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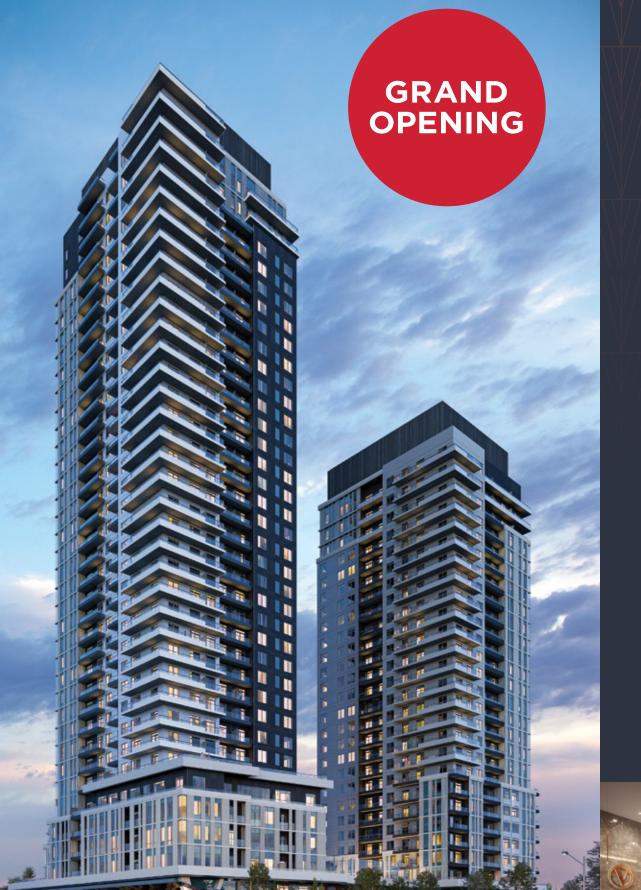
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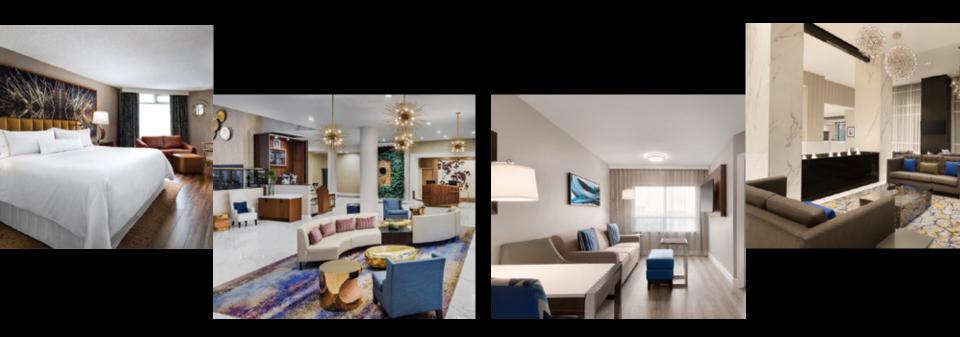


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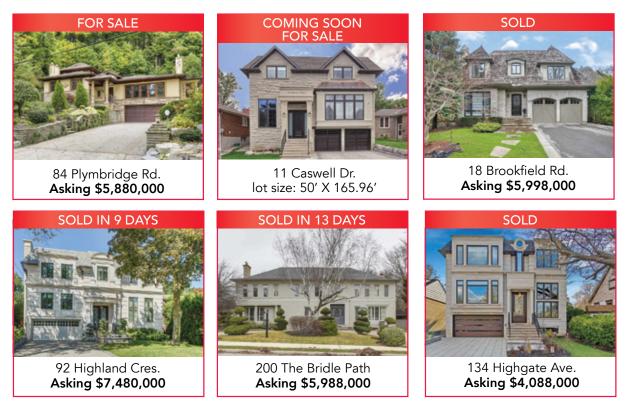






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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Michelle Zerillo-Sosa Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Fernando Zerillo Co-Founder/Creative Director

t always fascinates the *Dolce* team when we reflect on all the many actions, interviews and photo shoots that need to be planned and executed prior to publishing each issue of our luxury magazine.

And, of course, our fall edition is no different. Once we got past all of the stress and excitement that came with photographing a high-profile and multi-talented celebrity, the sense of gratitude, relief and feelings of being blessed and privileged to live our passion washed over us.

What a sweet moment that was.

When Nicky Jam's team contacted us to confirm that this megastar had chosen *Dolce* magazine for an exclusive, in-person interview and photo shoot with him in Miami, we were beyond ecstatic.

Can you blame us?

Jam is a reggaeton star, rapper, producer and actor. We play his music loud and proud in our household any time we want to feel good. The "Hola Bebe" line from his song "*Travesuras*" is our sing-out-loud anthem.

The epitome of a person who embraces and overcomes life's challenges, Jam's hardships and struggles are real, and, in fact, are some of the things he shares with us in this issue's candid interview.

Rising like a phoenix from the ashes (his 2017 album *Fénix* is considered to be his breakthrough album), Jam's ability to continuously reinvent himself defines the "phoenix rising from the ashes' allegory. His past was dark; his future is bright.

The culmination of being incredibly happy to meet and feature Jam for our cover was matched only by our conviction that his story would resonate with the many people who struggle with some of the same challenges that he has faced and overcame, including the crippling feelings associated with being depressed, discouraged and

"No man can walk so long in the shadow that he cannot come again to the light"

— Robert Jordan

overwhelmed. Jam's story negates the fear around not being able to make it or not being successful or wealthy because you weren't born into the right circumstances.

"My legacy is my story," Jam says. "For the people to know where I came from, the hole I came from, how much I suffered and all these obstacles that I had to become successful. I show with my story that, no matter where you come from, and how much at the bottom you are, if you have discipline and faith in God, you can make it. I'm living proof of that. That's my legacy. That's my story."

Authentic and committed to his word, he worked with the *Dolce* team long after the agreedupon time frame. Jam is respectful of others, which was charmingly evident throughout our photo shoot and interview. We love nothing more than to have our subjects share something special about themselves, that little something that resonates and pops and reminds us of exactly why we chose them for our cover. While glitz and glamour are grand, what is important to us is how a person lives their best *dolce vita*, a life that embodies the sharing of one's good fortune with others.

And, yes, we agree, in fact, we celebrate that

Nicky Jam's music is feel-good and absolutely impossible to not dance to, so why deny yourself that joy?

But, what appealed to us the most about Jam is his powerful story, one that moves all who hear it.

After watching Jam's Netflix documentary *El Ganador* (which he also produced), we were incredibly moved by his story — one that defines living life on life's terms — and, so, we decided that we were going to request an interview for *Dolce*.

And, as you read *Dolce*'s interview with Jam, imagine yourself standing in his presence, connecting with his magic energy and plugging into his reimagined life's story.

For us, it was a study in emotional overload.

Intriguingly, while he is covered in tattoos from his neck down, Jam does not intimidate. In fact, people in his circle credit him as approachable and with having a good heart.

Our favourite quote, from his interview was probably when he said: "... If you're going to hug somebody, hug them like it's the last time that you're going to do it. If you're going to laugh, laugh like it's the last time you're going to laugh. If you're going to kiss somebody, kiss somebody with passion, like it's the last time you're going to kiss that person, because you only have one life, and you have to live it to the maximum."

Spoken like a true *ganador*.

We hope you enjoy connecting with Jam and all of *Dolce*'s life aficionados in this issue, all of whom we celebrate as they live their personal *dolce vita*.

Michelle Zerillo-Sosa Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

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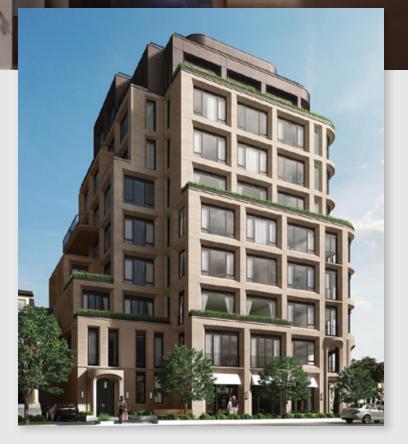
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NICKY JAM: Reggaeton

star Nicky Jam reflects on his life story, success, downfall and redemption A MAN MOVED BY MUSEUMS: Josh Basseches, director and CEO of the Royal Ontario Museum, shares what it's like working for a great museum in an exceptional city

VIEW FROM THE VINEYARD

A window into the properties

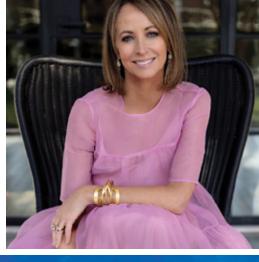
sitting on one of the world's

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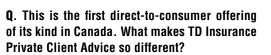
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FOR GREATER PEACE OF MIND

Davina Boulineau, associate vice-president at TD Insurance Private Client Advice, talks us through TD Insurance Private Client Advice, TD Insurance's new direct-to-consumer insurance service, and what makes it so different from everything else on the market



A. We've really put our clients at the heart of this and, quite truthfully, if we hadn't, it wouldn't be as successful. What makes this so unique is that we're the first direct-to-consumer market doing high-net-worth insurance in North America, which is a big deal. When you think about our competitors, they use independent brokers to distribute their products. We do it all ourselves, and that means we don't charge any extra premiums to cover someone's commission.

The other thing that's very different about our strategy is we've empowered our expert insurance advisers with underwriting authority, which independent brokers typically do not have. We know our high-net-worth clients are busy and we wanted to make applying for insurance an easier process for them. We're able to make decisions with clients over the phone without having the need to refer their files to multiple departments, or have them wait days before hearing a response.

Q. How are you ensuring this service works for the different needs and goals of every client?

A. We have the ability to customize product offerings based on the unique needs and lifestyle

of our eligible, high-net-worth clients. The first call with a client is crucial. We take our time to fully understand what matters most to them before putting a proposal together. We understand them and we have their backs.

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We're also not a call centre. Our clients have dedicated advisers assigned to their portfolio, and they can communicate with them any way they want to, whether that's over the phone, with direct line access, email or text message.

Q. What are some of the types of coverage you offer?

A. We do primary residences and cottages, even if they're located on an island, as well as luxury condominiums. We focus on art collections, jewelry collections, wine and expensive liquor collections. We have solutions for yachts and watercraft coverage, and cyber and fraud insurance. We also have liability coverage, which is so important, especially when you think of the significant assets and exclusive lifestyles of this segment of customers.

As well as that, we have broad water coverage, including overland flood coverage and access to cross-border insurance, because we do understand this segment has properties outside of Canada. So, with strategic partnerships with companies in the United States and Canada, we're able to provide a comprehensive approach.

Q. Protecting wealth is as important as creating it. How exactly does this new service do that?

A. The No. 1 thing we've discovered in our research is that preserving wealth is so important. For this reason, more clients are making insurance part of their financial plans. Priorities have shifted. We're seeing high-net-worth clients asking a lot of questions to really understand their insurance blind spots, and that's what we're here to do. Identify those blind spots and put in a program that's complete, so they see different options on how to protect their assets. We individualize underwriting and review of the assets to ensure they are fully protected.

We're also hearing from clients that claims are as important as coverage, and they're right. Our claims service offers a seamless experience that includes a dedicated claims specialist to help clients when they need us the most during that process.

Q. What can people do if they're ready to hear more or get started?

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PARK HYATT TORONTO REOPENING

A four-year renovation has brought a grande dame back to life

n major world cities, there always seems to be a few hotels that can be termed "grande dames" — ideally located, stately, luxurious and almost regal in their commanding presence in the metropolis. Park Hyatt Toronto is just such a property.

Opened in 1936 as the Park Plaza Hotel, Park Hyatt Toronto recently reopened after a nearly four-year renovation and reimagination to adoring crowds welcoming back an old friend. Located at the gateway to Yorkville, the city's midtown enclave of exclusive shopping, dining and galleries, the restored hotel debuts new interiors from Studio Munge, luxury guest rooms (in the north tower), a new world-class restaurant, a rooftop lounge, 65 luxury rental apartments (in the south tower) and a glamorous and sophisticated style paying homage to Canadian heritage, art deco and literature, befitting of this landmark and emblematic address.

Park Hyatt Toronto collaborated with worldrenowned designer Alexandro Munge of Studio Munge, drawing inspiration from Canada's natural landscapes and seasons of striking change to bring these experiences to life through a pleasing blend

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER

of modern materials, natural wood and soothing colour schemes.

The restored hotel features a significant permanent art collection highlighting pieces from notable Canadian and Indigenous artists. A new public art sculpture, *Rendezvous* by Canadian artist An Te Liu, forms a vivid and spectacular tableau, with Canadian artist Shannon Bool's *Dead Ringers* providing a large-scale tapestry, which highlights the lobby area.

The 219 guest rooms, which are located in the renovated north tower — including 40 luxurious suites — all offer sleek, contemporary style with modern lighting accents. The palatial Presidential Suite, located on the 14th floor, includes a welcoming foyer, dining room, study and living room grounded by a stone-clad fireplace.

A new restaurant, Joni, has been added to Toronto's pre-eminent culinary experiences. Located in the heart of Park Hyatt Toronto, Joni focuses on fresh and flavourful ingredients through elevated cooking techniques, with a design thematic inspired by the city's vibrant arts and cultural scene.

Perhaps the most welcomed addition brought forth by Park Hyatt Toronto's restoration is the return of the archetypal rooftop cocktail bar located on the 17th floor of the south tower, affording some of the best views of Toronto's skyline. Familiar to generations of Torontonians and international travellers alike, the cocktail bar, now known as the Writers Room, pays tribute to the history of literary legends who have shared moments at Park Hyatt Toronto.

The restoration of Park Hyatt Toronto is part of a wider redevelopment of the site into a mixed-use destination by its owner, Oxford Properties. In addition to the hotel's guest suites, the redevelopment created the 65 luxury rental apartments in the heritage-designated south tower at 2 Avenue Rd., making it one of the largest heritage restoration projects in Canada. It also features more than 20,000 square feet of prime retail space over two floors, with 100 feet of frontage along Bloor Street and Avenue Road.

The restored Park Hyatt Toronto is a grande dame reawakened and taking her stately and exemplary position again as one of Toronto's great hotels, and tourist and business destinations.

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Created by the internationally acclaimed team of architect Siamak Hariri, interior designer Alessandro Munge and landscape architect Janet Rosenberg, No. 7 Dale is a rare collection of 26 ultra luxury condos majestically perched on the Rosedale Ravine. No detail has been spared in this stunning property as each residence is adorned with imported materials and every conceivable upgrade.

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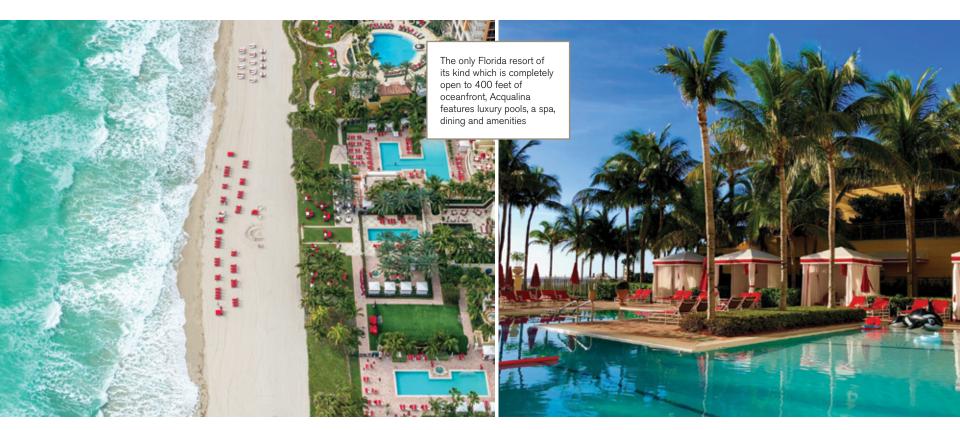


DOLCE EXCELLENCE SEASIDE HAVENS



The five-star luxury experience in South Florida

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER



hose seeking a respite from the frozen onslaught that is the coming winter need look no further than a luxurious escape to Florida's Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach, located on nearly five acres of prime oceanside property in Sunny Isles, between Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

A recipient of the coveted Forbes Travel Guide Star Award and the prestigious AAA Five Diamond Award, this 98-room resort is the epitome of elegance, service and style, where guests can immerse themselves in the glamorous South Florida lifestyle.

