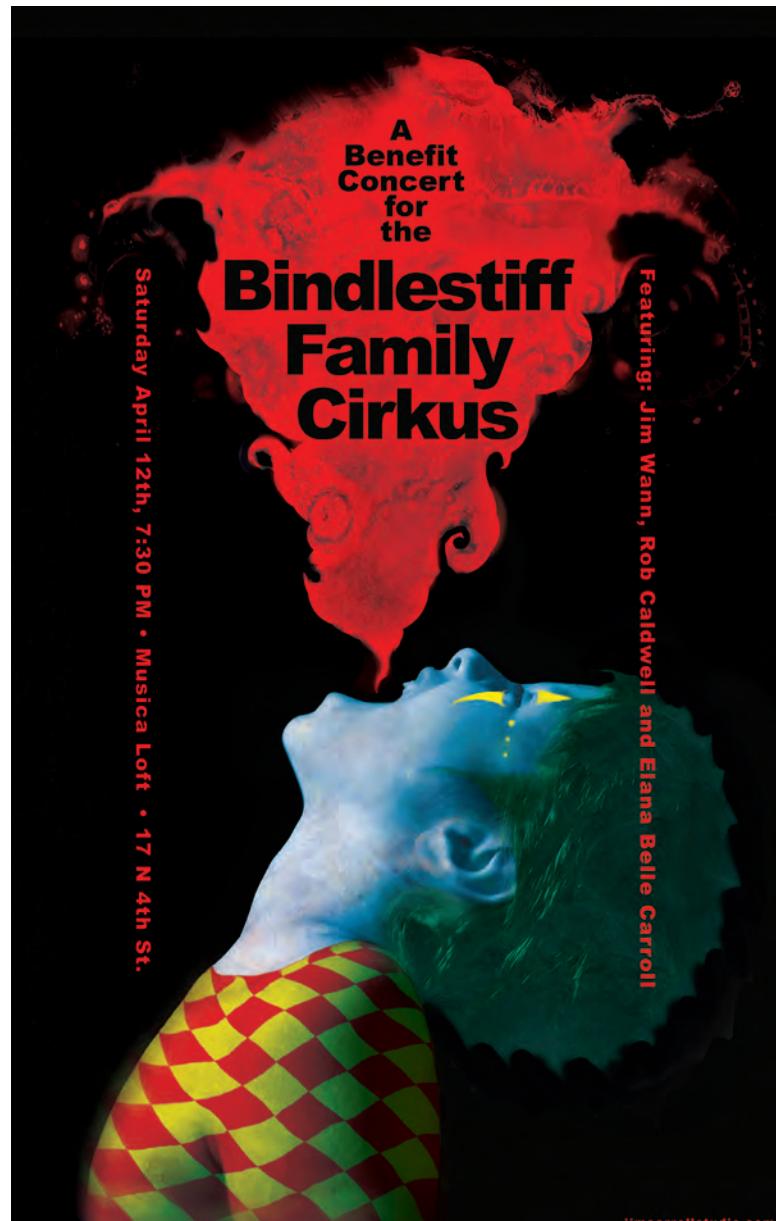
## Applying art to design work

"I'm not a fine artist," said Jim. "Fine art is there to ask a lot of questions – that's the purpose. Graphic design and illustration are there to make something real, make it clear. And though there's a job to do, I do it in an interesting way, that makes it a joy."

Joy is always at the basis of Jim's life and work. Play is essential, he said, "When I have free time I need to bike ride, chase a ball, or I get sick and go crazy. When I make stuff I make a picture usually and I try to play and not know the next step – like a dance – there's a knowing and not knowing. If you know too much ahead of time, it's not exciting."

Art isn't always the easiest way to make a living so I asked Jim how he does it as a creative person in the field of illustrations and graphic design. "In the past I've had to mix that with a lot of other things like carpentry and painting houses," Jim acknowledged. "I'm able to make a living creating illustrations now working with the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens, NY."

Jim provides all of the museum's promotional materials, signage, invitations, and design work. It turns out that the two are a great match. "The people I work with give me



featuring: Jim Wain, Ron Salvetti and Diana Belle Salvo

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room to create interesting things. Clients can be constricting or liberating, but the Museum allows me to create some beautiful designs. Though some clients want to tell you what to design and control the work, this group asks me, ‘What do you think, Jim?’”

I asked him how he felt about his art when it doesn't go well? Is that frustrating when he's on deadline? "Design is not always art," he explained. "It's not set up to be an expression of yourself, it's set up to sell an event, or a service," he said. "It's clear that some of the best clients appreciate listening to the designer."

The Louis Armstrong Museum is a good story as far as artist/client relationships go. Jim said, "Sometimes it's about making the client happy and they aren't interested in pushing the boundaries of visual expression, they just want to show

they've got a service to provide. You can also nurture a client and help them to push boundaries. In the end it's a service and it's a business."

**Art in books**

Jim says that he's still interested in all of those things he loved growing up, especially picture books. "I see that as a perfect device for me because I like the idea of telling stories and doing it visually. This is where my skills and interest are."

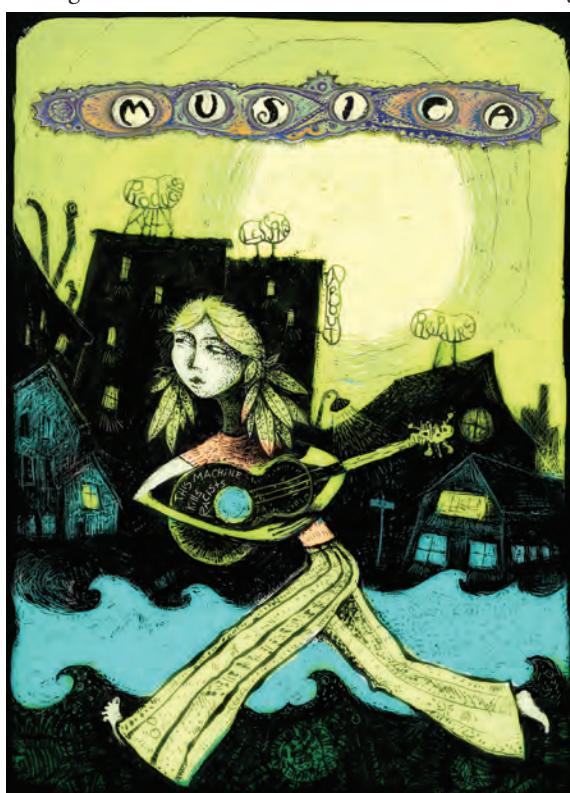
Though writing says Jim, “is not my best talent,” he says he’s tried to improve his skills. “Combining pictures and written words have been a real joy for me.”

Jim told me that when his first children's book, *The Boy and the Moon*, first published in 2010, he wanted the title to be *Midnight*, because it was about the beginning and the end of an adventure focusing on a child who goes out

in the middle of the night dancing and playing in a dream with the creatures. Ironically, another author by the name of Jim Carroll, the punk rock poet who published his famous 1978 memoir, *The Basketball Diaries* (Penguin, 1987), also wrote a book called *Midnight*. To avoid confusion, the publishers of Jim's children's book decided to go with the current title.

Though abandoning his original title was disappointing, Jim still reached his goal of making a picture book, both as an object and as a vehicle for expression. At the start of the book process he said that his third child was born, which initially gave him his inspiration to create a book that was predominantly pictures with some text. The result was a story about a small child playing in the world, "having a party," Jim said.

Since hitting stores in 2010, the book has had great success and outstanding reviews. Amazon readers call it, "dreamy, magical, and mesmerizing." The book's publisher, Sleeping Bear Press, writes *The Boy and the Moon* illustrations are "Gorgeous atmospheric paintings that lure readers of all ages into believing that anything can happen – at midnight!"



Above: *Papa's Backpack*, picture book illustration. Below, left: Local music store, Musica poster.

*Papa's Backpack, A Tribute to the Bond Between a Child and Military Parent*, Jim's second children's book published in 2015, is a departure from the first. As Jim described it to me, this book is a very personal story dealing with the unsettling circumstances that military families face when a parent suddenly goes off to war leaving a child and remaining parent home to manage feelings of fear and loss. "It's not a book that holds up battle and conflict as something to be considered noble," Jim explained. "It's more about separation for the parent and child – real and dangerous – and this starts a conversation about a parent saying, 'I'm with you.'"

Jim's publisher, Sleeping Bear Press, describes it this way, "*Papa's Backpack* honors the bond between a parent/soldier and a child, and acknowledges the difficult and emo-

tional process of separation during deployment. A young bear cub dreams of accompanying Papa when he leaves on a mission, wanting to stay close to provide comfort and moral support, ultimately overcoming adversity together."