Designed to be reminiscent of a Mediterranean villa, from its grand porte cochère entrance to its luxurious guest rooms, to its charming bistros and dining, and outdoor amenities, Acqualina Resort is the absolute manifestation of "playing to your strengths" in that it is Florida's only resort of its kind to be built completely open to the ocean and completely free of barriers between it and 400 feet of glistening Atlantic shoreline.

The 51-storey tower contains 54 guest rooms and 44 suites, with standard rooms beginning at nearly 750 square feet, rising to three-bedroom suites of more than 2,300 square feet, with some select guest rooms and suites featuring full gournet kitchens.

Acqualina Resort features a full suite of dining options and amenities to make it a true destination of elevated elegance. The resort features New York City's acclaimed Italian restaurant, Il Mulino New York, which features authentic cuisine from Italy's Abruzzi region. With a diverse, eclectic and tapasstyle menu, using only the freshest ingredients, KeuH brings Japanese fusion cuisine to Acqualina, while Costa Grill is the ultimate outdoor dining locale, ideal for midday respites under umbrellacovered tables.

Guests at the resort can also escape to and

indulge in the award-winning Acqualina Spa by ESPA, the first branded ESPA in the United States. Featuring skilled therapists, his-and-hers relaxation lounges with Himalayan salt walls, a Roman waterfall spa and a heated jet pool, ESPA offers meditative and restorative treatments based on Ayurvedic principles.

Acqualina Resort features three additional swimming pools, including the Beach Club Pool with private cabanas, the adult-only Tranquility Pool and the Recreation Pool for the resort's aquafitness classes. To avoid the Florida heat, chilled towels and iced fruits are presented hourly.

Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach is the winter-escape destination offering luxury and style, as we can attest to during our stay there for our cover shoot in Miami. It was an opportunity to indulge in *la dolce vita* — Acqualina style.

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FUELLING **THE PASSION**

Grand Touring Automobiles in Toronto has been serving the connoisseurs of luxury and exotic cars for close to 50 years

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

eople can have many different interests and passions. There are art lovers, music lovers, wine lovers, dog or cat lovers and even those who sleep in sheets with logos of their favourite sports team. After all, "fan" is short form for *fanatic*.

Then, there are those people who are interested in luxury and exotic cars, which elevate their passion up to an entirely different level. People like Paul Cummings, dealer principal and CEO of Grand Touring Automobiles, the leader in inventory of new and pre-owned luxury and exotic cars in Canada, who can best be described as that classic "car guy."

"I don't know a time when I didn't like cars. I've just loved them from day 1," says Cummings. "My dad owned an autobody shop, and our family has always been around cars. So, the fact that I can combine my passion with this business, it has worked out beautifully."

Grand Touring Automobiles was founded in 1974 and, at one time, it was the only retailer in Canada to house all of the major British car brands under one roof, as the owner at the time also owned the stately London-inspired Windsor Arms Hotel in Toronto's Yorkville neighbourhood.

Hired by Ford right out of university, Cummings worked on the business side of the automotive world, moving to one of Canada's big five financial institutions in auto financing before moving to Volvo, where he rose to become president of Volvo Canada. Making the family-focused decision to remain in Canada rather than an international posting, Cummings acquired Grand Touring Automobiles in 2009.

Today, it has locations in Toronto, Vaughan, Ont., Waterloo, Ont., and Calgary, and, from sales to service, parts and detailing, the company is known as the pre-eminent dealer with the largest and best selection of luxury and exotic cars and SUVs in Canada. Cummings has expanded the brands to where Grand Touring Automobiles now sells Aston Martin, Bentley, Bugatti, Jaguar, Karma, Lamborghini, Land Rover, Polestar, Rolls-Royce, Koenigsegg, Lotus, Rimac and Volvo, with outstanding service by its highly knowledgeable sales staff and maintenance from its U.K.- and European-trained technicians.

Cummings knows first-hand that others share his passion for cars, regardless of age, and relates his favourite story that occurred after Grand Touring Automobiles moved from its 24,000-square-foot showroom to its current 141,000-square-foot, fivefloor flagship showroom in Toronto in 2017.

"A mother and her young sons showed up in their minivan one day during the March school holiday break," recalls Cummings. "They just wanted to walk around our showroom and take photos of themselves beside our cars. I never realized before that our showroom would become a destination for a family during their holiday."

Not everyone has the means to purchase a luxury SUV, exotic sports car or even the hypersports cars that are now on the market, but when the opportunity arises for them to do so, Cummings and his staff fully appreciate and understand their roles in making a dream come true.

"We have to instill confidence in our customers through our knowledge of the vehicles," says Cummings. "We're actually the end of the story, as the customer is rewarding themselves with a beautiful car. Something has happened in their lives through success in business, or they've worked hard and want to treat themselves, so the car is really the end of what's happened in their lives. Nobody needs the cars we sell; they *want* these cars, and our people understand that. Let's make sure that what we add to the equation is the 'wow' factor and to take care of them properly."

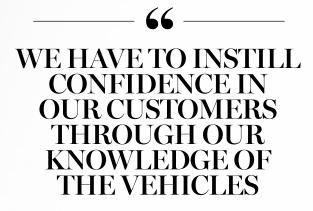
Few products in the marketplace have changed

more than the automobile in the last 10-15 years, and Grand Touring Automobiles is keeping up with all the changes. Cummings recalls with some bemusement the differences he observed about the wants and desires for a vehicle between Europeans and North Americans while he was at Volvo: the Europeans were concerned with technology and engines, and the North Americans were more focused on how many cupholders were inside the car. The future of the automobile will extend far beyond cupholders and will be driven by the next generation.

"We are truly at a game-changing time in the automotive industry, and, with what I'm seeing with the products that we sell and the parts coming from the leading manufacturers, there is so much happening," says Cummings. "Technology is changing drastically, and design language of cars is evolving, as they have to maintain their brand heritage. It's also about what the customer is expecting. While we still sell big 12-cylinder gasburning engines, we also have a new generation saying that's not for them. They want a hybrid or perhaps full electrification, and the governments are looking for more green technology. You'll still be purchasing a car, but it is evolving so quickly and so fast, as we have a responsibility to do what's right for the environment and the climate."

With the leading luxury and exotic car inventory in Canada, professional and knowledgeable sales staff and highly trained and skilled technicians, Grand Touring Automobiles has earned its rightful place atop the Canadian automotive industry. And, while you may not choose to spend your holiday time inside a car dealership, if you are looking to reward yourself, treat yourself or just fuel your passion for exotic cars, there is no doubt that Grand Touring Automobiles can quench your thirst. www.grandtouringautos.com

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SEA, BUT NOT HEARD Infinity Aquarium Design creates an undersea

wonder in the Las Vegas desert

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER



n aquarium can be the ideal complement to any interior living space. It can be a calm, peaceful, multicoloured and mesmerizing accoutrement, turning any room into a sanctuary. In the fast-paced mayhem that is Las Vegas, however, perhaps it's only natural that any aquarium might be slightly bigger and more elaborate than what the rest of us might envision or be used to.

That's what noted HGTV personality Nic Tiemens of Infinity Aquarium of Los Angeles designed and created at Desert Oasis, a magnificent 51,000-square-foot estate about 10 minutes from the famed Vegas Strip. In a residential compound that already contained a sprawling water park, baseball field, BMX course, regulation-sized hockey rink and basketball court, MMA gym, batting cages, golf simulator, movie theatres, health spas and an endless funhouse of activities, Tiemens added a "small" backdrop adjacent to an intimate poker lounge and cardroom by building a custom-made 400-gallon acrylic aquarium with a tech-savvy support system.

This is much more than an aquarium containing a rock and a castle with a drawbridge. With more than 30 years of combined experience in the aquarium industry, Infinity Aquarium Design specializes in the design, fabrication, installation and professional maintenance of custom, highend aquariums. Infinity practises what it calls the "science of aquariology": the study of animals in controlled aquatic systems.

As leaders in this industry, Infinity Aquarium vets its suppliers and vendors thoroughly and works only with organizations that monitor and care for the natural reefs from which all livestock is obtained, while at the same time working to promote public awareness of ocean conservation.

As impressive as the size of this Las Vegas aquarium at Desert Oasis is, perhaps even more so is the technology built into it for the safety and health of its inhabitants. With building sustainability being an increasing request from his clients, Tiemens responsibly sources all materials for his aquariums. In addition, his world-renowned designs feature the latest technology. Infinity teams wire the aquariums to send text alerts to staff members if the fish need a temperature or lighting adjustment. Every accommodation for the safety of the aquatic life is the No. 1 priority in Infinity Aquarium projects.

Of course, for such a priority project, design does matter and appearances do come into account. The aquarium is surrounded by custom, hand-carved cabinetry, which took more than 100 hours to create, contains custom LED lighting and fits completely into the Spanish Colonial design of the estate.

Aquariums, whatever the size or content, can be both fascinating and serene, but, most importantly, during these turbulent times, a powerful reminder of the wonders of life on our all-too-fragile planet.

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CHANGEMAKERS IN REAL ESTATE





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Recognized as the 2021 Best Luxury Real Estate Brokerage in Canada by the Luxury Lifestyle Awards, the Hammond team, led by president, Jerry Hammond, is a diverse group of consummate professionals. As a noted residential real estate authority in affluent local, national and international markets, the team's mission is founded on distinct principles: client-service excellence; immeasurable commitment; and unmatched results.



eal estate life for Hammond International Properties, a boutique luxury real estate firm in Toronto, isn't just about taking clients on a stroll along manicured pathways and into exquisite spaces of luxurious homes and developments. It's about staying true to the Hammond brand and exuding an elite level of confidence, rapport and style. In business since 2015, the company continues to maintain its sterling reputation, offering discretion and integrity to its high-net-worth clientele, including celebrities, sports figures and business leaders. Maintaining consistent communication through online and offline channels, and nurturing a deep understanding of each client's needs and goals, has been the foundation of Hammond's

success. In 2020, Hammond's residential sales topped more than \$100 million, with an average property price ranging from \$2.55 million to \$7.2 million. And in 2021, sales topped \$61 million (January to July), with the average property price ranging from \$2 million to \$6.7 million.

Housed in a trendy, modern north Toronto complex, Hammond International Properties is a refined operation. The Hammond team undertakes the sale of 50–75 listings a year with skill and meticulous strategy. A stream of magnificently executed deals, founded on an impressive signature white-glove service, collaborative strategies and visually stimulating marketing materials, serve to elevate each property and redefine the luxury lifestyle landscape.

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FALLING IN LOVE WITH NIAGARA

Condoville's expertise perfectly positions Riverwalk Niagara luxury condominiums

hen the world thinks of Canada, a few images come to mind: a Mountie, perhaps a snow-capped mountain or pristine lake, but most definitely Niagara Falls. Located on the U.S. border just 90 mins from Toronto, Niagara Falls has been known primarily as one of the world's top tourist destinations, but today it has evolved into a place where families are choosing to live and not just visit, with the growth rate of the region soaring 300 per cent between 2011 and 2016.

Uncovering the real estate potential of the Niagara Region through sophisticated market intelligence was Condoville Realty Inc. Brokerage, the exclusive sales company for the new Riverwalk Niagara luxury condominiums. The project is being developed by Heller Highwater Developments Inc. and is located in the charming village of Chippawa, Ont., which is just a mile up the river from the famous falls and set to open in 2023.

"People are just falling in love with Niagara Region, and it's experiencing a perfect storm for growth," says Shaminder Gogna, founder and president of Condoville. "A lot of empty nesters are taking advantages of the fantastic amenities of the area, such as the wineries and waterfront properties, and, because the pandemic has shown we can all work from home, all of the Niagara Region is booming with new developments, and this will be a long-term play for a lot of families. You can't unlearn a new way of life."

Condoville's industry-leading analytics and market intelligence data were key elements in developing the successful marketing and sales strategies that have made Riverwalk Niagara stand out among the new developments in this booming region. By understanding the current and future competition, Condoville can critically access the marketplace dynamics to create information that may not have been previously available, offering tremendous value to any developer in decisions regarding product type, timing and price.

"We created the positioning, branding and marketing for the entire site with a sales strategy, which is resulting in a successful campaign," says Gogna. "Our target market is empty nesters or weekenders from Ontario's Oakville, Burlington, Mississauga and Toronto and who already enjoy waterfront living and are cashing out, as they want to capitalize now on selling their homes in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). People are leaving large metropolitan areas like the GTA and are not coming back, and it's a worldwide trend."

Riverwalk Niagara will be a luxury boutique condominium of five storeys, containing 51 residences priced from the mid-\$600s, making it affordable living not far from the attractions of Niagara Falls, but within the village of Chippawa to avoid the crowds. The building offers views of the Niagara River, the distant skyline or over the peaceful village itself.

All suites feature a private balcony or an outdoor terrace space, nine-foot ceilings, vinyl flooring and porcelain floor tiles. Kitchens and baths include quartz countertops, and building amenities include a party room with a kitchenette and lounge area, as well as a fully equipped fitness centre. Gogna feels Riverwalk Niagara represents excellent value for residents or investors in a region where prices have risen 25 per cent in just the last year, and where the prices of Niagara's water-access properties have risen an astounding 160 per cent since 2019.

"This is the first development in the area, and there are many more coming, so price appreciation will continue to increase at a higher rate," observes Gogna. "With the falls, the GO Station for easy commuting, the waterfront living, the golf courses and amenities, you're purchasing a lifestyle at Riverwalk. For investors, there are no other quality builds in the area, so there is nothing to compare with this product if you were to rent the suite you bought."

Through the specialized market intelligence, and sales and marketing expertise of Condoville Realty Inc., Heller Highwater's Riverwalk Niagara is bringing an elevated level of elegance and luxury sophistication to affordable residential living in the Niagara Region, transforming an area previously used mainly for visiting into a home for exceptional living.

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LOVE IN STONE

Stone Tile started with its co-founder and president, Sylvia Benchimol, working from her car. Today, it's one of the most respected stone, tile and wood businesses in the industry.

ot only does Stone Tile have an unwavering commitment to staying ahead of fashion trends, but it also employs close to 200 people and has more than 250,000 square feet of warehouses, with locations in Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver, as well as a new slab showroom, which just opened in Toronto.

"There was no grand scheme. My vision was only to work each day as hard and smartly as I could in order to create a solid future for my son," says Sylvia Benchimol, recalling the developmental stages of Stone Tile, which she co-founded with Carl Hesse. "Every day became a building block to the next because I believe that life is built one block at a time. It was a lot of work,



STONE TILE IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT YOUR HEART, PASSION AND HARD WORK INTO SOMETHING

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Sylvia Benchimol, pictured with her son Daniel Sultan, whom she would regularly bring to meetings while raising him as she was a working single mother.

- Sylvia Benchimol

but I did it with a lot of love. It's not textbook theory, but it doesn't mean you don't have a vision. Stone Tile is a perfect example of what happens when you put your heart, passion and hard work into something."

Since its inception, Stone Tile has become known for having products of the highest standards, providing options for its customers in stone and porcelain slab, quartz and wood. And that's just the beginning. The company's competitive advantage is its industry-leading ability to provide the design industry with creative tools backed by experts providing expert consultation.

"The culture of our company is to ensure a safe place, where everyone is treated like family. We really care for our people and are very proud of our team, which evolved naturally from our belief of surrounding ourselves with the very best. Whether it's the initial partnership with Carl Hesse, the addition of Vicky Baron, the opening of our first showroom or the current executive team, our purpose has always been to make Stone Tile the best it can be on a daily basis."