Jim said that he grew up at a time when the Vietnam war was on the nightly news. "I watched the war every night and saw guys that were muddy and bloody, and I believed that that could be my job someday, trying not to die, and it haunted me."

Ultimately he never did have to face the draft or go to war. Jim said, "I kind of hid between the wars. I got to stay home." Despite his good luck, he was never quite able to shake loose the sadness he imagined children were dealing with when a parent went off to battle. "This book was my way of thanking those who had to leave their kids and to try to fill the void," he said.

Goodreads website gives Jim's heartfelt book, *Papa's Backpack*, a rare 95% rating. It is also a book that is featured on blogs like Books That Heal Kids. On freelibrary.com, they have this to say: "*Papa's Backpack* is a terribly touching, beautifully illustrated book about a little bear whose Papa has to go away to be a soldier. Wanting to go along, the bear child imagines himself in his Papa's backpack, safe together through the scary wartime

journey experience. Realizing he cannot really go, but wanting to stay close to his Papa, the little bear makes a bear doll just like himself to go in his Papa's backpack. A sensitive poetry narrative accompanies tenderly expressive bear family portraits in a layered, contemporary style to complete this helpful book for children of all ages who experience separation from a parent for military service."

### On the horizon

In the moment, Jim Carroll is working on a book about music. It is another children's picture book which is being presented to publishers in the next six months. Though Jim didn't reveal the details of this new project, no doubt it will be a book that stimulates the mind and the heart as Jim's first two books have so magically done. And no doubt the new book will also be playful because it is from the author who says that on any given day, he would rather be outside, riding his bike. •

To learn more about Jim Carroll, please visit [www.jimcarrollstudio.com](http://www.jimcarrollstudio.com).



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# New lives as farmers

A PHILANTHROPIST'S DESIGN: LOCAL FARMING FAMILIES AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

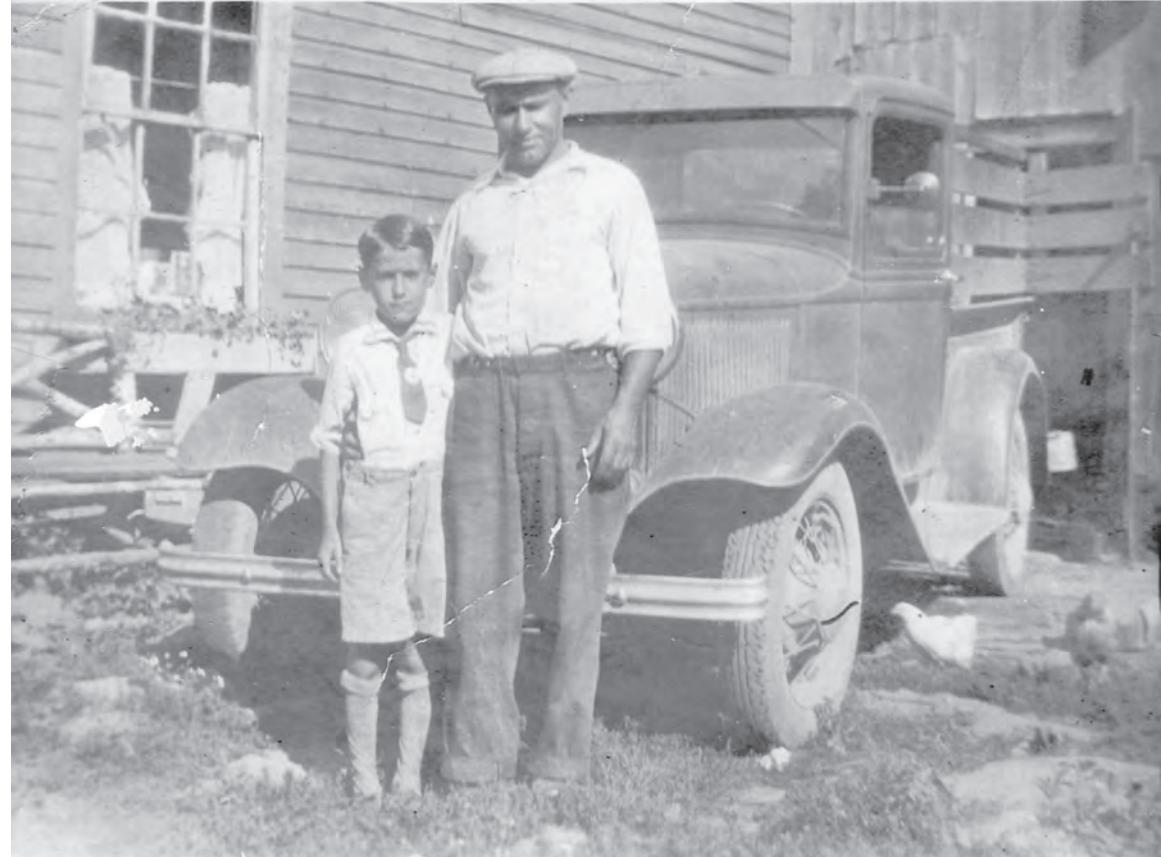
By Carol Ascher  
info@mainstreetmag.com

In nineteenth century Russia, Jews were confined to the Pale of Settlement, an area in western Russia where they were concentrated in provincial towns, often supporting themselves as traders and clothing makers. Even within the Pale, they were forbidden to live in major cities like Kiev, to study in universities, or to own their own land. While over half of all non-Jews in the Pale were farmers, only two percent of all Jews worked on farms.

Starting in the 1880s, as waves of government-sponsored *pogroms* – a Russian word meaning “violent havoc” – spread throughout the Pale, Jews were beaten, raped, and murdered and Jewish property looted. For many Jews, the *pogroms* made clear that life was no longer possible in Russia. By the turn of the century, two million of the five million Jews in the Pale had fled or were fleeing their homeland. While some stayed in Europe, most made their way to Amsterdam and other ports, and onto ships headed for the United States.

## A helping hand

Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831-1896), a Belgian Jewish financier, had become one of the wealthiest men in Europe by investing in a railway through the Balkans to Constantinople (now Istanbul). Deeply stirred by the relentless poverty and persecution of Russian Jews, Hirsch devoted his great



wealth to aiding his fellow Jews.

After his failed attempt to influence the Czar to ameliorate his policies toward Jews, Baron de Hirsch funded groups inside Russia that were helping Jews leave; provided emergency funds for refugees traveling through Europe; and sponsored projects to help Russian Jews become self-sufficient in their new countries. For Hirsch, ownership of farmland would be a “Bill of Rights” for Jews, and he used much of his vast assets to helping Jews become farmers.

Having learned that Baron Edmund de Rothschild (1845-1934), the French Jewish philanthropist, was supporting colonies in Palestine, Hirsch decided to focus on helping Jews become farmers in the Americas. His first initiative, the Jewish Colonization Association, settled 35,000-40,000 Russian Jews in Argentine farm colonies.

In 1891, Hirsch donated \$4 million, a huge sum at the time, to

establish a fund in New York City aimed at promoting farming among Russian Jewish immigrants in North America. Although Hirsch died in 1896, over the next four decades, the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (JAIAS) would offer grants to over 10,000 Jews for the purchase of farms, equipment, and seed. Critical of traditional charity, Hirsch had two conditions for any grant: that the recipients contribute their own money, and that some or all of any grant should be a loan. Ultimately, of the \$7 million spent by the JAIAS, \$6 million was repaid.

*Der Forward*, the Yiddish-language newspaper, announced the availability of JAIAS grants, and its advertising columns included farms for sale in nearby Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York. However, to make possible the purchase of farms

Above: Sam and his father, Louis Gorkofsky, who immigrated from Russia. Photo taken around 1930, courtesy of Sam Gorkofsky. Below, left: Anna, Lottie, and Hilda Marcus haying, around 1915. The Marcus family left Ellsworth around 1920 and built a large and very successful dairy in Danbury. Photo courtesy of Martin Klein, grandson of Harry Marcus.



Continued on next page ...

as far away as Wyoming, Texas, and Saskatchewan, Canada, JAIAS kept a directory of available farms, and in some areas JAIAS agents took Jews around, acting much like a realtor.

### Farming immigrants in Connecticut and New York

In 1914, to take a busy year, the JAIAS loaned over \$1.7 million to 2,600 Jewish farmers, of which over \$300,000 went to 599 Jewish farmers in Connecticut. Though most Connecticut farms were concentrated in the rich central valley as well as Eastern Connecticut, between 1907 and 1925 around thirty Russian Jewish families would purchase land and make a hardscrabble living as dairy farmers in the stony Ellsworth Hills above Sharon.

Understanding that most Jews had never before farmed, in 1908 the JAIAS began publishing a Yiddish monthly, *The Jewish Farmer*. For the next several decades, the magazine provided information on what seeds to plant and when, how to judge dairy and beef cattle, what machinery to purchase, and how to build chicken coops and silos.

In 1910, the JAIAS created a farm purchasing bureau, and credit unions were established in Fairfield County and Ellington, CT, as well as Rensselaer County and Ellenville, NY. Scholarships were also offered to the sons of Jewish farmers to attend agricultural colleges, including at the University of Connecticut at Storrs.

### Farming isn't for everyone

Yet neither Baron de Hirsch's financial support, nor the educational offerings of the JAIAS, could soften the challenges of farming. Not everyone was suited to relentless dawn-to-dusk physical work, seven days a week, or to the emotional and financial challenges of barns catching fire, crops destroyed by hail or draught, or herds suddenly taken ill. Moreover, not only was soil in the Ellsworth Hills thin and stony, yielding little for cattle to eat, but transporting heavy milk cans down the steep hills and across the Housatonic to the railroad was a



Above: Charlie and his father Morris Paley in their field next to Paley's Farm Market in 1985. Photo courtesy of Emma Paley. Below, top to bottom: Nathan and Max Osofsky, themselves immigrants, at the graduation of Max's son, Alex, from City College of New York in 1929; Alex would study medicine and become a doctor. Photo courtesy of Max's grandson, Joel Osofsky. Ronnie Osofsky and employee Edna Vasergo, in front of Ronnybrook Dairy truck. Photo by B. Docktor, courtesy of Ronnybrook Dairy Farm.

daily challenge.

Like Jewish farmers throughout Connecticut, the Ellsworth farmers were inventive. To supplement their farming income, they offered rooms with kosher board to weekend and summer visitors. This became the seed of a new business for a number of families who in the 1920s moved to Amenia, New York to open hotels and boarding houses and build Temple Beth David, turning Amenia into a lively Jewish resort.

### Today's farming families

Nevertheless, some families continued to farm both in Sharon and in nearby towns, and the descendants of several Jewish families remain farmers in the area. Sam Gorkofsky, who attended a one-room school in Ellsworth, is the son of Louis Gorkofsky, an immigrant from Sokolka (now in Poland). At ninety-two, Sam lives with his wife, Estelle, on their large farm on the Amenia Road just outside Sharon.

Max Paley left Russia around the turn of the century, at the age of 50. Having worked in New London as a "cloak maker," he was 63 when he and his wife purchased a small farm in Ellsworth with the intention of offering room and board

to guests. Max's son and grandson, Hyman and Morris Paley, farmed in Sharon and Amenia, and Morris's son, Charlie, now runs Paley's Farm Market on the Amenia Road.

Several descendants of the Osofsky brothers, Nathan and Max, who purchased an Ellsworth farm together in 1907, are still farmers here. Joel Osofsky, Max's grandson, raises cattle in Ancramdale, and Rick and Ronnie Osofsky, Nathan's grandsons, own Ronnybrook Farm Dairy in Pine Plains.

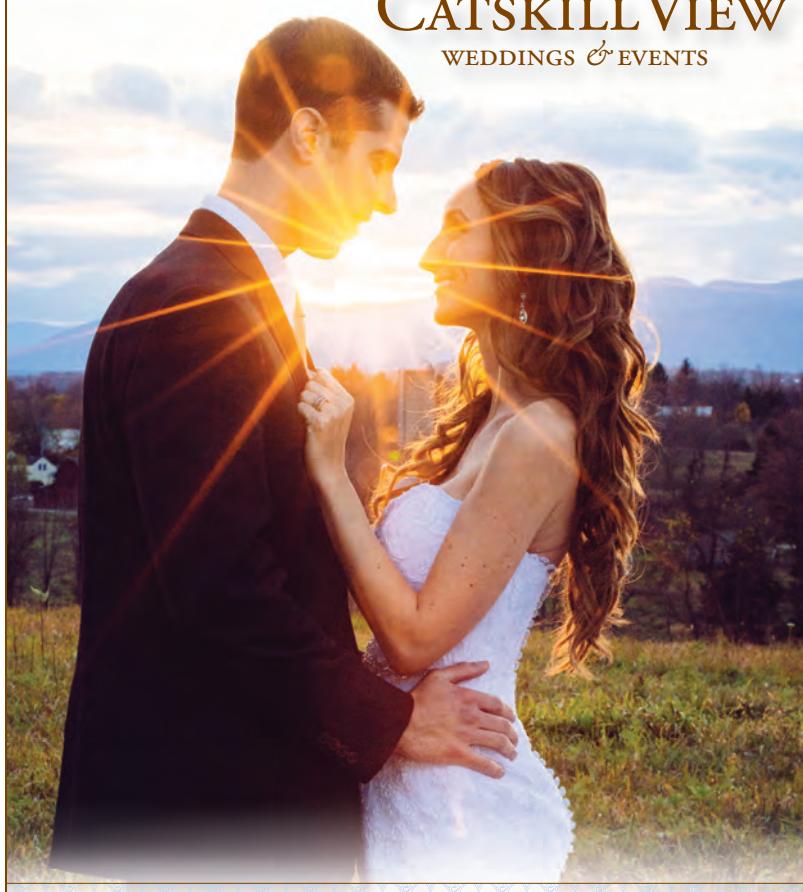
Though Russian Jews would not likely have settled in the hills above Sharon without aid and direction from a Jewish philanthropic organization, their love of the land and capacity for sustained hard work has enabled them to remain here for over a hundred years, contributing to the vitality of our area. •

*The author of the novel, "A Call From Spooner Street," and other books of fiction and nonfiction, Carol Ascher writes regularly for Main Street. She is guest-curator of "A Chance for Land and Fresh Air: Russian Jewish Immigrants in Sharon and Amenia, 1907-1940," which opened on October 22nd at the Sharon Historical Society.*



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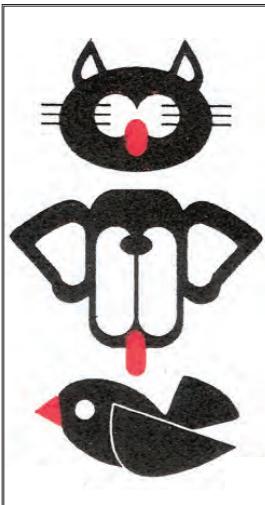
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# coffee table books

WHERE DÉCOR MEETS SUBSTANCE

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.  
info@mainstreetmag.com

We're in the age of electronic books, and if you're a reader who likes the feel of a real book, this can make you sad. Yet physical books still have a vital place in this world. Nowhere is this more evident than with coffee table books. Somehow, scrolling through an e-coffee table book on a tablet isn't as appealing as feeling the heft of a lavish, oversized tome — one that you can really stick your nose into.

Sales of coffee table books are robust, even with the higher price tag. That means most of us have one or more of them gracing our living rooms, adorning our bedside table, or gathering dust on our bookshelf. Whatever their use in our home, the subjects they explore is a manifestation of our life and personal interests. They allow us to make a statement about ourselves, whether it be bold or subtle.

## **Seinfeld, Coleridge, and Audubon**

Taking inspiration from *Seinfeld's* Kramer, who created the seminal coffee table book on coffee tables, I researched the existence of a coffee table book on coffee table books. No luck. Nor is there much information about their provenance. What is known is that the first appearance of a book of this sort, known as a parlor book, was in 1580. Michel de Montaigne, famous for his wordy, but nonetheless insightful essays wrote in *Upon Some Verses of Virgil* that he is "... vexed that (his) Essays only serve the ladies for a common movable, a book to lay in the parlor window..."

Much later, nature became a common theme for oversized illustrated books. In the 1820s John James Audubon paid homage to our feathered friends in *Birds of America*. This publication, reserved for those with means, sold for \$1,000, which is nearly \$25,000 today. Audubon's illustrations allowed



Photo: Olivia Valentine Markonic

the wealthy a rare insight into birds they might never see, bringing them alive through his vivid renderings.

## **Welcome to my parlor**

In the late 1800s, technological advances in the printing process and newfound wealth, education, and social mobility spurred by the Industrial Revolution caused a more widespread ownership of books, particularly ones that could be displayed in homes.

Dan Dwyer, antiquarian vintage bookseller and owner of Johnnycake Books in Salisbury, CT, observes that a wonderful example of this type of parlor book is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* illustrated with the wood engravings of Gustave Doré.