Beyond its superior product line and high standards of creative design and materials, Benchimol's love of family runs through the organization. Her son Daniel Sultan is VP of corporate development, diversifying Stone Tile's product lines and realizing his vision for product innovation and market expansion. He began working in Stone Tile's warehouse when he was just 14 years old.

"It was hard to comprehend in the early years, but I always knew my mom was very independent and I could sense she had her own vision for things," says Sultan, recalling those initial visits when he tagged along. "I have some clients today who remember me riding along with my mom, and that was 30 years ago. I would help her take samples to her clients. She is probably one of the most transformable individuals in the industry. I witnessed what she started and I always wanted to finish the story. This is what drives me."

Over the last three decades, Stone Tile has worked on impressive projects. Whether it's supplying materials for W Hotels in Minneapolis and Atlanta, major National Hockey League arenas in Toronto and Winnipeg or the transit system in Vancouver and Toronto, the business's portfolio is nothing short of impressive. Currently, the company is supplying stations for the entire Eglinton Crosstown Light Rapid Transit line in Toronto.

Benchimol's favourite project, however, was the supply for the world-famous Madison Square Garden in New York City in the early 2000s. "That, for me, is a project I value very much."

Through all of these projects, however, commitment to quality and material has been consistent. As well as offering styles that are both classic and contemporary, Stone Tile has trusted relationships with the finest quarries and always adheres to a strict environmental policy that addresses the concerns of its materials. So, whether the setting's urban downtown or natural wonderment in the country, Stone Tile has the materials and finishes to reflect the desired surrounding driven by Benchimol's ability to forecast trends, determine what's new and what's next and have a natural eye for esthetics. "I love the business because we deal with such amazing clients and suppliers, and it is all about creativity," she says. "And it's all about relationships, as I consider all of my clients my friends. We can only work with people we like."

Benchimol gives great credit to Carl Hesse, with whom she originally founded the company.

"He really branded the look of Stone Tile, and the branding of a company is the essence of a company," Benchimol continues. "He designed our showrooms and defined how to present our products."

As the transition to her son begins to gain momentum, the pair are looking to Stone Tile's future. "It's much more than just a tile business," says Sultan. "Today, we also sell hardwood, vinyl, countertops and perhaps there could be future plans for plumbing, lighting or home finishing down the road. I want to create the most convenient business in the industry. We're daring to think big and in everything we do, we push the limit."

Expansion within North America is also part of Sultan's vision. "My vision is to be in every major city, but my mom's vision is to be in New York City," says Sultan. "For her, New York is the mecca, and I hope I can make that happen for her."

The strong sense of family and the ability and appreciation to embrace life are best reflected by how mother and son describe what la dolce vita, or the sweet life, means to them both. "*La dolce vita* is the ability to enjoy the moment, to really understand that this is a special moment and to squeeze the sweetness out of life and to appreciate it," says Benchimol. Adds her son: "It's about learning to have balance, and I'm learning from my mom there is a way you can have it all you can have the business, but you can also build a family, and that's what I'm trying to achieve."



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VIEW FROM THE VINEYARD

Keith Moskow and Robert Linn's new book, *Martha's Vineyard: New Island Homes*, offers a window into the properties sitting on one of the world's great escapes

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL



Keith Moskow (left) and Robert Linn, who co-founded Moskow Linn Architects

MOSKOW LINN ARCHITEC

PHOTO COURTESY OF

ocated off the coast of Cape Cod, Mass., is Martha's Vineyard, an island home to idyllic beaches, buzzing ecosystems and celebrity hideaways. In 2019, the Obamas purchased a house there, joining the likes of the former first lady, the late Jackie Kennedy, and film director Spike Lee. It's also where Steven Spielberg shot his classic, *Jaws*.

For Keith Moskow, who co-founded Moskow Linn Architects with Robert Linn, the island's real estate is so captivating that he and Linn decided to publish a book about it. Titled *Martha's Vineyard: New Island Homes* (Monacelli Press), it's an expansion of Moskow's 2005 study of the area, presenting 25 new homes to explore.

With each, the home's architect describes their goals for the project, letting the reader experience how they've integrated the island's character into the property. It's presented as a coffee-table publication for architects and design lovers alike.

"Martha's Vineyard is very small as a land mass, but on it are so many distinct topographies and environments," says Moskow, who shares memories of surfing on the island's beaches as a teenager, when his parents rented a house there. "One area looks like it could be in the prairie, one looks like it could be in Vermont. There's a historic, traditional town and there's a town with gingerbread cottages. There are all these environments that people can draw from to make their house appropriate to the island."

The book covers these, leading the reader through properties like Island House by Peter Rose + Partners, a contemporary building with generous views and sweeping panels of glass. You also have the Modern Farmhouse by Architecture + Indigo, designed with cathedral ceilings and generous helpings of natural light.

Choosing what to include in the book wasn't easy, and Moskow explains how the number of submissions was so impressive that what's featured only counts for a third of the work sent in. "They had to be well explained about what they did in the environment," Moskow says, talking about the selection process. "They had to take architecture and make it different. Some simply replicate the past, but we wanted to see how architects thought critically about what they're doing."

While the properties featured in the book span different approaches and styles to design, there is,

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Half-Glass House by Moskow Linn Architects, complete with pool and tennis court

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Nebraska By The Sea by Robert Young Architects, set into the island's greenery

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THEY HAD TO TAKE ARCHITECTURE AND MAKE IT DIFFERENT. SOME SIMPLY REPLICATE THE PAST, BUT WE WANTED TO SEE HOW ARCHITECTS THOUGHT CRITICALLY ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING

for Moskow, one thing that ties them all together. "The way they open the connection to the outdoors. All these homes are primarily summer homes. It's so fleeting here in New England, so you want to be integrated with the outdoors, and have a house that has that interplay in interior and exterior."

The book isn't the first Moskow has worked on. It's the sixth and follows volumes on sustainable facilities and creative solutions for better city living. The fact that Moskow Linn was championing sustainability in the early '90s, before the term was universally understood or accepted, is telling of their influence on the design world. "We were one of the first to be awarded for sustainable design in Boston," he says. "We wanted to get the word out, so we said we'd write a book about it."

They also have the next in the works, which

will act as a visual record of the commemorative spaces built to remember the events of September 11, 2001. It will be called *Memorializing 9/11* and comes after Moskow Linn Architects designed a memorial in Boston's Logan International Airport.

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Prior to setting up his own studio with Linn, Moskow gained his architectural expertise on both coasts of the United States. In the late '80s, he worked with an established architect in New York City before working for an avant-garde architect in Los Angeles. Afterwards, he started his own firm.

Today, he describes good architecture as something "that responds to the environment and takes clues from the past to create something of today." He works with Robert Linn, someone he shares a close design esthetic with, to make the dream homes of clients a reality. "We ask them to put together a program of things they want in their homes, which is easy," he says. "Then we ask them to numerically list them from most to least important, which is hard. We'll also ask them to build a digital file of things they find esthetically appealing, be it a fashion model, piece of furniture or a tree they like. With that, we get to see their esthetic, so the house becomes theirs, rather than ours."

It's this passion for design and collaboration with people that brought Moskow to architecture. It's also what built the foundation for this book. As much as *Martha's Vineyard: New Island Homes* is an exploration of craft, material and innovation with space, it also tells the story of an island and the people who live there.

www.moskowlinn.com





FOR THE LOVE OF A BROTHER

Call it what you want — volunteering, giving back, service to your community. When Sandi Treliving started volunteering at CAMH because she wanted to help people like her brother with mental health issues, it was just the beginning. Now, as director of the CAMH Foundation Board, she just keeps picking up speed and involving herself in all kinds of new initiatives, from womenmind, a community of philanthropists committed to closing the gender gap in mental health, to championing the Trans Canada Trail, which connects more than 1,000 communities and inspires active living. This fall, she will be chairing the advisory committee for Talent Fund Canada, supporting Canada's emerging filmmakers. Loaded with the kind of caring that comes from the heart and from personal experience, she's unstoppable

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

hen Sandi Treliving was just a child, her teenaged brother started showing symptoms of schizophrenia, but it wasn't until he was in his 30s that he actually received a proper diagnosis. This was back in the '70s, and it wasn't like it is now. There was really so little help available and that affected his wellness tremendously. Not just him, either, but the entire family. They knew that he was sick, they knew it wasn't his fault, but they didn't really talk about what was going on.

Because of her brother, Sandi had always wanted to do something related to the mental health field, but she struggled because she couldn't find anything that she saw as being particularly positive. That changed when she and her husband, Jim (an investor on *Dragons' Den* for 15 seasons and owner of the Boston Pizza chain), went to an event at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). She was impressed. "I was so surprised by the advances, the vision, the leadership and their focus on care that it completely changed my thinking." The next day she called CAMH and spoke to someone at the foundation to ask for a tour of the campus. She started volunteering right away.

That was just the beginning for Sandi. In fact, she and her husband have partnered with

CAMH for years now and, as health advocates, they're working on campaigns to raise awareness, end stigma, fundraise and improve treatment. Presently, she's the director of the CAMH Foundation Board. Since joining the foundation, Sandi has headed various initiatives, including co-chairing (with her husband) the campaign for Canada's 150 Leading Canadians for Mental Health in 2017 to recognize Canadians making a difference. And she was an advisor for CAMH's \$200-million Breakthrough Campaign, Canada's largest hospital fundraising campaign for mental health.

Volunteering and giving back comes naturally to Sandi, and not only in the mental health field. This fall, for instance, she will be chairing the advisory committee for Talent Fund Canada. "My parents were always involved in the community: you knew your neighbours, you knew the people in town and you knew the ones who needed a little extra help, so we would often have somebody else at our dinner table," she says. Her mom went on to volunteer with Meals on Wheels, and her dad coached young girls'/ladies' softball, so they often had a billet at their home. When she started working, Sandi began volunteering with different organizations through her employer, and learned how they are run, and how important it is to find a good fit. One thing she wasn't expecting with CAMH is that it has been very healing for her. She's always talked about mental health, "but through this experience and learning more ... it's just incredible," she adds.

Sandi is always looking for new projects and likes to get other people, including her own family, on board. One such initiative is womenmind, launched last year to help CAMH focus on closing the gender gap in mental health. Members of the womenmind community will also connect with and learn from one another through a variety of mentoring and networking opportunities. When Sandi spoke to the women in her family, they were overwhelmingly excited to join her. "One of the things that just gave me chills was when I said to Katie [her daughter], 'What do you think about this?' And she said, 'Mom, I've been trying to figure out how to get involved.' And to be able to do that, it's powerful," she says.

As a mental health advocate, Sandi is trying to reach as many people as possible, so she's using social media to reach out to her followers. On her Instagram page, she has started Female Fridays to highlight well-known Canadians such as Silken Laumann, who speaks openly about mental health; Dr. Renee Linklater at CAMH, working in the Indigenous mental health field; and Mary Simon, our new Governor General, who lent her expertise to 150 Leading Canadians for Mental Health. "I



always say to people who have chosen to be in the mental health field that it is not sexy," Sandi says. "There is not a lot of money that has been spent in mental health, unlike other causes, so I'm really pleased with the women who come forward and tell their stories. It's hugely important."

Sandi is tremendously proud of what she's helping to build now, supporting the fundraising efforts for womenmind and for the research centre at CAMH. "We are already known as leaders in mental health research and care around the world, but we are going to be the only mental health centre where a research tower is on the campus of a mental health hospital," she says. "We will literally be going bench-to-bedside with evidence-based care and making a difference in the outcomes for years to come — and not just in Toronto, where the home is, but globally, as well."

Most of all, Sandi is grateful for so many things, not the least of which is that she will be celebrating 20 years of marriage this year. "I think the biggest thing is that we support each other, and I've always supported his career fully ... and he has jumped in on my work in mental health in so many wonderful ways. His support is just huge," she says.

Sandi makes no secret of the fact that her brother and his illness made the biggest impact on her life. Had her brother received treatment for his psychosis when it initially began in his teens, the trajectory of his life would have been dramatically different, she says. And then she talks about the newest, tiniest member of her family now, her granddaughter, who is just six months old. "If I look at 20 years from now, how is the world going to change for her and the impact that will have been made? Because, you know what, because we put a focus on this, we highlight the need and we deliver on the impact."

Volunteering comes naturally to Sandi Treliving

and not only in the mental

instance, she'll be chairing the advisory committee for

health field. This fall, for

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HOME SWEET HOME: Tricon Residential builds on a solid legacy by investing in culture, community and connectivity to reimagine rental living across North America

Owning more than 31,000 single- and multi-family homes and apartments in the U.S. and Canada has made Tricon an acknowledged leader in the rental housing market

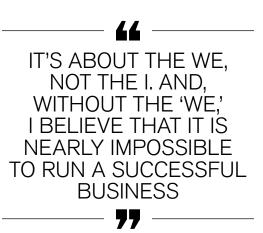
hen someone starts a business, it's usually an expression of their passion, and very rarely do they think about their legacy or have time to wonder where they will be in 30 years. However, where passion leads, success follows.

This story begins in 1988, when David Berman and Geoff Matus founded a real estate equity lending and joint venture company named Tricon Capital. They hoped to establish themselves as the preferred lender for residential developers in North America, distinguishing themselves from competitors by developing a reputation for doing "the fair and right thing" in their business operations and relationships.

Passion and integrity have taken Tricon a long way, but vision and a spirit of entrepreneurship that have been consistent characteristics throughout the company's history have moved it forward. In business, the result was a deliberate transformation from a for-sale housing company to a rental housing company, recognizing the demands of a new generation that faces reduced home affordability and seeks a convenient and community-based alternative. In leadership, the result was a transition from the founders of the company to a new visionary leader.

Today, Gary Berman, president and CEO, leads a rebranded Tricon Residential, the first public company to own and operate single-family and multi-family rental homes across North America, making it one of the largest owners and operators of rental housing. Tricon is also one of Toronto's most active multi-family rental developers, with 10 purpose-built rental housing projects under development and it will have a portfolio of over 5,000 units upon completion (including The Selby). Overseeing a company supported by the foundational pillars of culture, community and connectivity, Gary finds himself in the fortunate position of leading a company into an exciting future built firmly on a cornerstone of passion. "We love what we do," says Gary.

"Our 'we' culture started right from the beginning, as we were a family business and a small group of people who depended on each other," says David Berman, co-founder and executive chairman of Tricon Residential. "I give my wife,



- David Berman

Renette, much of the credit. She has a genuine interest in the well-being of our people. From the very beginning, she viewed our staff as part of our family. She would say, 'It's about the we, not the I.' And, without the 'we,' I believe that it is nearly impossible to run a successful business."

This guiding philosophy illustrates the feeling that exists strongly at Tricon, where the very backbone of the company is the tenet that all people should have the opportunity to live in a good home. This simple yet noble objective runs throughout this Toronto-based company, which is committed to increasing the number of accessible, high-quality housing options available to individuals and families who either prefer to rent or are unable to afford the home and location of their choice.

"We have become a company that recognizes the needs and desires of our residents," says David, who is still closely involved in the company. "We provide an attractive alternative to home-owning and have reimagined renting as something our residents want to do, irrespective of their means. There used to be a stigma that renting was only for people who could not afford to buy, but that's not the case anymore. As millennials are showing us, there should be a choice, as there is a lot more flexibility in renting and living a maintenancefree lifestyle."

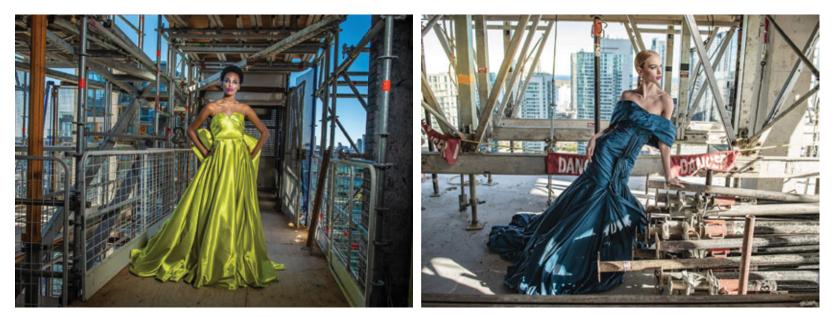
While a strategic succession plan is part of a successful company, Gary's eventual leadership was not in Tricon's plan, nor was it David's idea. When Gary decided to leave his Wall Street career and return to Toronto to join Tricon, David discouraged him. "I don't believe in nepotism, and I told Gary that he'd have to work for another developer first to get the necessary experience," says David. "I said if you can then convince the other three directors why you should work here, then you can."