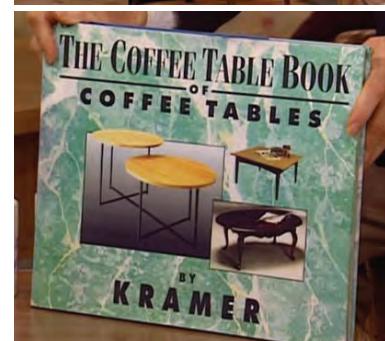
As he reverently turns the book pages, Dwyer explains that this book, published in 1870, "utilized state-of-the-art publishing techniques" and typifies the parlor book of that era. Classic tales and verse were combined "for people to look at and enjoy, associating images

with the text." These parlor books were meant to inspire conversation and were popular throughout Europe. It was at this time, says Dwyer, "that the idea of decorating with books found a foothold in the Victorian parlor and from there into popular culture."

## **Coffee table advocacy**

Fast forward to the 1950s. With the rapid advancement of photo reproduction, the market for the coffee table books we're familiar with today came into being. Paul Steiner, founder of Chanticleer Press in 1952, is generally credited as the father of the coffee table book.

In 1960, under the leadership of David Brower, the Sierra Club published the first modern coffee table book. Entitled *This is the American Earth*, it was graced with the stark and gripping photographs of Ansel Adams with compelling text by Nancy Newhall. It became



Above: Screenshots from the *Seinfeld* episode where Kramer unveils his coffee table book on coffee tables. Images courtesy of Pinterest.

Continued on next page ...

the first book in Sierra's Exhibit Format collection. These books had an educational and political purpose, which was to allow readers to connect with nature's majesty and thereby promote conservation of the natural world.

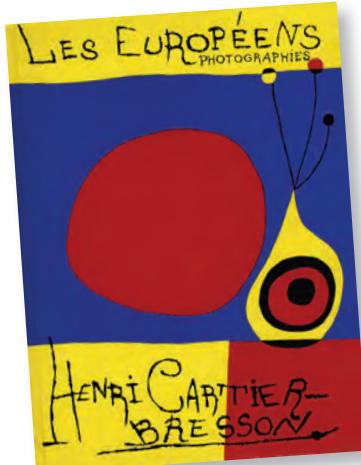
Each oversized volume in this series conveyed the sense of being at a photography exhibit. Brower explained, "The eye must be required to move about within the boundaries of the image, not encompass it all in one glance."

For the Sierra Club, this series was the medium for their message. "It has long been recognized," said Brower, "that the book, for all that TV, radio, and periodicals may do, still has a status of its own in influencing thought. It lasts. It is kept and referred to. It is quoted. This is particularly true of the exhibit-format books."

#### Works of art

In contrast to a nature theme, back at Johnnycake Books, Dwyer brings out a 1955 mid-century modern volume entitled *The Europeans*. With photographs and text by Henri Cartier-Bresson and an iconic cover by artist Joan Miró, for Dwyer it exemplifies "state-of-the-art publishing technique with cutting edge art and photography." It is very much a book of its time, namely post-war Europe.

In the 1960s, museums began in earnest to enter the coffee table book market with exhibition cata-



logues. These books evolved from the previously used hand lists and contained detailed text to go along with the images. Their goal was to celebrate the exhibition and add to scholarship.

#### Décor meets substance

So what makes a great coffee table book? Well, some of that depends on you. Coffee table books, meant to be prominently displayed, should reflect something of value to you. They can offer a fleeting glimpse or a full-on frontal view of your personality. A book about antique world maps says one thing, Madonna's best-selling *Sex*, well, that says something quite different.

The cover should be visually appealing and draw people in. This puts the cover on a more equal footing with the content. In the case of the coffee table book, you can tell a book by its cover. For example, the Cartier-Bresson/Miró collaboration delivered a work of abstract art on the outside that could easily stand on its own merit, with stunning and beautifully composed photographs on the inside.

The topic should also be interesting. A book on the history of butter knives might not pull people in, or say much that's interesting about you. You want the book to be opened, casually perused or even pored over, start a conversation, and adorn your living space.

When Dwyer thinks about acquiring a book for his shop he considers the nexus "between decoration and substantive elements." The book should be visually appealing, but also meaty and thought-provoking. It should enrich you when you engage with it and pull you into the subject it explores.

Another factor to consider is your interior *décor*. A country cabin might call for a nature-themed book, a contemporary style would go well with a more modern one. Dwyer is often called upon by interior designers to locate books that complement the theme or mood of a room.



Above: One of the wood engravings by Gustave Doré from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Below left: The cover of *The Europeans*. Images courtesy of Pinterest.

#### The more things change...

Alex Tart is a long-time editor at Rizzoli Publishers, the esteemed publishing house that specializes in illustrated books. She observes that "with the advent of the e-book, there's been a shift in how people view books. They've become more precious, people care about the books that they own and they choose them intentionally."

In addition, more people are becoming home-centric. Home entertaining and time spent there are increasing. Because of this people devote more time and money to decorating them. She points to the proliferation of home design shows, celebrity interior designers, and books on the subject.

Tart adds that coffee table books are still produced in the old-fashioned way, and this takes time. From inception of an idea to publication takes over a year. Due to cost, most illustrated coffee table books are produced overseas. Physical proofs must be shipped back and forth, as electronic images lack the clarity and impact that is achieved

by seeing the actual proof. Editors like Tart must keep ahead of the curve when considering potential ideas for a book, which is part of her challenge and reward.

#### Book of life

Your coffee table books reflect your life, taste, interests, as well as complement your *décor*. With a rich history grounded in a rich variety of topics, these books are personal profiles that can be proudly displayed and cherished. Over time they document the trajectory of your life and provide you with a tangible reminder of who you were, are, or want to be. •

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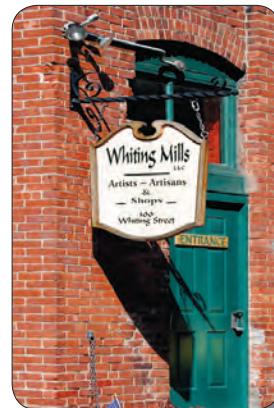


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ALISON PALMER & STEVE KATZ:

# When ceramics & rock 'n' roll meet

By CB Wismar  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Paco is barking. There's no need to be a "dog person" to know that the bark is friendly, accompanied by a violently wagging tail and a dance around the front yard of Steve Katz and Alison Palmer's home.

"Paco!" The attempt to achieve some semblance of quiet is in stereo as both Alison and Steve laughingly try to calm down their very active puppy.

Two older, wiser dogs – Henry and Mickey – join the chorus for a moment, or two. They are much more acclimated to the easy-going life atop Segar Mountain amid stone walls, towering maples and oaks, and the parade of visitors who come to work and talk and enjoy the peace of this place.

And, why shouldn't Paco be excited? He began life as part of a litter born to a street dog in a Mexican dump, destined to live with malnutrition, having to fight for every scrap of food. And here he is, in the hills of South Kent, CT with owners who rescued him from a life of fighting to live in this benign, pastoral setting. Paco won the lottery ... if there had been one for dogs.



But that's closer to the end of the story.

#### **Back to the beginning**

Alison Palmer and Steve Katz met at a moment in time when both were in transition.

Alison had forged a career as a ceramic artist and was caught in the vortex of finding time to create while knowing that marketing and promotion were critical to any further success. Having studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and the California College of Art and Craft, she was hanging out at "The Schoolhouse," an artists' cooperative in Croton Falls, New York. Alison had established herself as an up-and-coming clay artist with a keen sensitivity to character and shape in her work. Potters are calm people. Working with clay requires great patience and the "zen-like quality" of being able to allow the elements to dictate where they want to go, and being able to follow along with devotion ... and a sense of humor.

Steve was in the "prop wash" of having left a career as a global

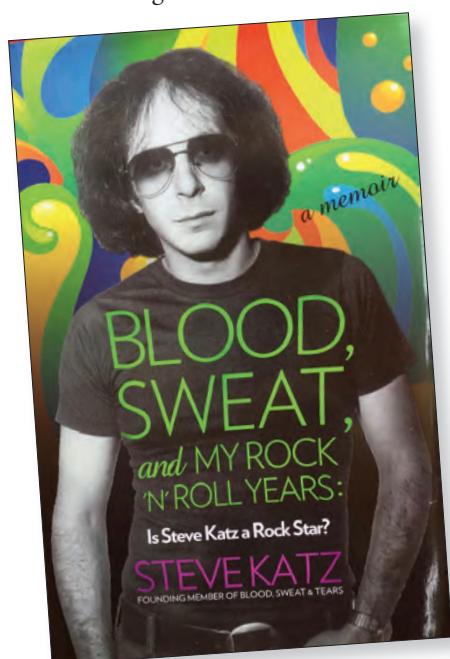
rock star as a founding member of The Blues Project and the super group Blood, Sweat and Tears, going through a particularly trying divorce, and morphing into the peripatetic role of discovering, developing, and producing emerging rock bands. Relationships had crumbled and Steve was trying to figure out his "what's next?"

So, they met by chance. And, after a start that would make a great story for sitcom television, the connection was made. It was right, and they both knew it.

#### **By the book ... buy the book**

A rather frank and altogether entertaining presentation of Steve's rock and roll journey appeared in 2015 when he published his autobiography *Blood, Sweat and My Rock 'N' Roll Years*. It's an engaging read, especially if names like Mimi Farina, David Clayton Thomas, The Rev. Gary Davis, Dave van Ronk,

Above, L-R:  
Alison Palmer, the  
ceramic artist,  
and Steve Katz,  
the musician.  
Below, left: Steve  
Katz's book was  
published last  
year.



Continued on next page ...

Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, The Blues Project, John Sebastian, and B.B. King still resonate with you.

The rock 'n' roll life can drain the energy and resilience out of those who struggle to the top. But, like any muse that captures your soul, music is not something that the gifted and talented can set aside. Finding balance is not easy, and those who are successful in that effort are far outnumbered by those who do not succeed. When he met Alison, Steve was able to burn through the fog and find a partner to whom balance was a way of life.

Steve still performs, and thanks to the promotion around his book, the offers keep coming in. It's not stadium concerts with three truck loads of speakers, amplifiers, and pyrotechnic displays, "roadies" and instrument engineers and sound mixers and agents. It's Steve and an acoustic guitar. He has gone back to his musical roots, singing blues and ballads in the folk tradition and interweaving performance with his own, personal narrative.

#### **The ways of clay**

And while Steve follows the music, Alison has established the welcome environment centered in a large, two story clay studio, replete with teaching space, multiple potter's wheels and several large kilns for firing hundreds of pieces at a time.

What started as a flourishing business of creating pieces that retailed in shops up and down the east coast, were presented at major craft fairs throughout the summer



pottery studios in Western Connecticut and neighboring Eastern New York. The bright green and purple signs that identified the studios invited visitors to enter the realm of earth, water, and fire and to experience the wide range of styles that area potters create. Selling one's work is important, but the precursor of a sale is education, and

and to experience the wide range of styles that area potters create. Selling one's work is important, but the precursor of a sale is education, and

Steve and Alison were enthralled



Above: A glimpse inside Alison's studio. Below: Alison's love of animals is evident in her lustrous work, where animal shapes are often incorporated.

months and available online, Alison has managed to keep a public presence with her work, while creating a studio environment where notable ceramic artists from around the world can come to present workshops.

Her love of animals and the mysteries that surround them has led Alison to focus on the incorporation of animal forms in her lustrous work. Mugs, vessels, pitchers, and vases are both unique and magnetic in their appeal. Her website serves as a ready catalogue of her work, changing as new designs, and new pieces appear out of the kiln to take their place in her portfolio.

Alison's efforts at organizing and communicating were evident in her co-creation of CLAYWAY, the Columbus Day Weekend tour of 15

Alison is a master of the art.

#### **Back to Paco**

Paco has stopped barking. The energy is sustained, but now his interests have been turned on a toy, or discovering new ways of creating mischief inside Alison and Steve's home. Paco's journey from Mexico to Connecticut tells as much about the character and personalities of Steve and Alison as any clinical description.

After attending the wedding of a colleague in Mexico some years ago, Steve and Alison recognized that the pace, the lifestyle, and the people of the country were very appealing to them. Winter vacations, getting away from the snow and cold, became their regular pattern.

While on a winter trip, surrounded by American ex-pats, they became aware of an effort started by an American veterinarian, "Dr. Jeff," who, both in Mexico and India, had introduced programs to rescue wild dogs, treat them for the variety of illnesses and parasites that inflict those without regular care, sterilize them so the feral population can be controlled, and re-introduce them into the world. It was an article in the *Yucatan Times* that pointed to the local work of Dinah Drago – working with the model established by Dr. Jeff – that sought volunteers to help in a clinic.

Steve and Alison were enthralled

with the idea, so over the years, they have been part of this effort in a number of towns near the places where they spend some winter weeks. "You have no idea the size of the problem," muses Steve as he recalls their staffing the "post-op" rooms where the dogs, after treatment, recover consciousness.

"We spend a lot of time just massaging and soothing them back," adds Alison. "For some of them, it's the only gentle human contact they've had."

#### **Onward**

From Woodstock to the woods. From creating animals in clay to caring for animals in Mexico. Alison Palmer and Steve Katz have had adventures that yield story after story. There is, importantly, no sense of being aloof or separate about them. Their generosity and sense of calm are enveloping ... even when Paco races to the front door, begins barking and wagging his tail, careening around the living room and knocking over yet another piece of furniture. •

Preview Alison Palmer's work at [www.alisonpalmerstudio.com](http://www.alisonpalmerstudio.com). Follow Steve Katz on [stevekatzmusic.wordpress.com](http://stevekatzmusic.wordpress.com).

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# Outdoor gear: Form following function



By Ian Strever  
[info@mainsstreetmag.com](mailto:info@mainsstreetmag.com)

One of the fundamental principles of modern design is that “form follows function,” a phrase coined by the seminal Chicago architect, Louis Sullivan. Frank Lloyd Wright would later amend the adage to say that form and function should be one. While these two leading lights applied this philosophy to buildings, the legacy of their thinking is evident in everything from office chairs to ice cream scoops.

Over the past few decades, major innovations in fabrics, composites, and computer design have revolutionized the realm of outdoor equipment in the same way that steel allowed Sullivan to conceive of the first skyscraper. Manufacturers are producing durable, lightweight wares that not only perform necessary functions, but that even allow for new outdoor activities that were not possible before.

This summer, I inspected a vintage kayak from the 1960s at an

antiques shop in Portland, Oregon. The vessel was made primarily of metal and wood, and how anyone carried it from place to place is beyond me. Back home at Clarke Outdoors in Cornwall, serious kayakers can choose from any number of options that are designed for specific applications such as ocean kayaking, flatwater, and whitewater. Long, stable boats withstand the heaving of the sea, but tiny “play” boats allow spin-on-a-dime maneuverability in rapids, where kayakers might even find themselves upside down. Plastics, composites, and computer design allow manufacturers to push the envelope of the sport, and extreme kayakers are now able to launch down cascades that are tens of feet high with the confidence that their boats will handle the impact.

#### **Low impact, low weight**

In other outdoor sports, however, low impact is the ethos. Backpacking is a hobby devoted to simple living, and every item has a purpose and a place. A trip to the Arcadian Shop in Lenox is an education in just how far gear has evolved from the days of external frames and

rolled-up sleeping bags. Osprey’s Exos Packs provide plenty of storage for a three to five day outing, offer a fully adjustable fit, and weigh in at a feathery two and a half pounds. Nearly all of the other implements required to live out of that pack have gotten lighter and more functional, too. Throw out your separate cutlery – now we’ve got a titanium spork. Forget that lantern for your tent: Big Agnes has built a string of LEDs into its mtnGLO series of shelters.

Big Agnes has led the outdoor recreation industry with innovative, integrated systems that decrease weight and maximize functionality. Their sleep systems are now the rage, with sleeping pads that slide into the sleeping bag to cut weight and improve comfort, and their minimalist Scout shelters require the use of hiking poles instead of tent poles for structural support – one less thing to carry.

That said, for those who aren’t obsessed about weight, some backpacking classics have yet to

Continued on next page ...

be outdone. I still use a Coleman Peak 1 stainless steel cookset that I bought with paper route money, and the current iteration of my MSR Whisperlite stove is not much different from the blackened one that has been in my pack for twenty years. My original burnt sienna Themarest is still my go-to sleeping pad for cold weather camping, regardless of the weight. When form and function are perfectly mated, it is hard to improve on design.

#### **What leads to new innovations**

The answer, then, is to create new functions. Extreme conditions and remote locations have spurred the imaginations of athletes and designers alike, leading to new innovations in gear.

The Alaskan Iditaride competition, a fringe event a decade ago, has led to innovations in bicycle frame, rim, and tire design that can be seen in the fat bike movement that has caught on as a year-round ride. The Cannondale Bad Habit features three inch-wide tires, resulting in increased air volume that allows for lower tire pressure. Paired with 27.5" wheels and long-travel



suspension, this spells improved traction and more secure footing. Many mountain bikers swear by their fat bikes, riding them in the snow, mud, and throughout the range of conditions they encounter in the Northeast.

Similarly, snow lovers have found new ways to enjoy the season through an expanded range of offerings in skis and snowshoes. Traditional cross country skis have swelled to blur the line between Nordic and Alpine disciplines, and light, mid-width, metal-edged skis allow movement both up and down slopes. While this kind of backcountry application used to necessitate some telemark skills, randonee bindings and boots free the heel for ascents and restrict it for controlled descents. The result is long days in the woods and off-piste opportunities that would be much more challenging with traditional equipment.