For Gary, wanting to work at Tricon was an easy decision, as he realized he could learn the most from his father, who would be the best mentor for him. "He has taught me judgement and how to make small but important decisions; things they don't teach you in business school or that you can't learn from a book," says Gary. "I used to overhear his business discussions on the phone while riding in the car with him. He is a good man, generous and thoughtful, always seeing the big picture and wanting to take care of people by doing deals that lead to win-win situations. To

Founder David Berman (left) and son Gary, president and CEO of Tricon Residential, have created a culture of character at Tricon

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PHOTO BY CARLOS



ELEVATING ART AND DESIGN. Tricon's newest building, The Taylor, is located at the heart of the fashion and entertainment districts and will open in early 2022. Partnering with CAFA (Canadian Arts and Fashion Awards) and emerging Canadian designer Jordan Stewart and her label RVNG, Tricon showcases the detail and beauty of fashion juxtaposed with the detail and rawness of the construction.

this day, those values live on at Tricon, and that is what I've learned from him."

While David had every confidence in his son's business acumen, there were still some things that surprised him once they were working together. "What I didn't expect was the vision — Gary has the ability to see things I don't," says David. "He came to me 11 years ago and said there was an opportunity to go public. I didn't think we could do it, but five months later, we had our IPO! Gary also had the foresight to be an early entrant in the single-family rental market in 2011." Tricon's most recent growth initiatives have been backed by joint venture partnerships with over US\$7 billion in purchasing power, putting Tricon on track to double its portfolio to 50,000 single-family rental homes in the next three years.

The vision to change the business and expand is one aspect of success, but operations are another. "In everything we do, we foster an environment where everyone should have permission to be their best authentic self, as that has a significant ripple effect. You can be who you are here," says Gary. Being your authentic self also means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching and when it would be easy to do nothing. A case in point is the Tricon manager in California who drove 100 miles to a resident's home to deliver a turkey, so the resident could have a proper Thanksgiving during the California wildfires. Or the mother and her sons in Orlando who lost their home when an electrical short in a clothes dryer started a fire. Unknown to the family, while they were sheltering with friends, the Tricon team salvaged some of their personal possessions, rebuilt the home, placed those special mementos inside, and surprised the family by welcoming them back to their home. "We always try to go above and beyond for our residents, as our whole culture is about putting people first," says Gary.

This thoughtfulness and attention to detail are reflected in every decision, including Tricon's significant investments in a growing portfolio of developments, such as its flagship building, The James, in the heart of the Rosedale area in midtown Toronto. "While the overall quality of developments in Toronto has improved over the past decade, there is an opportunity to raise the bar further through intentional design, quality and attention to detail," says Gary. "For The James, we hosted an international design competition and we are creating what I think will be the highest quality building in Canada. As developers, we have a responsibility to improve the built environment and we want to inspire our peers and competitors to elevate that environment."

In addition to focusing on developing some of the most beautiful properties across the skyline, each Tricon development includes state-of-theart amenities such as pools, gyms, games rooms, lounges, dining rooms, theatres, guest suites and concierge services. These first-class environments are supported by professional, best-in-class, onsite property management teams that take care of every need. "But we also recognize that we are not perfect, that we can and will make mistakes," Gary adds. "There is an adage that says that those who have never made a mistake have never done anything. We believe that. If we learn from our mistakes, they can help us grow. All we ask of our employees and ourselves is to take ownership of each situation and learn from it."

Tricon has also integrated sustainable design into its development projects. The company's first

purpose-built rental development in Toronto, The Selby, was awarded LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Certification in 2020. The building has many sustainable design features that promote resident well-being, while optimizing energy and water performance. In all of its new developments and renovations, Tricon incorporates design principles that foster accessibility and mobility, as well as a sense of community and well-being.

"Although over 95 per cent of our properties are in the U.S., we love Toronto and believe we can help address its housing affordability concerns without sacrificing quality and design. Our goal, which we believe is achievable, is the large-scale development of new, affordable, high-quality rental housing," says Gary. In collaboration with Dream and Kilmer, Tricon is developing a 12acre rental community in the West Don Lands area surrounding Toronto's Distillery District. The West Don Lands project includes the province's first purpose-built Indigenous Hub. The Hub will help meet critical health-care, spiritual, employment, training and family support needs for the Indigenous community.

A partnership with Evergreen Brick Works to launch a community garden program where residents can share locally grown produce is another innovative way Tricon is integrating environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices. Apiaries for honey production will also be available. "These are creative ideas that enable us to be more sustainable, while giving back to our communities at the same time," says Gary.

Besides Gary's infectious enthusiasm for the business, his ability to guide his team establishes a management style that enables a collective spirit for the greater good of the company and its employees, fostering the "we" culture, that drives the company.

This generosity of spirit also extends to Tricon's philanthropic endeavours. The company is heavily invested in arts and culture in Toronto, supporting the National Ballet of Canada, the National Ballet School, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Conservatory of Music and sponsoring a lounge at Roy Thomson Hall, all of which benefit Tricon's residents, since they are able to attend special events. Equally important, Tricon's principals provide annual scholarships for underprivileged but talented aspiring dancers and musicians to enable them to attend the National Ballet School and the Royal Conservatory of Music. In 2012, Tricon and its partner MOD Developments Inc. donated a critical piece of land to Massey Hall, the 121-year-old Toronto live entertainment theatre, to facilitate its revitalization and ensure that the hall continues to contribute to the lives of Canadians through arts, employment and cultural celebration for generations to come.

Tricon weaves art and design into each of its projects — with the head office proudly displaying a collection that features both established and up-and-coming Canadian artists. Artworks are displayed throughout Tricon's residential buildings, there is a historic WWII-era piano in The Selby's lobby that residents are welcome to play and plans for a soundproofed music room are being explored, so that residents who are budding musicians can practise their artistry. "Where would we be as a society without art and music?" says Gary. "I think that's what makes a great city, as it connects us and brings us joy."

Tricon's goal of enriching the community and its residents' lives extends beyond art and design, and it has made several impactful donation programs, including its Pay It Forward campaign, Giving Back Fund and Resident Emergency Assistance Fund. The company culture, founded on a shared passion for making a positive difference in people's lives and the community, influences all of its organizational, strategic and operational decisions. "We want to be a company that always takes the long-term view and is solid, innovative and responsible," says David. "A company that always does the right thing, not what's easy. A company that respects its people and its residents. One that people want to work for and that makes them proud. Together, we believe in Gary's strategic leadership that will enable us to achieve great returns for our shareholders and investors, while always considering the interests and needs of our residents."

Tricon Residential is committed to making a difference and determined to leave an enduring legacy; it's not just an example of a noble business philosophy, it's a genuine life lesson as well. triconresidential.com ③ @triconresidential.home



No matter how great the dream is, the bee is a symbol that we can accomplish anything we put our minds to.



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ELEVATING EXPERIENCE

After closing its doors for months, the AGO's director of visitor experience, Herman Lo, reflects on delivering exhibitions in lockdown and how the art world can prepare itself for the new normal

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

rowing up, Herman Lo always felt privileged living in a city like Toronto. With institutions spanning the Royal Ontario Museum, Bata Shoe Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art, there's never a shortage of cultural experiences.

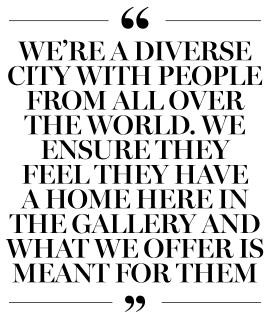
His first memory of being in a museum was in Tsim Sha Tsui at the Hong Kong Space Museum. Though he was there when he was much younger, it set something in motion that would lead him to work with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) as its director of visitor experience. "It had recently opened and was the first local planetarium," he says. "It's one thing to hear about these things on TV, but to be there, interacting with the exhibit and appreciating there's a bigger world out there ... It puts things into perspective and gives us a sense of the world we're a part of."

As one of the largest art museums in North America, the AGO's collection features more than 120,000 works of art from cutting-edge contemporary art to significant works by Indigenous and Canadian artists and European masterpieces. Currently, the AGO is in the final days of a major Andy Warhol exhibition and has just opened *Picasso: Painting the Blue Period.* A major retrospective of First Nations artist Robert Houle is planned for December 2021.

It's also where Lo gets to put his passion for helping people connect with art into practice. It comes after spending much of his childhood visiting museums and a professional career working with other cultural organizations in marketing and sales. For him, the role at the AGO brings everything together. "It's a culmination of all the experiences I had in my career," he says.

Because of the ever-evolving role of the customer experience, no two of Lo's days are the same. Where one could be spent on the daily operations at the gallery, the next could be planning for upcoming exhibitions in the calendar. "I could be in meetings talking about the exhibition's flow from one room to the next," he says. "Then, I could be talking to the team on communications about how we should respond with a friendly tone in emails."

There's also the educational aspect of the job. "The topics we cover at the art gallery are ones I might not be knowledgeable about, but it's an opportunity to gain new insight." Toward the end of our discussion, Lo talks about how a new perspective can even come with seeing the same work multiple times, describing a piece in



the sculpture atrium that offers something new, depending on the time of day he walks past it.

With the pandemic, however, everything changed. Time spent on the floor observing patrons moved online, and employing a skill set to deliver art in a way that resonated with guests onsite had to pivot. In response, the AGO delivered a program of virtual lectures, tours and workshops to keep the community engaged, with a high rate of participation. For Lo, it was a lesson in the importance of being nimble and able to adjust to changing times.

Even with the pandemic aside, it comes at a time when transformation with data and technology is accelerating. "We had a show a few years ago about industrialization and impressionism, looking at how artists are seeing the rapid changes with factories being built, highways being brought in," he says. "Put it in today's perspective, in our information age, and you see we're going through an industrial revolution of our own. The bigger-picture question is how the art world shifts with that."

Particularly now that the gallery has reopened, and people are appreciating art again in person, Lo feels the future of art lies in physical exhibitions, but in a way that's complemented by digital innovation. "There are a lot of digital tools, but it's not quite the same as being in front of a painting or sculpture and admiring the brushstrokes and materials used by the artist. That's still important," he shares. "But the silver lining is, there are new tools. If you want to go in-depth, you're able to hop on your phone and get that audio tour or go through the exhibition before you come on-site, so you know what to focus on when you're here."

A key point for consideration with bringing art back to the public has been accessibility and ensuring as many people can connect with the work on show as possible. "We're reflecting the place we live in," he continues. "We're a diverse city with people from all over the world. We ensure they feel they have a home here in the gallery, and what we offer is meant for them."

No matter what artist you're visiting the AGO for, or which piece of work you want to appreciate, it's Lo's job to ensure it happens seamlessly, with impact. In the same way the creation of art is personal, so, too, is the experience of enjoying it. "One of the things we've heard from visitors is how much they've missed coming to the gallery and being able to stand in front of a painting and lose themselves in their thoughts," he says. "It's therapeutic in many ways. It's part of this experience of knowing you're part of something greater than who we are. I think it's important, especially now, to know we're in this together." **ago.ca**

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Lo is director of visitor experience at the AGO

JOSH BASSECHES: LEADING A LIFE INSPIRED BY KING TUTANK HAMEN

ART

Josh Basseches, director and CEO of the Royal Ontario Museum, reflects on art history, travel and working for a great museum in an exceptional city

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER

SCAN THE OR CODE FOR DOLCE'S EXCLUSIVE BEHIND THE SCENES FOOTAGE





rowing up in Washington, D.C., Josh Basseches was surrounded by standout museums. Whether it's the Smithsonian Institution, which stands today as 21 museums, galleries, gardens and a zoo, the National Museum of Women in the Arts or the Glenstone Museum's take on art, architecture and landscape, it's a city with plenty to see. For Basseches, it was this environment and one exhibition in particular — that led him to where he is now.

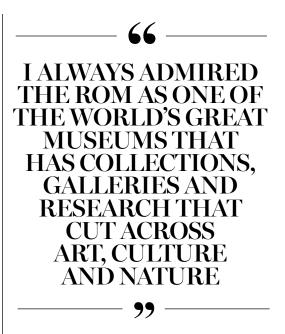
"In the 1970s, the first of the King Tutankhamen exhibitions came to Washington," he says. "I remember as a young person going through the extraordinary Egyptian objects and seeing the funeral mask of King Tut, the gold jewelry, carvings and all these wonderful, mysterious objects dug up by archeologists. I said, 'This is incredible. This is what I want to do' so I set a course at that point."

Since then, Basseches has spent a life invested in the arts. As well as working as deputy director of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mass., he worked as executive director of the Harvard Museum of Natural History and spent 10 years on the New England Museum Association's board. Today, he's director and CEO of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and is in the midst of completing a PhD in the history of art and architecture.

"I've worked in museums throughout my life," he continues. "You get to know where the exceptional ones are located and who has remarkable collections. I always admired the ROM as one of the world's great museums that has collections, galleries and research that cut across art, culture and nature. It's truly comprehensive. When I got a call saying, 'We're looking for the next director and CEO of the ROM,' I leapt at the chance. It's pretty rare you get the chance to work at not only a great museum, but also a great museum in an exceptional city."

Given both his role and the presence of the establishment, no two days look the same for Basseches. He explains how his job covers everything the museum does, from discussing upcoming exhibitions to the type of coffee visitors are drinking. "I might be in a meeting in the morning where I'll have a curator wanting to buy a dinosaur fossil from Montana. I might be hiring a new curator of climate change," he explains. "I'm also very involved in the operational, financial and organizational side of the museum, which includes talking to our chief marketing officer about how to recover our attendance after the pandemic."

For that reason, Basseches calls himself "a capable generalist," but ensures he's surrounded by people who are experts on every facet the museum covers. "I need to know about Indigenous art and culture, for example, but I also rely on talented curators, educators and others who bring greater insight into the discussion. I'm reliant on this exceptional team of experts across the museum."



His own personal area of scholarship is 19thcentury art or, more specifically, something he calls the "transatlantic exchange." "During the 1870s, '80s and '90s, thousands of young, aspiring art students left New York, Boston and studied in Paris," he shares. "At the time, it was the centre of the art universe. I'm interested in how those young artists studied in Europe, how Americans influenced French art and how the experience of living in Paris led to all these talents and trends in North America."

Alongside his work at the museum, Basseches loves to travel, with plans to visit the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, high up on the list. He also loves being on the water. Recently, while sailing in the Gulf of Maine on a historic schooner, he was put in a situation where he had to face his fear of heights and was treated to a memorable life lesson.

"One of the expectations was to take one of the shifts at the top of the mast as a lookout. I was picked on the night shift and had to climb up the rigging," he says. "I got to the crow's nest and it turned out to be one of those memorable experiences. When you allow yourself to be pushed out of your comfort area and try something you may not want to do, it often has enormous payoffs."

But for all the culture that surrounds him in the day and the adventure he seeks in his free time, Basseches believes slowing down is key to finding *la dolce vita.* "We can all be busy with the next deadline, demand, need or requirement someone has and be focused on life that's satisfying, but doesn't have much sweetness," he says. "It's about taking time to slow down. Eat the things you find wonderful, travel to places you want to see and spend time with people you care about. Those are the things that bring sweetness to life."

www.rom.on.ca @@romtoronto Binon created her blog, *Stems* & *Forks*, in 2017 to showcase all her creative musings: recipes, photography and botanical sculptures. Since then, Binon has built a successful multi-faceted brand after nearly 20 years in the floral design business

BETTY BINON: THE REMBRANDT OF FOOD

A feast for the eyes through Betty Binon's passion for food, florals and photography

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

f only you could taste Betty Binon's beautiful musings through the pages of *Dolce*. Luckily, the next best thing would be to try the bespoke recipe she created for our fall edition: braided pumpkin babka with chocolate and pecans.

Binon is the creative force behind Stems &

Forks, a blog she started in 2017 to showcase her musings on recipes, photography and botanical sculptures. After having worked in floral design for two decades, Binon realized she needed an outlet to satisfy the other aspects of her creative mind. As she explains, "I went into the blogging business, and I thought, *I'll teach myself how to bake*, *hozv to cook and document my journey* ... I said I'll go back to photography, which I had abandoned decades before. So, I decided, you know what, I'm going to make this hodgepodge of everything I'm interested in."

Her creations, which are genuinely a feast for the eyes, are characterized by the Golden Era's

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chiaroscuro style, which involves contrasting light and shadow in drawing and painting for visual effect. Binon's individual interpretation of this style through her work is intended to teach those admiring the art form a greater lesson: "For me, the relationship between light and shadow is simple. Beauty and joy can only be appreciated and understood when darkness is present."

Binon captures the chiaroscuro imperative through the use of a small palette of colours dominated by dark earth tones and golden highlights in photographs of her combinations of food and floral arrangements, all of which give her visual creations a Rembrandt-like effect. "Manipulating light and creating shadows with strong highlights have been around for centuries, that form of storytelling, and I just love that strong contrast of the darkness with the light. I tend to gravitate toward art like that, even music. Music that's kind of got a dark side, but then has that really uplifting, hopeful side. It speaks to me," says Binon.

Making the leap from the floral business into the unknown world of blogging wasn't a risk-free proposition, but was something Binon knew she needed to do for her own peace of mind. "I have always been like my father's daughter, which is [that I] don't take risks, and to move always cautiously, and, now, I'm realizing that, I think, in life you have to take risks, and the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward. I do have regrets. I regret not taking the plunge earlier, so, I would say that it's easier said than done, but be fearless, be strong. Chase your dreams, because I truly believe we only

have one life, we don't have an afterlife, and, if we do, we don't have it here on Earth. So, try to do what you love, because you may not have a second chance, you know? ... Even if it was 20 years later, I would say that if you want to make a career shift into something that you love, definitely go for it."

Growing up in a Korean and Japanese household, Binon infuses her background into the flavours of her dishes, blended with a presentation informed by the Renaissance esthetic. "If you look at my feed, I do try to inject a lot of my background into it, so there are a lot of Korean or Japanese ingredients ... Taste is very important. I look at seasons and the availability, and, because I am a visual storyteller, I try to think of something that's beautiful or that could convey some type of beauty."

For many of us, the rise of the recent pause in our lives has given us the ability to lean into skills and passions that we may not otherwise have had the opportunity to explore. For Binon, this was embracing something she's always wanted to do. "One of the takeaways from the pandemic was learning how to shoot video. During the pandemic, as soon as it started, everyone went into panic — they cancelled events, they cancelled gigs, jobs. So, for me, I lost a lot of business in the beginning, because workshops and speaking engagements got cancelled. I decided, you know what, I'm going to teach myself video. This is something that has always been on my bucket list. I'm going to take the time to learn it, and, so, for the past 19 months, I've just been teaching myself how to shoot and edit video."

Just like Binon taught herself how to bake, cook and work the camera, she has brought her magic touch to the art of videography. "I think teaching it yourself definitely absorbs a lot better, instead of sitting in a class. Teaching myself videography, for instance, rather than a course, it's a struggle, but I tend to absorb it a lot better going through that struggle and trying to figure things out. I



think there is something to be said about being self-taught, for sure."

Despite providing her with the time to develop her skills as a videographer, society's pause brought about its challenges, not the least of which was something all mothers can relate to: "I would have to say there was a thorn for my kids; I really felt bad for my kids. For a seven-year-old and a 15-year-old to be cooped up in a house and to see the daily ins and outs of their mom and dad working, I just thought, mentally, it was the most wretched for kids. They couldn't go to birthday parties or celebrate their own with their friends ... Seeing my kids suffer from that was horrible."

But, at least, the increased time at home allowed for well-deserved family time. "I think the biggest pro has been being able to sit down and have dinner with my family. That, to me, is priceless and a time that I miss so much from the childhood of my first daughter, my firstborn, when I had the flower shop. Just being able to cook a meal, and being able to offer that to my family is such a treat I didn't get that growing up; my parents were always at work. I think, in many ways, as I became an adult, I thought that that was acceptable, and OK, just to work hard like an ox and not care about anything else, just as long as you're focused on working and providing for the family. But, I realize there's more to providing to the family than just financial providing: it's to actually be there, be physically present in the lives of your kids. Just being physically there to let them know you're here, you know, is, I think, very valuable in a child's life."

In addition to her children, Binon's ideal guests for a dinner party are Jesus Christ, Johan Sebastian Bach and her grandmother. An interesting mix, at first glance, but completely consistent with Binon's sources of inspiration. "I would have to say it comes from everywhere. It comes from ideas, or emotions and then, based on those ideas, or concepts or emotions, I try to create a visual

story, so it doesn't even necessarily have to be something visual. It can be as simple as an emotion of nostalgia and then I'll go from there."

When Binon was a teenager, she always wanted to create films in some capacity, but shied away from it because of her father. "My dad was like, 'Oh, you're chasing rainbows.' Very old-school immigrant Dad, typical immigrant Dad, and I believed him and said, 'Yeah, you're right, you're right.' And now, I'm in that state of mind of I really don't want to be on my deathbed and say I didn't try, so it's a dream I always had that I'm trying to make happen now later in life — pursuing things that I've always wanted to. One thing that I've been really focused on for the past seven months is actually writing a screenplay. I've been writing a screenplay, which I've

been really focused on, and I don't know if it's going to take me anywhere, but it's one of those things that I've always wanted to do, and now I have the time to do it ... if something comes of it, great, but if it doesn't, at least I can die saying I tried."

Admiring the light because of darkness, or seeing the beauty in unexpected places, defines Binon's journey. "The sweet life is being able to find beauty in the everyday. I always say, 'Finding the extraordinary in the ordinary' that's kind of like my little motto in my head. I think that stems from me growing up in such a poor household and always trying to elevate the experience, even though we didn't have the most luxurious things around us. I think that's the sweetness of life, is just finding it in whatever situation you're in, you just have to make it."

There's something to say about those who make even the smallest parts of their lives the most whimsical they can be — understanding that what makes life wonderful isn't what you're given, but what you create with your hands and your mind. With that, we hope this recipe reflects more than just a sweet treat, but living *la dolce vita*.

www.stemsandforks.com

"TASTE IS VERY INPORTANT. I LOOK AT SEASONS AND THE AVAILABILITY, AND, BECAUSE I AMIA ISUAL STORYTELLER, ITRY TO THINK OF SOMETHING THAT'S BEAUTIFUL OR THAT COULD CONVEY SOME TYPE OF BEAUTY"

BRAIDED PUMPKIN BABKA WITH CHOCOLATE AND PECANS

INGREDIENTS

For the Dough:

2 teaspoons active dry yeast
1/4 cup or 50 g sugar, plus 1 teaspoon divided
1/2 cup milk warmed to 110°F-115°F
5-5 1/4 cup or 650-680 g, as needed, unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 cup or 115 g unsalted butter, room temperature and cut into cubes
3 eggs room temperature, separate and save 1 egg white
1 cup pumpkin purée, canned or fresh

For the Filling:

1/2 cup or 115 g unsalted butter, room temperature
3/4 cup or 150 g cup dark brown sugar
1/2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1/2 cup pumpkin purée, canned or fresh
1 cup or 125 g chopped pecans
1 cup or 115 g roughly chopped semi-sweet chocolate

DIRECTIONS

For the Dough:

Add 1 teaspoon sugar and yeast to warm milk. Stir gently and wait about 7-10 minutes, until the yeast proofs and forms a foamy top. In a stand mixer bowl, with the paddle attachment, mix together 5 cups flour, 1/4 cup sugar, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Add the eggs (2 eggs, plus 1 egg yolk), yeast milk and mix on low-medium speed. Swap out the paddle attachment for the hook. Add the 1 cup pumpkin purée and mix until incorporated. Add the butter, a couple cubes at a time, and knead for about 10 minutes on low-medium, scraping the down the sides of the bowl periodically, until dough looks smooth, shiny and elastic. If the dough doesn't pull away from the sides of the bowl after 10 minutes, add a tablespoon at a time of flour until the dough is tacky and doesn't stick to the sides of the bowl.

Grease a large bowl with neutral oil and transfer the dough to the bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and place in fridge overnight. Remove dough from fridge about 1 hour before rolling out to make it softer to work with.

For the Filling:

Beat the butter with the paddle attachment in the stand mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Add the brown sugar, cinnamon and pumpkin purée. Cream together until smooth and spreadable.

Assembling the Babka

Take dough from fridge at least 1 hour before rolling. On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into 2 pieces. Roll dough out into rectangle about 18 inches x 14 inches. Spread half the filling evenly over the sheet of dough. Sprinkle half the chopped pecans and semi-sweet chocolate. Roll into a tight log lengthwise using both hands. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Repeat with remaining piece of dough. Freeze logs for about 15 minutes. Once logs have hardened a bit, use a very sharp serrated knife to cut lengthwise down the middle. Take the tendrils and create a cross, looping over each other.

Continue looping over, starting with the tendril underneath and cross over the top tendril of its neighbouring braid. When the tendrils become too short, take the ends of the tendrils and tuck under the babka.

Transfer the babka to a baking sheet covered with parchment paper. Cover with a warm damp kitchen towel and leave at room temperature for 25–30 minutes.

Baking the Babka

Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly whisk the reserved egg white until loosened. Brush the egg wash all over the babka.

Bake for 35-40 minutes. Check if babka is over-browning at 20 minutes and cover with foil.

At 30 minutes, check for doneness by inserting a cake tester in centre. Tester should come out clean and not gummy.

Store in airtight container for up to 3 days. Enjoy.



Prep time: 30 active minutes Cook time: 35-40 minutes





STYLE





CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

Tom Mihalik's Tom's Place stands atop men's apparel from its modest beginnings in Toronto's Kensington Market

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER

In almost every major metropolitan city, there exists a certain retail "legend." That special and distinctive man or woman, who personifies their business or industry, is known throughout the city, and possesses that larger-than-life personality trait that can best be described as being a "character." When delving a little deeper into these characters, you notice a common denominator — the innate ability to connect with people.

In Toronto, that legend is Tom Mihalik, owner of Tom's Place, which, for more than 50 years, has been selling menswear and business apparel at below-retail prices from its now more than 15,000-square-foot location in the heart of the city's Kensington Market neighbourhood. Simply put, Mihalik has a passion for clothes, and selling clothes, that is most likely unmatched anywhere.

"I just have always loved clothes; it's that simple," says Mihalik in a recent interview with *Dolce.* "Growing up in Hungary, we didn't have a lot of money, but my mother would always dress me to look good, as looking good was important, so it looked like I fit in. Clothes became a passion of mine, and I was always wearing dress pants, dress shirts and jackets."

Tom's father, William Mihalik, first came to Canada in 1956 after the Hungarian Revolution and, armed with a strong work ethic but very little money, he opened William's Bargain Store, selling used furniture and clothes in Kensington Market in 1958. However, it took 12 long years before he could send for the rest of his family to join him.

"I dreamed of a life here in Canada," says Mihalik. "My dad's store gave us an opportunity to live and work here, and it was much better with more freedom here. With hard work, you can do anything you want in Canada."

Mihalik started working at his father's store at just age 12, literally on the street outside William's Bargain Store. "The stores in Kensington Market are tiny, so most of the selling in the neighbourhood took place on the actual street, and sales and clothing were definitely in my blood," says Mihalik. "It was a very European atmosphere, and I loved it as it was so lively. Kensington has changed as most of those European store owners have gone, replaced by people from the West Indies, Africa and China, but they all love it and have great opportunities here. Kensington is a small city within a city."

He also loved living on neighbouring Spadina Avenue, surrounded by some of the finest tailors anywhere, who could make a made-to-measure suit by hand using the finest materials on the spot. "It also had some of the best eateries in the world, with the best bakers, butchers, cheese shops, all second to none," says Mihalik in recalling those early days. "In those days, people shopped every day, and all the food had to be fresh."

He also paid close attention to his father and how he treated his customers, always giving them a good deal, and, most importantly, how his dad treated people. "If my dad saw someone struggling or homeless, he sometimes would treat them to breakfast at the Crest Restaurant on Spadina," says Mihalik. "He would also tell some folks who were going through tough times to pay him for the clothes whenever they could."

That spirit of community has stayed with him, and, today, Tom's Place supports many local organizations, such as SickKids Foundation, St. Michael's Hospital Foundation, The Children's Breakfast Clubs, St. Stephen's Community House, the National Youth Orchestra, the Kensington Market Jazz Festival, many local sports teams and Jewish organizations.

"It's nicer to give than receive," says Mihalik. "The community has given us so much, and it's always important to give back; otherwise, we have no city, no province and no country. It's my duty to give back, and we've been doing it forever."

When his father retired, Mihalik took over the business in 1981 and moved to new premises on Baldwin Street with a new name: Tom's Place. Here his legend grew as he connected with people with engaging, lively conversation and by being visible. "My mother once took me outside and pointed to the sign and said, 'That's you. You can't stay in the back. Get out front.' And I do," says Mihalik. "I always want to make sure my customers see me and get to know me, as you've got to work for your customers."

Retailing legend Mihalik stands amid his 15,000-square-foot Tom's Place location, a fashion institution in Toronto for more than 50 years

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IT'S NICER TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE. THE COMMUNITY HAS GIVEN US SO MUCH, AND IT'S ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO GIVE BACK

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With Toronto being Canada's economic capital, Mihalik decided to focus on business apparel and began to build a loyal clientele in the nearby financial district because of the discounts he offered. Proof that everyone loves a bargain, Tom's Place attracted the everyman, and the richest man, as Ken Thomson, then Canada's wealthiest person, was a regular customer.

"Ken was a kind, caring and loving man and even came to my 50th birthday party," says Mihalik. "One day, I got a note from him saying he thought the advertisement I was running in *The Globe and Mail, his* newspaper at the time, was too jumbled and cluttered. That it needed more white space to be better understood. I, of course, took his advice, but for Ken Thomson to take the time to care about my business like that says so much about the man."

Celebrities, such as Burt Reynolds, professional athletes and politicians have all made the pilgrimage to Tom's Place. "The mother of Toronto Mayor John Tory once phoned me to say I should be dressing the mayor because 'everyone goes to your place, and John is the mayor of everyone' that was such a big compliment," recalls Mihalik.

Mihalik's notoriety in Toronto is enhanced by his many radio commercials, always with a positive and optimistic commentary on the mood of the day. Many barely mention clothes at all, as he doesn't believe in doing a hard sell, and his loyal customer base is well aware of him.

"I always believed in our concept, and I was advertising even during the dark days of the pandemic to encourage everyone to stay strong, as this province and the city have been very important to me," says Mihalik. "While our business went south during the pandemic, we never gave up during the difficult times." When Mihalik was a youngster growing up in Hungary, he was enamoured with the movies of the 1930s and 1940s, and by the suits of the actors being so impeccably tailored and stylish. He often wondered if someday he'd have the opportunity to dress some of the movie stars. As fate would have it, the giant television and movie production business in Toronto was allowed to operate during the pandemic, and many production companies turned to Tom's Place for their wardrobes making a young man's dream come true.

Mihalik sees a mood change recently, and as more things in life open up, and hopefully stay open, he senses a pent-up demand to dress up again after 18 months of sweatpants, bathrobes and bunny slippers. "People want to go out, look good and go to functions again," says Mihalik. "Evening wear, such as black suits, are back again, and we've never sold as many tuxedos as we have in the last few months. You always want to look your best when you go somewhere special, and there is no doubt high-quality tailored clothing is back again."