For those who prefer to stick to the slopes, wider and wider skis have been appearing on lifts everywhere. Whether you prefer the hard-pack snow in the east or the

powder out west, wide skis work like fat tires on mountain bikes. They soak up the small vibrations or mistakes and stabilize the ride. I rode a set of Rossignol Sin 7 demos on a trip to Colorado last year, and between the width and the rocker design, I stayed (mostly) upright on my first experience with true western powder. Rocker is a relatively recent evolution in ski design that prioritizes float at the ski tips via a rocking chair-like shape, allowing them to glide over the surface with less risk of catching an edge or turning into snow shovels. I rode a slightly longer ski, sat back more, and allowed the boards to run free over light, fluffy powder.

Snowshoes have also benefited from advances in materials and design, and they now come in a variety of shapes and sizes that can accommodate everything from backpacking to running. Atlas and MSR make technical snowshoes for all applications, and the dearth of snow last year means discounts on overstocked inventory. With any luck, a real winter in 2017 will deplete that inventory by next November and get us all outside for some fun in the snow. •



Above: The Alaskan Iditaride competition has inspired new bicycle designs with the distinct "fat tire" look. Below, left: Light-weight travel gear (as well as most gear in general) has come a long way.

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# An artist's landscape design

LYNTON WELLS AND HIS GARDEN

By Claire Copley  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Landscape design is its own art form, but when an artist designs his/her own landscape it is fascinating to explore the relationship between the artists' work and how their particular artistic vision influences the garden design. In this case, the artist is painter Lynton Wells, who has inhabited and tinkered with his property in Salisbury, Connecticut for forty years.

Lynton Wells has exhibited extensively in the US and abroad since 1970, with over 150 group and solo shows. His work is in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Walker Art Center, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Dallas Museum of Art. Wells received a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. He earned an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he met and married his wife, Margaret, who was studying design and architecture.

## **Life revolves around a pond**

In 1976, Lynton and Margaret bought fourteen acres of land in Salisbury, CT that included a one-and-a-half-acre pond. For them, the pond was the focus of the property. Even before they began to build the house they added a large wooden dock from which to enjoy the life



of the pond (see picture right). They designed and built their house on the site slowly, as finances and schedules allowed, carefully adapting their plans to work with the particular features, and fellow inhabitants of their site.

Usually gardeners and designers plan to add a pond or some sort of water feature to an existing landscape. Here, the entire site has been envisioned and built as an extension of this pond. The pond is both eternal as the grounding force of this place, and ethereal as it changes with the seasons and weather.

Today, the garden is not a garden in the traditional sense; no decorative plantings, no perfectly sited specimen trees, no exotic shrubs. The only flowers are those that grow wild and an occasional potted geranium. The property feels like a secret place, still and yet teeming with life. The pond still dominates. It centers and focuses the landscape and provides a constantly changing reflection of the larger space. It reminds me of the small Japanese gardens that were built by retired scholars or politicians who desired to devote themselves to contemplation or study.

## **A "natural" garden**

In garden design vocabulary I would describe this as a "natural" garden. It has the underlying feeling of a Japanese strolling garden, adapted to Connecticut's native species. Japanese garden design grows out of eons of tradition. While the gardens are designed to be "natural," every detail is consciously conceived and placed to create an entire world that both ignores and reflects the larger context.

While the Wells' have not consciously set out to create a particular type of garden, it is obvious that they approached their landscape with knowledge and respect for its native conditions. The principles



of their approach were respectful enhancement and maintaining natural harmony. The application of an artistic vision is apparent here, but is a light touch on the natural landscape.

As Lynton showed me around the property I noticed what has been added. Tall pines, stands of bamboo, and low groundcovers add to the feeling of this being a hidden place – a place one has to discover. Rather than pruning back too-long branches that have reached out for sunlight, Lynton has constructed supports out of dead branches of other trees (see picture left). The space created under these branches has been mowed into a shady walk. The mowing of the garden has become a creative tool that serves to uncover secrets, outline features and lead the viewer on the garden journey. Lynton has mowed paths into the landscape rather than add new surfaces.

## **Placing stones**

Northwestern Connecticut can be a rocky landscape. During the excavation they found many large boulders which they saved to place throughout the property. Actually moving them was more complicated than they thought. They read an important book about the principles of Japanese garden design titled *Japanese Gardens for Today*, that discussed the placement of stones in traditional Japanese gardens. They decided to track down its author, David H. Engel, and ask if he would be willing to assist them in placing these rocks to enhance their site.

"I remember calling him up, describing the situation, and inviting him to see it," explained Lynton, "He came ... The house was not finished, and the rocks that had been dug out for the foundation

Continued on next page ...

were exposed. David, a very sweet man, agreed to place the rocks. It was quite a day. Margaret, called in sick so she could see the action, a large back hoe and a large bulldozer in tandem moved the rocks."

Today, the rocks seem as if they have always been there. They add substance and variety to the view. The concentration of interest on such elements as the shape or placement of a rock, or the moss on a pathway, or the patterns that tree roots and branches make against their individual backgrounds, suggest the hidden qualities of nature and provide a sense of intimacy. This garden has a serenity and calm which seems to flow from a natural harmony of the elements.

#### To really see the landscape

The Wells have added other structural details to this garden over the years, sculpting and refining. The contrasting patterns of straight and leaning tree trunks, the purposely exposed roots of trees, the undulations of the ground enhanced by rock placements and paths, all seem to require the visitor to really look at the landscape, and remind us that every element must be seen in rela-



tion to every other element.

Though they have planted trees (katsura, sequoia, willows) the banks of wildflowers like goldenrod and loosestrife, milkweed, thistles and bee balm, are native to the area and natural to the pond's banks. While Lynton battles invasives in their midst (this year it's Phragmites), he tries not to disturb the natural progressions. "It takes a lot of work to keep it so it looks like you don't do anything," he said as we walked.

A "natural" garden such as this is not only intended to be an immersive aesthetic experience, but is also a contribution to the surrounding environment. Naturally designed landscapes can also become functioning ecosystems capable of providing food and shelter for animals and insects and helping to perpetuate many native species whose habitats are being reduced through development.

#### An intense sense of place

As I spoke with Lynton about the garden, I began to see more clearly the relationship between his garden and his painting. He and Margaret have added only what grows organically out of the landscape itself and subtracted anything that jars or disturbs the sense of natural belonging. They seem to have created this garden with an innate sense of place. I asked Lynton about this "sense of place," and to my surprise he allowed that this is a central

concern in his painting as well.

Lynton explained that, "It is impossible to depict the landscape. Rather than painting the things in a landscape, I always wanted to paint the place itself – what it is I am really looking at."

Another look at his paintings and I begin to see his point. He is responding always to the invisible forces at work in a place: the movement in the space, the state of mind it provokes, the pulsations and relations of energies. He seems to strive to figure out the essential lure of nature.

The painting pictured to the left is eighty by forty inches, with subtle colors that seem to emanate from the canvas. When I asked Lynton about his process for making the painting he described a meticulous system of addition and subtraction much like his work in his garden:

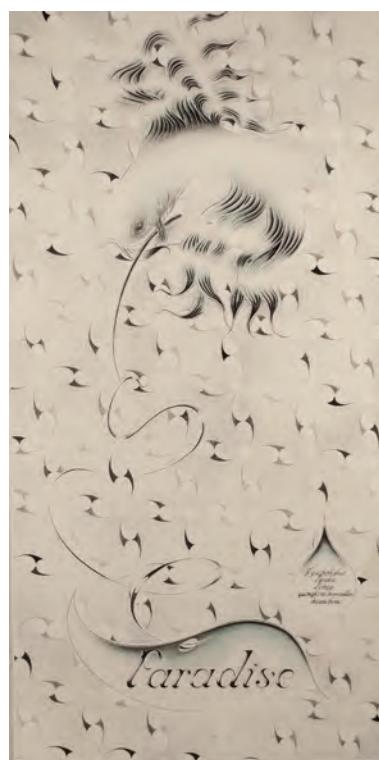
"The canvas is primed with nine coats of acrylic titanium white. The pigment is applied by dipping paper towels and/or Q-Tips in mineral spirits. After the ink and colors are applied, the drawing is done using single-edged razor blades and 100 grit sandpaper. I can use over 100 razor blades on one painting. I can go back and forth with the ink [water soluble], the colors, the blades, and the sandpaper. The painting is finished with a combination of matte and gloss varnishes."