Another factor of influence may be coming from the top — the absolute top. Mihalik believes President Joe Biden has brought back taste and style in men's clothing, with coloured shirts, patterned ties, pocket squares, pinstriped suits and Corneliani sports jackets.

"Biden has great taste," says Mihalik. "We carry his Hickey Freeman suits, one of the oldest suit makers in North America. He wears his clothing extremely well, and his shirts, jackets and pants are perfectly fitted. He mixes American know-how and Italian fashion very well, and he has definitely brought back style."

It is the quality of the well-fitted suits, all 100 per cent wool in every price range, that keeps customers coming back to Tom's Place all these







years. "When the fabric is not good quality, you cannot make a good garment," says Mihalik, speaking of the quality he is known for. "We have served up to three or four generations, and I, now, have customers who are bringing in their sons or grandsons for suits, and there is no bigger satisfaction than that."

That concept of family is the foundation of Tom's Place, as Mihalik has now been joined in the business by his son, Tom Jr., and sister, Anett Alves.

"We are very much a family business, and it's great working with them both. We never have arguments," says Mihalik. "I think my dad would be very proud of my family and all the great things we have done, never forgetting where we came from and to work hard, believe in yourself and to not give up on your dream."

"My dream was to sell designer clothing in the early 1980s at discount prices, and we were the first to do that," says Mihalik. "We have people from all walks of life shopping here because of our quality and pricing and our vast selection of merchandise. We probably have more suits here than anywhere else in the world. We always wanted to be known as the place that sells suits."

Family, friends, relationships and clothing are what make up *la dolce vita*, or the sweet life, for Mihalik. With the addition of Italian food. "The best meals are Italian, with fresh and simple soups, pasta, breads and sauces," says Mihalik. "In order for you to have la dolce vita, you don't need money, you just need style and class, which is very much alive and well in Italy."

We would all consider ourselves most fortunate indeed to know a man such as Tom Mihalik and even more honoured to call him a friend. He may be a legendary retailer, known to everyone in town, but he is first and foremost a good and decent man, and there is no higher praise than that.

toms-place.com ©@tomsplaceto





HOW TO DRESS YOUR HOME WITH SEASONED DESIGNER JANIE MOLSTER

Dolce spoke with interior designer Janie Molster from her home in North Carolina about her philosophy when it comes to dressing your home your way, filtered through a lens of irreverent design and boho flair

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

anie Molster's designs are completely imperfect. It's for this reason, among others, that her work stands out from the crowd. "After installation, when we've fluffed every pillow and dimmed every light, and the candle is burning and we're walking out of the room, and I look back, my overwhelming kneejerk inclination is to go mess something up. It's just a little bit too perfect. That's something that I always try to bring to the table, because if it's too perfect, you kind of want to walk past that room."

Having grown up in rural northeastern North Carolina, Molster's ability to create a welcoming home speaks to her Southern charm and warm nature, "You want a house where you open the door and you feel like the house is embracing you and drawing you in visually. I don't want the house to be so intimidating that you feel like you're in a museum."

The pages of her first monograph, *House* Dressing: Interiors for Colorful Living (published by The Monacelli Press), which is dedicated to her five children and husband, John, Molster, invite you to take a look at the spaces that are always intended to, "make people become more



Molster believes dressing your bed well is a key component to feeling at peace. "People lead such busy lives; we're all pulled in so many directions, and when you slide into bed, we need the best mattress, we need the nicest sheets, the duvet or the blankets that fit you exactly"

in touch with and raise the bar of their aesthetic," including her very own urban farmhouse. Each vibrant project gives insight on how to work with colour, pattern and texture, while always staying sophisticated and finely attuned to their occupant.

Q: When did you have the "aha!" moment of when you knew you wanted to get started in interior design?

JM: I thought I was going to be an English teacher and was very excited about it. Then I married relatively young, shortly after college, and began a family very quickly, and some of that got derailed for a bit. But it was really when I had worked on our first home, and I joke that I was very long on ideas and very low on budget, just trying to be creative and trying to pull it all together. From that point, what happened is a few friends would come to visit or come for dinner and say, "Would you help me pick out a paint colour? Would you help me arrange my furniture?" And, it started to then be the friend of the friend, of the friend. One day, it was my birthday, and a couple of my girlfriends took me to lunch, and my birthday cards were business cards that they had had printed for me. They were like, "You've got to take this plunge," so I always say that design found me. I just kept looking the other way for a long time. Finally, I heard it, and it was definitely something I should always do. I was rearranging my room as a child. I would paint my college apartments just so that I could stand to live in them for five months, you know? I've always been very impacted by my environment, so it just took me a while to hear that.

Q: What is your advice for designers coming out of school?

JM: When I think of people like Sister Parish and people like that who came through the design world without formal education and what that does is, you make a lot of errors. It's trial by fire, and so the education piece of the design career to me is so important. What I find is that all the design schools, which I either have interns rotating through or have new hires from, being an interior

designer in a residential community, you have to really be an apprentice in a firm. They don't really teach it in the design schools. My advice when I visit them is to apply to design firms where you love the work that's happening, because you're going to learn more in your first year of work than you could possibly learn in a two- or fouryear education program. So, of course, I've done continuing education, we all have to do that, but it was definitely a trial by fire.

In the first 10 years of my career, I don't even like to think of the profit margins, because I was eating mistakes left and right, but you definitely learn quickly that way. I'm just so envious of the people that I hire that are coming out of design school with so many wonderful technological skills. That's just so advantageous for our firm to have that available.

Q: In your book, you speak on designing a space that reflects who you are. Why is this important? JM: Some days, I've got head to toe Lululemon on,

JM: Some days, I've got head to toe Lululemon on, and it's not your everyday, but that's why looking

In her first book, published by The Monacelli Press, Molster reveals the secrets behind her signature ability to craft dreamy interiors and shares down-to-earth advice for creating your own beautiful and personal spaces

> WHEN YOU'RE ABLE TO FIND OUT PERSONAL PREFERENCES AND INCORPORATE IT INTO AN INTERIOR, I'M CONVINCED PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER IN THEIR HOUSE

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PHOTO BY TASHA TOLLIVER

in a closet reveals so much. It's got the whole gamut of what you like to wear, and you really get a sense of it. I don't do really well in wearing prints, and I don't use a lot of prints in my own home. But yet, I do use them in some clients' houses. It's just a personal preference for me. When you're able to find out personal preferences and incorporate it into an interior, I'm convinced people are happier in their house. It just brings them more pleasure to walk in and see a space that really tells you a lot about a person.

Q: Why do you believe that interior design is just so important for everyday life?

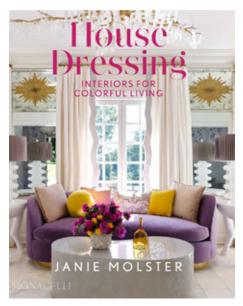
JM: I encourage people to really take stock of what is around them. We all love to go to beautiful places, beautiful scenic vacations. We are innately visual people. People have to realize that whether it's very obvious to someone, like someone like me that knows that their environment impacts them, or if it's somebody who's not even aware that it's happening on some subterranean level, I can tell you that if it becomes visually pleasing to you and you become more aware, it's going to bring you so much enjoyment. So that's my goal: having people become more in touch with their esthetic and raising the bar of their esthetic. So, a lot of it is education and psychiatry. Sometimes, they even say to me, "What should I like?" I say, "Oh, no, no, no, I'm not going to tell you what you should like; we're going to figure out what you like. We're going to take the time, do the research and get to the bottom of it."

Q: How were you able to grow such a beautiful family while also building your career? What would be your advice for women?

JM: I say this to my team, which is all women, too, "When that hard decision comes when you're looking at the 'most important meeting of my career,' and daughter's ballet recital, it's daughter's ballet recital. It's always family. You'll never look back and regret putting family first." You know, I started off, and things were going really well, but then I had 10 years or so ... I remember something was published, and the writer who had reached out to me, said, "Oh my God, I think I wrote something about you 10 years ago - where have you been?" And I said, "Well, I've just been trying to keep my foot in the door, because I've had a lot of other things pulling at me in other directions, and I don't regret that at all." I'm so glad I made the choice to put family first during the crunch years. The babies are easy. It's the older children that really need you to be present emotionally. So, that would be the piece of advice that I would give to young mothers: always choose family. The career is such a side gig to being a mother.

Q: What's one object you can't live without?

JM: I have a beautiful ring on my middle finger that my husband gave me that's a white sapphire.



In *House Dressing: Interiors for Colorful Living* by Janie Molster, Molster gives a master class on layering colour, pattern and texture to make spaces that are bold and captivating, but always comfortable and personal

I wake up every morning and that's the first thing that I reach for. I wear it every day. It brings me so much happiness. That's something I can't live without, not necessarily an interior design element, but a personal one.

Q: What is your biggest interior design pet peeve?

JM: Short lamps drive me crazy. When you have a lamp in the room, ideally the lamp is there to create ambient light and also to illuminate. Say you're reading a book, sewing on a button, the light should cast over a shoulder when you're sitting, and these lamps that are so short are basically casting a light at your lap. They make a room feel short; that drives me crazy.

Q: How has the pandemic affected your view on life?

JM: My daughter laughs all the time because I always say, "It's not a dress rehearsal, honey, just go for it. This is the real play. Just go for it the whole time." The pandemic really brought that message home for me - just how lucky we all are. But how that relates to an interior, I do touch on this in my book, is some people always say, "Oh well, we can't have that, because we have a toddler." And I always say, "Let me tell you, the toddler quickly becomes the messy school-aged child that's bringing home sporting equipment and dirty shoes, and that quickly leads into a college boy who's bringing home 10 cases of beer. And don't forget about the grandparent visiting who's stashing away red wine and your friends that are eating Chinese food on your white sofa, or your puppy." I said, "There's just always something you can say. I just can't have this quite yet." My opinion is you can have it; you just have to figure out a way to make it durable. Don't wait to design your house, if you have the financial means to move forward. Go ahead and do it now; there's always some reason to put it off because of vulnerability.

Q: And what would you say inspires you most?

JM: A lot of designers are probably not completely forthcoming about this, but I would tell you that I'm inspired by my peers. I really am. When I get a new design magazine, and I open it up, I can't hear anything around me. I'm so immersed. I'm so amazed by the talent of my contemporaries. Of course, everyone says, "I'm inspired by travel, I'm inspired by art." But, I'm also really inspired by other designers and their amazing creativity.

Q: What makes you feel at peace?

JM: A bed that is dressed with really, really great linens. My kids laugh so hard because they'll all come and jump in my bed, and whatever, and I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. This is my little area. This is my safe place. This is my happy place." If I'm going through someone's budget on a design, I'm always going, "We need to add a little more on the bed. We need to pad the bed budget, because we spend so much time there." People lead such busy lives; we're all pulled in so many directions, and when you slide into bed, we need the best mattress, we need the nicest sheets, the duvet or the blankets that fit you exactly, whether you're hot or cool at night. So, getting the bed just right, to me, is so important to me, and my bed brings me such peace and happiness.

Q: What would you say to your younger self?

JM: I would say, "Be patient. You're going to have an opportunity to do all of this." I work now more than I ever have, because I can. To your point earlier about the family, I have more time to work, and work brings me such fulfilment so I would say, "Be patient. All these things are going to happen, and it doesn't all have to happen in the same year." And, back to the "it's not a dress rehearsal," just take advantage of friends and family and opportunities to be together. I always prioritize that and try to create homes and vacation homes that draw people to do that. So, I would say to my younger self, "Just be patient. It's all going to happen."

Q: What does *la dolce vita* mean to you?

JM: I immediately think of this past weekend in my life. We had this little house down here at the beach in North Carolina filled with tons of family and friends. We had two beautiful outdoor dinners and sat outside on porches together. My kids, who are musical, we sang around the guitar, and, I mean, how does it get any better than that? To me, if I could make a picture of that, that's what I would call that.

janiemolster.com

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A NAME WORTH KNOWING

After a serious motor accident that left him deaf in one ear, Ed Hand decided to do what he does best: help people

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

d Hand has always led a life filled with love. Born in St. John's, N.L., he was the youngest of 10. Though he lost his father at the age of two, and lived with financial hardship, he makes a point of saying he grew up surrounded by people who cared.

As a kid, he says he was different. Not because of the way he hated school (only making it to Grade 7), but because he always managed to have a dollar in his pocket. Whether he was selling worms for people to go fishing, shovelling snow in the winter or offering up tickets to see hockey games, Ed had a way of making ends meet.

When you revisit his experience over the years, you start to realize this could be where his entrepreneurial spirit began. On leaving home, he flew from success to success, namely in the shoe business.

Not long after landing a job on the sales floor of Fredelle, a division of Kinney Shoes, he was boosting sales week after week and was promoted to store manager. After that, he was offered a job as supervisor, travelling across Canada to different store locations. Following that, he was approached by the ALDO Group, who made him assistant sales director of Canada.

For Ed, life was good. He had an impressive resumé and the satisfied customers to back him up. He wasn't just propelling sales through the roof, but was also living comfortably. Then, everything changed.

"I had a very bad car accident. I was going to get my kid a bicycle. On the way back, I was going through a green light, and the other gentleman ran a red light," he shares. "I remember hitting the car. I was in a state of shock. I got out and collapsed. They took me to hospital by ambulance, and I remember having this ringing in my ears."

When he returned home, he thought he'd suffered only soft-tissue injuries and knee trauma but, 10 months later, he was sick and rushed



— Ed Hand

back into hospital. After a number of tests, it was determined he'd lost his hearing in one ear.

From there, Ed was faced with financial instability, mental and physical stress from the hearing complications and challenges he wasn't expecting. Because there was a 10-month delay between the accident and Ed losing his hearing, the process to settle the case was also complex.

He was connected with personal injury lawyer Daniel J. Balena, who managed to turn the case around. Though he says that "there's no price tag on hearing loss," it was a result worth fighting for. When Ed started telling his story, and people began to find their way to Balena for his expertise, Balena did the unexpected and asked if Ed wanted to start working with him, with no licence or legal experience.

All of this led to the founding of where Ed works now. "My last name is Hand, I make a difference in people's lives and I'm available 24-7," he says. "So I said, 'I'm going to call my company Helping Hand.""

Today, Helping Hand is an organization founded in association with Balena's law firm that provides immediate support and assistance to victims of injury or accident. Covering everything from motor accidents to spinal injuries and longterm disability claims, they help families overcome the hurdles that appear between an accident and a settlement. "I love to make a difference for people," Ed continues. "I made my success because I've been honest, genuine. And any commitment I've ever made to anybody, I've fulfilled."

He also works with his two sons, Peter Hand and Adam Hand, making it a true family enterprise. Adam, who always dreamed of working alongside his father, says, "when I was younger I loved the way he was able to help people and how he knew just what they needed because he's been through it himself." Peter says, "I started working with my father, as I enjoy helping clients and families get through the hard times of an accident and truly making a difference in their lives." His son Ryan, not involved in the business, says, "The best advice I ever received from my father is to do whatever makes you happy and live in the moment."

It's not until you speak to the ever-expanding network of people who orbit Ed that you realize the impact he's had on the lives of others. "I have seen Ed make a dramatic difference in those who have been severely injured," says Cliff Hendler, who works with Ed professionally. "When people hire him, they become family for life. No matter if a case was settled years ago, he'll go to great lengths to keep in touch and see how everyone is."

Jonathan Juna, a client who had a serious car accident back in 2015, says Ed changed his life from the moment they met. "I thought I was going to be stuck for years until I received my settlement, but Ed didn't let that happen. Ed and his sons Adam and Peter always go the extra mile to make sure I'm OK." Balena, who helped Ed through his accident before hiring him to help with future clients, gives glowing reviews, sharing how Ed has an "enthusiasm for the work and a level of focus and commitment to the development of personal injury files that are rarely seen."