Lynton's artistic process involves a complex set of operations designed to add or subtract essential

vision and information to/from a figurative whole. His paintings are precise, subtle, and intimate. Their extraordinary surfaces are contrasted frequently with imagery that disguises their intentions. They are mysterious works that embody that same sense of intelligence that you feel in his garden. And yet these paintings are never without humor. They seem to always warn against taking them too seriously. Much in the way he bows to the realities of nature in the garden.

Margaret passed away last year and Lynton carries on the passionate caring for this garden. There is a bronze bust of Margaret tucked into a knoll where the path wanders away around the pond. It seems so fitting that she is here, quietly observing the life of this land.

I am most often moved by two experiences: art and landscape. In looking at the garden that Lynton and Margaret Wells created here, I see the vision of two people who shaped their environment to create a world within a world. While I clearly see the artist's particular sensibility and its impacts on the landscape, I see also the work of two artistic minds who shared this place. It reminds me that there are infinite ways of seeing and expressing our place in the natural world. •



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AN HISTORIC &  
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By John Torsiello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

When Alan and Janice Silverman walked into the main house at what is now Silverbrook Farm in Millbrook, NY they realized they had found a most special place.

"We fell in love with the house immediately," says Alan Silverman, as he takes guests through the home located near the intersections of Routes 44 and 82. Not only is the home warm, inviting, and spacious, it also carries with it a unique provenance, having been constructed sometime in the late 1700s and serving as habitation and a place of fun and frolic for a number of notable individuals.

The Silvermans tastefully renovated the interior of the six-bedroom home, in which they have lived for some 13 years, bringing a new luster and understated elegance to the 200-plus-year-old dwelling that was once part of what was known as Canoe Hill Farm. The couple also utilized a horse barn to house various horses that are in their later years, sort of an equine retirement home if you will. Four horses were in residence on this day.

# Silverbrook Farm



## The details

But back to the main house (there is also a caretaker's home, a carriage house, and an ice house) for a bit. The home is filled with interesting architectural elements, such as a living room that has quarter-sawn oak floors, a carved stone fireplace, and French doors leading to a cobblestone lined terrace. The dining room has tall, arched French doors, wall molding, a fascinating turn-of-the-century antique inlaid linoleum floor, and a 200-year-old Caribbean hard-caved fireplace mantle with antique bronzed ceramic Spanish Andalucian tiles. The Silvermans also used antique Spanish tiles, little works of art really, in other areas of the house, including the kitchen and in an *en-suite* bathroom on the second floor.

The home's exterior has been altered several times during its existence, which was first noted in record-keeping in the 1790s, when a David Lawton owned the property. It was known during subsequent sales as "the Lawton farm."

In 1857, the property passed into the hands of Harris Smith, one half

of the famous cough drop making Smith Brothers team, whose factory was in Poughkeepsie. The Smiths changed the Federal style of the home to more of a Victorian look, a style that remained for some 50 years.

Note: American Federal architecture typically uses plain surfaces with attenuated detail, usually isolated in panels, tablets, and friezes. It also had a flatter, smoother *façade* and rarely used pilasters. It was most influenced by the interpretation of ancient Roman architecture, Victorian generally refers to any style of home built during the queen's reign, which lasted from 1837 to 1901.

Many styles are represented in Victorian architecture. Victorian architecture really is a mixed bag and doesn't necessarily mean one distinct style, although when we think of Victorian homes those of the late 19th and early 20th century most often come to mind, with

Above: The front of the house at Silverbrook Farm. Below, left: An arched doorway was uncovered during renovations.



Continued on next page ...

their somewhat ornate design elements, including the ample use of cornices, or buttresses, and sometimes wildly flowing roof lines, large windows (the Silverman's house has 64 windows), and ample front porches.

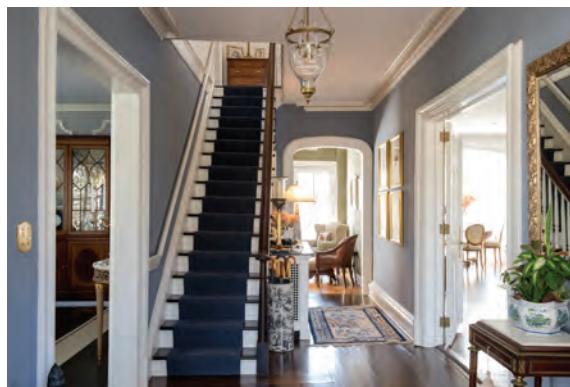
#### **Notable owners and visitors**

Another notable individual took over the property from the Smith family. Judge John W. Goff purchased the buildings and land in 1905, and it is believed that the new owner added the home's west wing, containing a library on the ground floor and a new master bedroom on the second. After owning the property for a dozen or so years, Goff sold it to Wentworth Bacon, a learned young man who launched a career in farming, well, more like gentleman farming, as he reportedly often traveled and entrusted the management of what became Canoe Hill Farm to a manager.

A number of notable personages were said to have visited the Bacon home, according to an article by John Freeman that appeared in the *Millbrook Independent*, including a prominent actress of the early 20th century, Katherine LaSalle. Bacon's first wife died at the age of 42 and he eventually married Katherine LaSalle in 1929. The new matron of Canoe Hill Farm took to rural life and appeared in summer theater in Millerton during the 1930s. The Bacon husband and wife team were among the toast of the town and hosted various parties and events.

Wentworth Bacon passed away in 1959 and his wife continued on for 30 more years in the home, reportedly teaching typing and making porcelain in her home's library. Her sister, Dorothy, came to live with her in her later years until her death.

The property sat for some six years until it was purchased by Thomas Bassett, with the Bassetts residing in the home and enjoying riding and caring for their horses for



nine years before it was sold to the present owners.

#### **The Silverman era**

As noted, the Silvermans took great pains to insure that their extensive restorations and renovations were architecturally sound and sensitive to the age of the structure, while still imbuing their home with a fresh look. The interior walls of the house were painted in soft colors, including a gorgeous light blue in the foyer, downstairs walkway, stairwell, and dining room. Period pieces, both furniture and artwork, abound in the rooms and the couple even paid homage to a hunt club that met at the property by dressing out a small sitting room in earth tones and hunt appropriate paintings and other items. A curved door archway that leads to and from the room was uncovered during renovations.

"The property consists of 53 acres," says Juliet Moore, a real

estate agent working with Elyse Harney Real Estate. "The back of the property leads down into fields and woods and a trout stream that meanders its way along the boundary line. There are also paths for riding."

Over the years, large trees (pines, oaks, and maples) have pushed toward the sky, as Alan Silverman comments on. "One of the things we love so much about the property are the tall trees that are both beautiful and give the home privacy."

With thoughts of downsizing ("It's too much house for us now," says Alan), the Silvermans will be pleased to pass the historic property on to new owners, knowing they wrote for posterity the latest chapter in a two-century-old story of life in Millbrook. •

Above top: Formal living area with original fireplace. Above, left: A stairway leads to the second level of the home. Above, right: The fine detail of the home is evident in a doorway.



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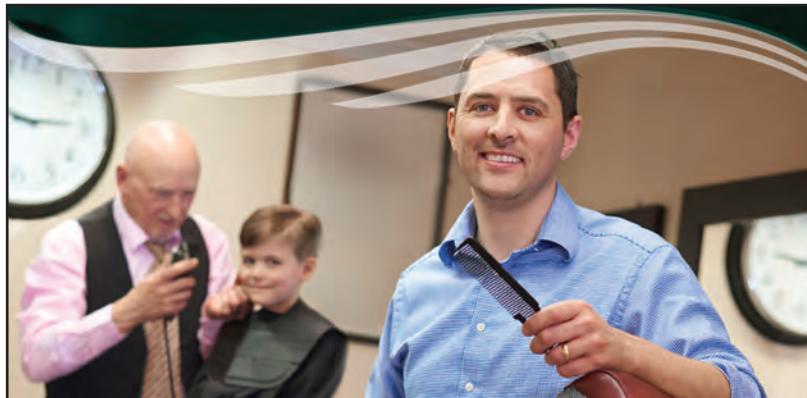
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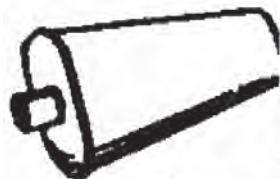
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Christopher Todd Antiques and Interiors was originally founded in North Carolina and then re-located to Millerton in 2015. What Christopher Todd Antiques and Interiors really strives to be is a self-contained interior design firm (with a shop). "It's very old school, the notion that the shop is the face of the design firm," says Todd. This tradition goes back to his great grandparents in Birmingham, AL. With plenty of experience, Todd is a third generation antiques and home furnishings dealer. He grew up in the "industry," working the High Point market showrooms in high school and later working under the tutelage of his grandmother's design practice. He sells reproduction colonial lighting: barn lights, front porch lights, post lights as well as fine fabrics. They have a great new mid-century inspired upholstery line that they will be introducing to the millennials (and up) who either weekend up here with their parents or are buying their first or second home. The pricing is terrific and it's made in Todd's home state of North Carolina. He also sells an interesting mix of well-priced mid-century to antique Regency furnishings. "I'll tell a customer if a piece is truly great, or if it's just an average piece that's a dime a dozen – I'm going to tell them that, too," explains Todd.