Sandy McEwan, who has been working with Ed after his daughter had an accident 12 years ago, agrees. 'Trust' is a very strong word, but more important is a feeling of cemented belief that the person's intentions are always for the greater good. That you can't be let down. Ed is the epitome of trust. If he says he will do it, consider it done. His actions are what give me the fullest trust of anyone I know. He's never disappointed me and he's gone above and beyond."

helpinghandinc.com





THE NAME'S BOULUD, CHEF DANIEL BOULUD

From his eponymous French brasserie at the Four Seasons Hotel in Yorkville, Toronto, Daniel Boulud shares the stories of working as a young chef in Lyon and how it has informed the restaurant's modern yet classically inspired menu today

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

hortly before *Dolce* sat down with Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud for an intimate conversation at Toronto's Café Boulud, we couldn't help but overhear a discussion between the chef and one of his assistants regarding Boulud's latest venture, Le Pavillon in New York City (NYC). The point from the conversation was clear: the placement of the flowers in the restaurant had to be impeccable. It's that dedication, that passion, and that attention to detail that has made Boulud one of the most celebrated chefs in the world. His charming French accent, paired with his contagious smile and kind eyes, is only part of what has contributed to his success.

Peppered with a few French words here and there, *Dolce*'s interview with Boulud covered everything from his latest projects and most meaningful accolades to his earliest culinary memories (plucking feathers from pheasants, partridge and woodcocks, if you must know) and why he will always consider himself a chef, first and foremost.

Q: You brought your French cooking training from Lyon, France, all the way to New York City, where you made your reputation in the culinary world. What was most surprising when you arrived from overseas, both professionally and personally?

A: What I felt coming from France, having worked in different parts of France as a young chef, and coming from my hometown in Lyon, I felt America was in *décalage* (gap) — there was a difference of generation and a difference of time. They were still cooking the old stuff before I started to be a chef, cooking the old French cuisine more than the nouvelle cuisine.

As I learned cooking with some of the greatest chefs who were really making a revolution with French cuisine, I think that gave me the motivation to stay in America, because I felt that I had a role to play to bring something new, a new approach to French cuisine.

Q: Since arriving in New York City in 1982, you have continually evolved your cuisine. How do you think your cuisine/style has changed most since 1982?

A: I think it has been the exposure to so many other different cuisines. The exposure to cooks in the kitchen whom I've been mentoring for decades are from all over the world. We see the next generation of cooks from South America, from Asia, from Canada, from Europe who have worked with me and went out on their own and developed something fantastic. Even in this town here [Toronto], Patrick Kriss with Alo was an alum of Daniel [Boulud's restaurant]. He came to Daniel to become a chef and today he's one of the best chefs in this town.

Q: Your culinary empire has brought you many accolades. Out of all of those accolades, which one are you most proud of, and which one means most to you?

A: Of course, some of the accolades were because of my work. All the James Beard awards I won in America, the Lifetime Achievement Award by the World's 50 Best Restaurants and, of course, the Michelin Star achievement.

But, personally, as a French, having left my

country and really tried to make the best out of my craft and teach my craft to others, that was the *Légion d'honneur* by the French. When the French give you the *Légion d'honneur*, that is to thank you for what you have done, for your craft and how you sort of have the excellence of it and you're doing good for what French cuisines represents around the world, but also for the community of where you are.

One of the most amusing achievements is that I've been on the Upper East Side for almost four decades now in New York. And, about five, six years ago, there was a new subway line that opened on the West Side - on 72nd Street and 2nd Avenue, there's a station — and they commissioned artists to do the stations. The station on 72nd Street is by Vik Muniz, the famous Brazilian artist and a good friend of mine. One day, he said, "Daniel, I need to take a portrait of you," and he took a portrait of me, and three years later, when they opened the walls of the subway, the walls were made as a mosaic, and my portrait is in the mosaic of 72nd street. It will be there for maybe 100 years. I think that was a great achievement to have been a New Yorker for so many years, and, on the same zip code, to end up in my zip code. That and Madame Tussauds New York - those are the two achievements as a citizen of New York that I need to do.

Q: You say that your inspiration remains grounded in the rhythm of the seasons. Can you speak on the importance of following the seasons?

A: I think if I had ended up in the Caribbean or Florida, or a place where seasonality was not as

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Michelin-starred chef Boulud recently opened Le Pavillon, an 11,000-square-foot dining experience at One Vanderbilt, in the heart of Manhattan

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prominent as New York City, I think it may have been different in my aspect of cooking. Being a New Yorker, first and foremost, and being French, I think French cuisine is driven by the heritage of the cuisine and the knowledge of the real classic cuisine, but also by the seasonality and the spontaneity with the seasonality, creating a new dish every year with what you expect to receive or what you are getting from the season. That, to me, is the biggest motivation and the biggest opportunity to have your menu constantly change it's like creating a new partition using only classic notes.

Q: You are best known for your restaurant, Daniel, in New York City, which has two Michelin stars. It is an incredible honour and achievement to have been awarded these Michelin stars, but they must also come with incredible pressure to maintain them. Can you speak on this and the pressure that one must feel to maintain this status?

A: I never opened a restaurant for the sake of Michelin stars only, but I always felt, as a chef, that I always maintain the reputation as one of the top five chefs in New York City. Usually, when customers come to New York, they usually want to come to the "Big 5." And that does not mean that there aren't 50 other restaurants to go to, but it's Le Bernardin, Per Se, Jean-Georges, Eleven Madison Park and Daniel. It's kind of like when you go to Africa and you want to see the big five, you're going to see a lot of other animals. In New York City, I always felt like we were the big five. To that, I hope Michelin will come to Canada, because it's the best reward, but also elevates all standards. Michelin, today, is not about being stuffy, fussy or pretentious; it's all about fine cuisine and fine dining and fine casual sometimes. We have seen restaurants with 20 seats and a counter get three stars, so it's fantastic. There's a real evolution in the approach to Michelin fine dining. But, for me, what's important is what we do for our customer. What really kept me excited, besides cooking, is the customer and the relationship with them. I want them to be able to come back often to my restaurants and not just want it to be a special occasion where you need to check the box and go once in your life. I really feel that I want to be part of my town, part of the community, and I want to be part of people's lives.

Q: Behind every restaurant, there's an incredible team. How do you ensure your team reflects the values you'd like to project into the world through your restaurants?

A: For example, for Café Boulud, we have a casual approach to fine dining, and we have a lot of communication. My chef and the professionals who are around me can talk to one another and share what's happening. For example, the chef here can say, "Oh, I've noticed you have a new dish at Boulud Sud or Bar Boulud or at Le Pavillon,

and what did you do? What was the technique? What was the recipe?" So we share the recipe amongst each other. When we make a menu, we talk about our organization around it, as well as what kind of dish fits best in the program of what we're doing. It's not cookie-cutter as much as if you have a more commercial type of restaurant, like a steakhouse. With the chef, the local team and the team working around me, we always work together collaborating.

Q: What do you love about Café Boulud, specifically, and of all the restaurants to choose from, which one would you eat at every day for the rest of your life? **A:** Café Boulud is a casual approach to fine dining. It's definitely the definition of Daniel in a much more casual way. At the same time, you can enjoy scrambled eggs and caviar, or you can just have your sunny-side-up with bacon. That's how the high and low, the fine and the approachable, the affordable, the expensive, all live well together. You can have a bottle of Dom Pérignon with your brunch, or you can have a selection of sparkling [wine] from the Ontario region. Café Boulud has always defined itself as being approachable excellence.

Q: Congratulations on your newest restaurant, Le Pavillon in NYC. What's your approach when opening a restaurant?

A: For this one, in particular, this is in the heart of midtown, and we wanted to create an oasis of greenery and garden. In French, le pavillon is often built in an avenue or park, and it's a place where you entertain, you're celebrating. It's not a hotel or *auberge*, it's really just a party place. I felt that this name would be synonymous with celebration. In New York, the idea was really to create a very refined restaurant in a very sophisticated simplicity. The elements are very simple: beautiful fabric, very modern and very classic, at the same time. The elements are the stone floor, the fabrics, the greenery, the wood aspects of the restaurant and the classic chair from Herman Miller. It's the music, the acoustic, the feel, the energy - it makes you feel good. It makes you feel that it is sophisticated, but very casual and relaxed. I think that's what I love about my business. With hospitality, there are so many ways to express what hospitality should be, and we always try to reinvent in a new way. I think going to Le Pavillon is different from going to Daniel; it's different from going to Café Boulud, but, at the same time, there's the service. Service is so important in the restaurant. We put a very strong hallmark on service. We want to make sure that our team is well trained. Our sommeliers are knowledgeable and really approachable in their approach to wine and their advice with that. So, wine, wine service, and the feel of the room, but also the energy of the service and the cuisine and the experience are important.

Q: Many people might not know that you have a management company called The Dinex Group. Between being a savvy businessman and chef, which one do you like more?

A: Chef first. That's why I have a CEO, such as Sebastien Silvestri. I have a team of executives and, of course, I share my time with my corporate chef, my chef de cuisine and my team. But, where I feel my best is when I'm in the kitchen. I want to know everything about the business. I am in every negotiation. I am aware of everything, but, at the same time, I also let people take their responsibility and play their role in our group.

Q: What are your first memories in the kitchen?

A: I don't know if it's pretty, but the chef I worked for when I was 14-15 years old was a big hunter and would go to Alsace, in France, and his car was full of birds, because he had hunted pheasants, partridge and woodcocks. I would spend my entire day in the basement. It was one of those cellars with no fan, no air circulation, where I could pluck the bird without having the feathers go everywhere. I would pluck the bird all day long and go back from my meal and come back down. Because I was an apprentice, they usually make the youngest people do this work, and because I was born and raised on a farm, I knew how to pluck a chicken. And it's OK, you can start with very humble, simple things, which we feel are sometimes degrading, but, to me, it was making sure that I was doing a good job at the first task I was asked to do. I never complained. It teaches me to never complain.

Q: What are the most important things in life to you?

A: Loyalty, trust and energy and creativity.

Q: If you had to have dinner with one person, dead or alive, who would you choose?

A: I think I'd like to have dinner with Paul Bocuse again, because he was a mentor, a good friend and a genius and a real leader in our industry.

Q: What is your favourite kitchen tool?

A: The microplane, because, for example, today, I was microplaning parsnips. I wanted extra-fresh flavour of parsnips.

Q: What would be your last supper?

A: All my good friends, a big meal by the fireplace and with a lot of good wine.

Q: What does *la dolce vita* mean to you?

A: My family, my children and my friends all together cooking, drinking and playing together somewhere South of France, Italy or even home, in New York.

www.danielboulud.com @@danielboulud

The flagship Grange, celebrating its 70th anniversary this year



With vintages that span half a decade, the Australia Collection is a celebration of style and unique philosophy that has surpassed more than 175 years

ince its beginnings in 1844, with a vineyard established at Magill Estate in Australia, Penfolds has grown to become a celebrated winery. In 1920, it was producing a third of all South Australia's wine. In 1948, Max Schubert, the company's first chief winemaker, embraced experimentation to create the renowned Penfolds Grange. In 1959, the "bin wines" tradition started, named after the storage area of the cellars it was aged in.

Fast forward to 2021, and its Penfolds Australia Collection is a celebration of that story. It includes the 2017 Grange (RRP: \$1,000). Celebrating its 70th anniversary, it's testimony to the multi-regional blending philosophy that underpins the Grange DNA. It uses fully ripe, intensely flavoured Shiraz grapes and is loved by collectors around the world for its aromatic, fruity profile.

The collection also features a number of collectable classics. Take the 2019 RWT Bin 798

Barossa Valley Shiraz (RRP: \$250) as an example. Named after the name given to the internal Red Winemaking Trial project when development began in 1995, it's a wine made from Barossa Valley fruit, matured for 18 months in French oak hogsheads.

The 2019 Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon (RRP: \$110) is another. Developed in response to the increasing availability of high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon fruit, it highlights the rewards of the brand's multi-region, multi-vineyard blending with the ripe fruit supported by a sensitive use of oak. Peter Gago, chief winemaker at Penfolds, describes it as "vibrant and compelling, showing respect to variety and house style."

The collection also offers two limited-edition wines made from parcels destined for Penfolds flagships. Titled Superblend 802.A and 802.B Cabernet Shiraz, they're similar takes raised in different environments.

"These two new wines are immediately

Penfolds, yet different. Propelling varied attributes that will challenge and engage," Gago continues. "Spoilt by choice — A-Grade Cabernet Sauvignon and A-Grade Shiraz from a wonderful harvest; French and American oak barrels of the highest quality ... and that much-coveted ingredient — time."

Penfolds

BIN 407

Together, the collection is a single and multiregion, single and multi-vineyard offering that celebrates the way Penfolds has found so much success making wine over the years. Like most in the Penfolds portfolio, these are wines that will improve and develop with time. So, whether you're chasing taste or additions to your collection, red wines or white wines, the Penfolds Australia Collection will gradually develop and reward patience.

www.markanthonywineandspirits.ca www.penfolds.com





Q&AWITH A COGNAC COGNOSCENTE

Exploring cognac culture with the help of cognac educator Arthur Kilajian

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

anilla crème, lavender, burnt sugar, rich toffee, candied fruits, florals, baking spices, vanilla, marzipan and figs. Do these notes make you think of the perfect dessert? If you're not thinking of cognac, think again. Some may argue that cognac, also known as *eau de vie* (only when it's ageing in the barrel), is the best way to top everything off. This is true for Arthur Kilajian, one of 80 cognac educators in the world who helped us learn how to drink cognac artfully, savouring every drop of this sweet spirit

Q: When did your love, passion and enjoyment for cognac first develop? What's your personal connection to cognac? Can you speak about your private collection?

A: My interest in cognac began 20 years ago. I felt that I needed a drink that would enhance my enjoyment of smoking fine cigars. Cognac is a perfect match, and I fell in love with it instantly. I developed my passion over the years by visiting the Cognac region in southwestern France and learning as much as I can about the spirit. There is so much to learn about cognac that one lifetime is not enough. I have been to the Cognac region over 20 times and visited over 60 cognac houses. I also collect cognac, as well as rare and beautiful bottles.

Q: When and why did you decide to become a cognac educator? What is a cognac educator?

A: I became a cognac educator in 2018, and I am one of only 80 in the world. I was disappointed by the lack of understanding of and appreciation for this noble spirit in Canada and decided that I can play an important role in sharing cognac knowledge and culture here at home. A cognac educator is accredited by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC), whose mission is to promote and educate about all aspects of cognac. As a cognac educator, I do not represent any brand. I hold events and masterclasses for those interested in learning about this luxurious spirit. These events are fun and educational, and often include food pairings and learning to train the nose to identify the different aromas of cognac.

Q: How do you see the demand for cognac within Canada and globally?

A: Producing cognac is a labour-intensive process, and this is why cognac demands a higher price than other spirits like whisky, rum and tequila, making it difficult to compete with them. Thanks to the four big cognac houses — Hennessy, Martell, Rémy Martin and Courvoisier — cognac is well promoted globally, but promotion is lacking in Canada. Cognac sales in Canada are not where they should be, and there is not enough variety available, especially in Ontario. There are over 280 brands of cognac, and we are lucky if we find more than five at our local liquor store.

Q: Can you give a brief history lesson on cognac from the late 1800s to the 1900s? What are the most noteworthy events when it comes to cognac?

A: The Cognac region had catastrophic damage in 1875 with the phylloxera bug that destroyed 85 per cent of the vineyards. Recovery took decades. The vineyards were finally saved, thanks to the grafting of the European vines onto American rootstock that was resistant to the insect.

Q: What does the process look like in making cognac? Are there any special techniques?

A: Vines are planted in the spring with grape varieties that have high acidity and low sugar, resulting in a low-alcohol wine. The most widely planted grape variety is Ugni Blanc. Grapes are harvested in September and immediately pressed, and then fermented. Up until this point, the process is similar to that of wine production. Cognac then undergoes a distillation using the Charentaise method. This is a double distillation in copper

stills that produces *eau de vie*, a complex, aromatic and flavourful liquid that will produce cognac after aging in oak barrels, sometimes for over 80 years.