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Simmons Fabricating is nestled on Main Street in Pleasant Valley, NY. Owner Robert LaLonde has over forty years of experience and a very extensive background in metal fabrication. He developed his welding skills in the Navy after being assigned to different assembly and repairs jobs. Simmons Fabrications builds all types of custom metal work and metal fabrication for many industries throughout New York and Connecticut. Their portfolio showcases many custom projects, which include multiple types of metal used to create stairs, railings, gates, parts, prototypes, and more. All projects are fabricated on a custom basis, from start to finish. Working from blueprints or your sketch, the Simmons Fabrication staff will work with you to design the custom result you're looking for. LaLonde said, "This business is interwoven with a need to be an artist some of the time and a mathematician all of the time. We have worked on art projects that have been placed all over the States as well as in Europe. All jobs are important to us and our work ethic is why our customers keep coming back." Simmons is known for their ability to do the impossible jobs other shops won't attempt, with so much knowledge and experience being put into every project. For your next custom metal fabrication project, call Simmons. You'll be in good hands.



## Leslie Hoss Flood Interiors

Residential interior design. 11 Railroad Plaza, Millerton, NY. (518) 789-0640. lesliefloodinteriors.com

Thinking of giving a room in your home a face-lift? Or maybe you just need help finding the perfect accent pillow to compliment a freshly painted room? This can sometimes be an overwhelming and daunting task to take on by yourself. Luckily for residents within a 30-mile radius of Millerton, NY, Leslie Hoss Flood started sharing her creative juices 27 years ago. She and her coworkers provide services that include, but are not limited to, reupholstery, slipcovers, custom curtains, blinds, rugs, interior design, furniture purchasing, color consulting, home staging, and so much more. No project is too big or too small. They have done everything from one pillow to an entire house. Leslie has a custom workroom located in the heart of Millerton, where you can find a wide variety of colors and fabrics to get a visual sense of what your final project will look like. Aside from Leslie's passion for design, she finds it most rewarding making people happy by using beautiful products that make dreams a reality. Leslie has a design dream herself; she would like to one day have her own furniture line, particularly French industrial iron pieces. She has served many wonderful clients over the years and hopes to work with you on your next interior design project.



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## INSURING YOUR WORLD

Take a walk through your home and notice that nice painting on the wall that has been handed down through your family, or perhaps that Shaker chair that great grandmother rocked all the kids to sleep in, or the Limoge vase that was given to you by your great aunt. What do all these items have in common? Value! They all have an intrinsic value that is worth more than going to the local furniture store and purchasing a similar object, yet one not made by that special artist, furniture maker, or French ceramic manufacturer. Unfortunately all homeowners' policies treat art, special antiques, and collectables the same; they do not give replacement value based upon appraisals under your contents portion of your homeowners policy. If one of these type items is damaged or lost, you will get paid based upon a new equivalent item. If you wish to have the appraised value of the collectable insured, you must add a fine arts floater to your homeowners policy and insure each collectable for their intrinsic worth. This is not an expensive proposition, but one that will provide the appropriate coverage for that extraordinary item. Keep this in mind the next time you review your homeowners' policy. Don't find out you are not covered properly after a loss!



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The frame you select can enhance your art in many ways. Take for example Eric Forstmann's *Interior with Melon*. Framed in a traditional black and gold Dutch frame you might feel the scene is somber and formal. You might notice the shadows cast by the table and chair. (Visit [www.gmframing.com/Advice.html](http://www.gmframing.com/Advice.html) to see images.)

Reframing with a simply shaped antique silver and black frame, the painting is instantly transformed. It becomes more welcoming and brighter. You might notice how the light catches the shirt and items on the table.

There are no hard and fast rules for framing your piece. However, certain frames lend themselves to certain styles of artwork such as contemporary, traditional, and country.

First and foremost we pick frames that complement your artwork. Keeping in mind however, your décor and where the piece will hang, we can then make framing recommendations. Our camera system lets you visualize what your piece will look like framed before you frame it – we eliminate the guesswork!

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## *The right haircut for your face*

The perfect haircut is more than just a few snips! The shape of your face should drive the artistic process. Round, oval, square, heart-shaped or long, there will be haircuts that look best on you. This is where artistry and geometry meet. With that being said, we're not here to tell you how you can and can't wear your hair. But if you're in need of a change and don't know where to start, or you just want a fail-safe cut that you can work with, there are some simple guidelines to follow.

Oval is the shape we all want to achieve, and your face is;

Round... You need lines that lengthen and fall down and away from your face. Side parts and long bangs are a good idea as well.

Heart... Think Jennifer Anniston. Use lines coming toward the face. Long layers work well and maybe side bangs, too. Avoid too much height on top.

Square... The important thing is to avoid anything that focuses on the jaw line or hard lines. A side part will help to soften. Any kind of wave can take away the appearance of corners, such as a tousled shag.

Oval... Many styles look good on oval shapes, and volume everywhere looks great. It can round the appearance of the face.

A good stylist can help you work out a chic cut that you can manage. Tell them about your routines, haircuts that you admire and haircut fears you might have. You can bring a picture, and don't be afraid to try something new.



**Janice Hylton & Bonnie Hundt**  
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# WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

## ARIES (March 21-April 19)

The truth is that your finances aren't where you'd like them to be. Can't people see how independent you are?

## TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

You need inspiration just as much as you need air and food. Decide what's most important to you and then take on one thing at a time.

## GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Nowadays there are so many "experts" out there that it's hard to know what to believe. But one clever decision will have a positive impact on your finances.

## CANCER (June 21-July 22)

You need to put a lot into a project, but that's OK as long as the final product you deliver is top-notch. Stick to your guns and don't let the opinions of others impact you too much.

## LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You are likely to move or change jobs within the next two years. Let your imagination flow and make some changes!

## VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Most of your loved ones need help now and again, but a constant need is draining and a bad habit. Make sure that you tend to yourself ahead of others.

## LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

You need to break up your daily routine. Be careful with your finances and don't spend beyond your means.

## SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Now is the time to think about that trip that was postponed. Improve a relationship with one person, focus on one project, make one call.

## SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You're ready to improve your ways in a new way. But think twice before doing so.

## CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You're full of ideas. Be kind to your coworkers. And decide to look forward to things.

## AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

You can't see straight because of your workload. You need a vacation. An attitude change will be beneficial.

## PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

You'll never get anything done if you take on too much. You should learn to delegate; it'll help you keep your sanity.

## THE WORLD ABOUNDS WITH WONDERFUL THINGS

For this "Art & Design" issue, we asked Dana Jennings Rohn of the antique store and gallery, Montage, in Millerton, NY to help us analyze antiques a little bit, such as what constitutes a good buy and why, what's back in style and what's out. Here's what Dana had to share with us:

Most of us are natural nest-builders. It is instinctive to gather around you a collection of the practical as well as those things that simply please your eyes.

Today, we find ourselves at a crossroad between the rage for mid-century modern, and a more holistic taste that is evolving, eclectic and open to antiques, objects and art of all periods.

My theory about why tastes evolved away from elaborate detail, rich fabrics and classic art, and toward the straight-lined, tonal, sparse look of mid-century, is that everyone's eyes were so over-stimulated by our digital lives, we bombard our senses daily on screens to the point that when we go home, we cannot bear our surroundings to require anything of our minds.

And yet, the pendulum always swings. We are seeing a renewed interest in early things and I believe it makes for better interior design and better quality of life. After all, the personal spaces that we create in our own homes are the sources of our aesthetic refreshment. The most compelling thing in how we craft our nests is that they not only shelter us, but also nourish us. The eye needs to be fed to keep the mind and the soul growing.

When you are out and about, on the prowl for things to furnish your house, stay focused. Think about what you need, pay attention to what pleases your eye. Evaluate and edit. Look for things that are carefully made. Pay attention to the details. Choose the things that are made with beautiful materials, choose things that stimulate you, or which *sate a yen*.

Although some antiques and art can be expensive, not all good things are. There is a bounty of objects full of merit that are available – even on a budget! So whatever your interests are, you should be able to source things to fit the bill. Keep these watchwords in your mind as you hunt and gather: Beautiful materials, quality construction methods, pleasing to the eye, and worthy of your home.



Photo left: Early English oak with studio pottery.

Photo above: French Provençal, paired with Chinese porcelain and modern art.

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