Q: What are the different styles of cognac?

A: Cognac can come from a single estate, a single cru, a single cask or a single year, or, most often, it is the product of a blending of all four. A cellar master blends the various *eaux de vie* in proportions that will produce the perfect cognac. A cellar master's expertise is developed over a lifelong process of learning. Cognac is designated into categories that indicate the length of aging: Very Special (VS) is aged at least two years, Very Superior Old Pale (VSOP) is aged at least four years, Extra Old (XO) is aged at least six years, and the new designation Extra Extra Old (XXO) is aged at least 14 years.

Q: How would you describe the taste of cognac to someone who has never tried it before?

A: Cognac tastes fruity, sweet and spicy. Take your time in tasting the cognac. Take a small sip and swirl it in your mouth. Savour every flavour that it offers you. Cognac is not about drinking, but about appreciating the complexity of the spirit. Then, we can talk about the age of the spirit, the crus, the history and the different aromas.

Q: What glasses are meant to be used when drinking cognac?

A: Tulip glasses are the right ones, not balloon glasses. Tulip glasses allow for the aromas to be released gently while tasting.

Q: If someone wanted to use descriptors and sound educated when it comes to tasting cognac, what are some of the words/phrases you would suggest using to describe cognac?

A: There are over 60 different aromas of cognac, but to keep things simple, describe cognac by identifying it as floral, fruity, woody, earthy and spicy. Now, if you want to sound like an expert,

Kilajian's passion for cognac runs deep. As one of 80 cognac educators in the world, Kilajian shares some insight into the fascinating world of cognac

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COGNAC IS NOT ABOUT DRINKING, BUT ABOUT APPRECIATING THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SPIRIT

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talk about rancio aroma with older cognacs. This descriptor identifies more complex and developed notes, like blue cheese, mushrooms and nuts.

Q: What are some of your favourite cognacs/ cognac-makers from around the world?

A: Audry, Paul Giraud, Hardy, Hine, Delamain, François Voyer, Ragnaud Sabourin and too many more. If you get your hands on any of these bottles, consider yourself lucky!

Q: What are the six distinct cognac-making regions in the world, and what makes them special/ distinct?

A: The regions are known as crus, and they are distinguished by soil type. They are: Grande Champagne, Petite Champagne, Borderies, Fins Bois, Bons Bois and Bois Ordinaires. Grande and Petite Champagne are considered the best due to

their chalky and clay soil composition that is well suited to grow grapes that produce cognac of the highest quality with floral aromas. Borderies is the smallest cru, and it produces cognac with violet and iris aromas.

Q: What are three things that would surprise people about Cognac?

- Cognac is made from white grapes.
- Cognac does not continue to age once it is bottled.
- Cognac is brandy, but not every brandy is cognac.

Q: What is the best cognac experience you've ever had?

A: I have had too many to mention, but tasting cognac straight from a 1906 or 1929 barrel with a cellar master may be top on the list. Or, having a sip of a pre-phylloxera cognac.

Q: What are different ways to enjoy cognac?

A: Cognac can be enjoyed in many different ways. Cognac VS works very well in cocktails. There are over 100 different cocktails that can be made with cognac. Younger cognac can also be chilled or served over ice. And, of course, older cognac should be enjoyed neat.

Q: What would you suggest pairing with cognac? What has been the best pairing you've ever experienced?

A: Cognac pairs perfectly with blue cheese, duck, chocolate and crème brûlée. In my masterclasses, we often pair cognac with a full-course meal. My favourite pairing is chilled cognac with fresh oysters.

Q: Who is the most interesting person you've met thanks to the community around cognac?

A: I have learned so much from all the cellar masters who work in the cognac industry. Their highly trained and sensitive sense of smell and ability to identify the smallest differences in aromas, colours and tastes make them all celebrities in their own right.

Q: Where in the world do you think people appreciate cognac and the art of cognac most?

A: In the United States, cognac VS makes up 80 per cent of the total market and is used mostly in cocktails. Cognac is hyped up in the U.S. by celebrity hip-hop artists. It has almost become synonymous with rap music. In China and the Far East, there is a lot of understanding of and appreciation for high-quality cognac. I would like to see more interest in this prestigious spirit here in Canada.

Q: If you were a cognac, which one would you be and why? What year would you be?

A: I would be a cognac from a small house in Grande Champagne, where my great-grandfather planted the vines, my grandfather distilled the wine, and my father bottled the cognac. The vintage year doesn't matter as much as the age in the barrel does.

Q: What is the biggest difference between a cognac lover and any other individual interested in a different type of alcohol (i.e., wine, etc.)?

A: I would say that a cognac lover has a more sophisticated palate and a lot of patience to appreciate this spirit.

Q: What does la dolce vita mean to you?

A: A glass of cognac in one hand and a cigar in the other, enjoyed during an in-depth and meaningful conversation with friends.

(a) @cognacpassion

For those who want to make the most out of what Two Sisters Vineyards has to offer, guests are welcome to sign up to a two-tier exclusive membership. The VIP Club offers mixed six-bottle cases shipped quarterly, as well as privileges that include complimentary tastings vouchers for friends and family, and access to intimate and exclusive events

requests personally

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

An inside look at the award-winning Two Sisters Vineyards, nestled in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake

hen asked how they would describe their estate in three words, sisters Melissa Marotta-Paolicelli and Angela Marotta usually say, "Inviting, sensorial and refined." Though their story begins in 2007, when the pair planted their first vineyard, today their estate spans more than 130 acres in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's also been named the best-performing winery in Canada by WineAlign and one of Canada's top growing companies by *The Globe and Mail*.

"From the very beginning, our family has shared a passion for beautiful wines and elevated experience," says Melissa. "The vision we had, to transport guests and enjoy a wine and culinary experience that will be memorable, continues."

Take a look at what's on offer at Two Sisters Vineyards, and you'll see why they're second to none. The estate building itself is inspired by the family's Italian heritage, setting a scene of beauty while paying homage to European architecture.

First, you have the wines. Spanning reds and

whites, which guests can experience through tasting visits and tours, the grapes are selected for their ability to thrive in cooler climates, and are situated over four vineyards. "We're positioned in a very desirable location," says Angela. "Being the closest winery to the Niagara River, we see warmer air currents coming from the river."

All of the red wines are estate grown, with the fruit coming from these vineyards before they're aged for at least two years. "It all starts with our winemaker Adam Pearce who shares our vision and philosophy of delivering ultra-premium wines every year," Angela continues. "With extended barrel aging from 18 months to three years, as well as small-lot production, we ensure the fruit dictates the direction of the wine that's bottled."

Make a visit to the estate and you'll be able to pair the wine with food via their on-site restaurant, Kitchen76. "We stay true to the essence of Italian cuisine, which is simplicity with excellent quality ingredients," Melissa explains. "Sharing the dishes we grew up with and were taught about by our mother and grandmother are now holding a proud place on our menu. We love it when someone has one of these dishes and says, 'It tastes just like home.""

Additional perks include the wine club concierge, who handles all of the members'

For those who want to make the most out of what Two Sisters Vineyards has to offer, the company welcomes guests to sign up to a twotier exclusive membership. The VIP Club offers mixed six-bottle cases shipped quarterly, as well as privileges that include complimentary tasting vouchers for friends and family, complimentary dessert and ice-wine pairing when eating at Kitchen76 and special pricing for select events.

The other kind of membership, Cellar240, focuses on offering 12 red wines every quarter, with privileges that also span Kitchen76, event invitations and access to the Barrel Room for private dining. As Melissa says, "This is a very special club for the wine lover who looks to enjoy wines and cellars for enjoyment."

For both, these clubs are the best way to experience Two Sisters Vineyards. "Many wineries offer a wine club, but, at Two Sisters, we pride ourselves on going the extra mile, with world-class customer service and a unique club experience," says Angela. "Our club members don't just receive exclusive benefits and award-winning wines quarterly, they become part of the Two Sisters family."

www.twosistersvineyards.com
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INSPIRATION

Sash Simpson, who was born in India, was adopted by the Simpson family when he was seven years old. He grew up with 28 other adopted siblings in Toronto, where he recently opened his first restaurant, Sash, in May 2019

CHEF SASH • **SIMPSON: YOU'LL CATCH ME [HERE] FROM MORNING TILL NIGHT**

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SCAN THE OR CODE FOR DOLCE'S EXCLUSIVE BEHIND THE SCENES FOOTAGE

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PHOTO BY CARLOS A. PINTO

Growing up with 32 siblings from all over the world, Sash Simpson's dishes represent the whole globe, with flavours spanning from continent to continent. Recently, Simpson took *Dolce* into his kitchen to explore his Indian roots through one of his signature dishes: Chilean sea bass with Madras curry

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

What I would do is: get a piece of the fish, make sure you get some of that sauce, then try a piece of that okra, and then a piece of pakora. And at the end you kind of know the flavour. Then you can start mixing it."

That's Sash Simpson, the creative force behind his eponymous Toronto restaurant, Sash, gleefully explaining to me how to enjoy one of his signature dishes. Simpson is the paradigmatic chef-as-artist, focusing his creative energy into dishes that dance on our tongues with every bite. The orchestra of spices, textures and cultural influences in a Sash meal are a medley where the end result is greater than the sum of its parts: "My menus are all about flavours. You'll see a lot of Indian influences on the menu, lots of spices. There are universal flavours all over it. Any dish that you put on your palate — it's going to hit you hard."

Given the complexity and attention to detail involved, a Sash Simpson dish is something that must be experienced in person — the written word has the effect of subduing the intensity of the effect. For this reason, I was recently invited to Sash on a crisp Tuesday to cook Chilean sea bass with Madras curry, served with fried okra and vegetable pakoras. Accompanied by a crisp glass of white wine, we sat down to enjoy the ideal pairing we had just cooked together. I was hoping to understand the man behind the meal, the inspiration behind the art.

Sash opened in May 2019 to critical acclaim, but that was only the second-most-important milestone for Sash that week: "I will never forget that month. I just knew one thing was happening for sure, and that was my son. Sawyer was born on May 27, and we launched the restaurant May 30."

Sash represents the culmination of a career of culinary excellence for the chef, who previously worked with Mark McEwan at North 44. "That's where I got my break and when I got into actually setting up a career path. I spent almost 25 years with Mark McEwan at North 44. I was part of that group that opened up Bymark, taped the Food Network for three seasons. I learned how to become a chef. I never thought I would be in a position where I could own a restaurant."

If you walk into Sash, there's a good chance

you'll be able to experience as intimate an experience as I did. "I'm here every night, every day. They will see my face nine out of 10 times. And if I'm not here, it's not because I'm taking the day off, it's because I'm somewhere doing a wedding, or bar mitzvah, birthday party, or anniversary. You'll catch me from morning till night. I just feel it's very important for a chef and an owner to be here from start to finish, because you have tables coming in early and



tables coming in late. I want everybody to get that experience. And I get to go to every table and talk to them. "How was your food and how was your experience?" Sash says, full of pride.

About eight months after the opening of the restaurant, Sash started noticing that something was off. "I knew something was happening because my reservation book wasn't getting filled up. Next thing you know, two weeks later, I had to close the restaurant. Boom, doors shut. And that was the biggest. I had everything on the line. I had to think of ways to keep the restaurant afloat."

The risks were particularly acute for Sash, who wanted the restaurant to represent his unfiltered

culinary vision. "I had a lot of sleepless nights because I said, 'What the hell am I doing? This is the biggest thing I've ever done, and usually when I do something massive like this, I always have a support group, somebody else wants it and it's not me. And now it's the other way around."

But those who know Sash know he is not one deterred by challenge. In fact, he's someone who relishes it. And overcoming challenge is something he's done his whole life. "Being an orphan, I didn't have a lot. I'm a street kid from India. I grew up on the streets of Chennai, and I slept on the sidewalk. What's getting me through and what has gotten me through over this year and a half of the pandemic is keep hustling. That's what I've always done. It's always been 200 per cent, never less. I've always wanted to be better than the next guy. People have asked me if I would have opened it after the pandemic. I would've said no way. You want to put me through rough waters, put me in it right now."

At eight years old, Sash was adopted by Canadian philanthropists and Families for Children orphanage founders Sandra and Lloyd Simpson. "When I was seven and a half, almost eight, I came at Christmas time, December 23, 1979, because my mum wanted me in Canada for Christmas. I was her Christmas gift. My sister Kimberly, who lives in Arizona now, she's the one who came to pick me up, and said, 'I'm your sister, Kimberly. We need to go because you're my mom's Christmas gift, so I have to get you there before Christmas. I didn't even know what Christmas was, I was just a seven-and-a-half-yearold kid nodding yes to everything. I remember getting woken up in the middle of my nap after lunch. My memories from being in the orphanage and being adopted, coming to Canada, I remember that clearly as if it happened yesterday. As a kid, you can never forget that."

It is no surprise, then, that Sandra Simpson, the family matriarch, has had a significant influence on his life. "I wanted to prove to my mom that she made an amazing decision to adopt me and bring me to Canada, so that was always that incentive for me to keep thriving in whatever I did. And as far as cooking goes, I started in the hospitality industry when I was 14 and never looked back. I thought it was the best job. You are with this



Left: Sash Simpson at the orphanage in India (marked No. 4). Right: Sash on a bike with his adoptive mother, Sandra Simpson



family that you see every day, other than your real family, and then it just grew. Then I got into the kitchen and I just enjoyed it and I was pretty decent at it and it just evolved to what it is now."

Sash credits his signature blend of globally inspired, locally sourced ingredients to his upbringing. "I have 32 siblings, 4 biological and 28 are adopted, me being one of the 28. My family is totally global. I have Vietnamese brothers, Chinese sisters, Korean sisters, African-American brothers, Spanish brothers, Indian brothers, Bengali brothers, Somalian sisters. You know, it's the whole globe, and that's why my menu is very global. A bit of everything that represents how I was raised in a family with so many kids, and my menu represents that, and the flavours represent that."

With his past and humility at the forefront of what he does, Sash can easily put his feet in the shoes of those who are less fortunate and has dedicated his philanthropic efforts toward giving back to The Scott Mission. "For me, it's always been knowing where I come from, how I came from. I can never forget it. I can never forget I was a street kid. I can never forget I used to beg on the streets and steal food and eat out of garbage cans. When I see things in Canada and especially where I live, I guess it's like anywhere in the world, people need food, people are on the street and I've been fortunate to have angels watching over me the whole time, so it's my way of taking care of people."

Part of this mission is to not let anything go to waste in his restaurant. "When I have a lot of food left over, I feed my staff, and if I still have a lot of food left over, I'll package it up and I'll bring it to The Scott Mission. All the food that I cook or whatever I have, it all gets used up one way or another. I don't waste anything because I just feel like that will always be me and I'll never let that go."

When it comes to his sons, Sash can't help but give them everything he didn't have growing up as an orphan in Chennai. "They'll have everything that I didn't. I just feel. giving my sons stability for the future is a must because I didn't have it. With my kids, I do spoil them because I give my kids what I never had. My kids are two and seven. I'm humbled to have my two boys. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would have two boys, have a wife and a restaurant in Rosedale. When it comes to them, I'm going to teach them respect and teach them hard work and yet just spoil them in a good way."

As we age, many of us become more selfreflective, and getting back to one's roots becomes an increasingly larger consideration. "Now that I'm getting older, and I think back on home and I think India is such a beautiful country. I'm getting more and more used to doing Indian dishes now because I'm getting more comfortable with myself and my Indian heritage because I never really experienced it before."

It's incredible to think about how fate has worked to put Sash in the heart of Toronto all the way from Chennai. "I'm living the sweet life. I couldn't have had it any other way."

As we nibbled on the last few crumbs of our delicious dish of Chilean sea bass on that crisp Tuesday morning at Sash in Toronto, I couldn't help but feel completely satisfied — I came for a great meal, but left with food for the soul.

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Welcome to the world of Amaury Guichon, where everything from a big blue sea dragon to a roulette wheel and a rotary telephone is made into a gastronomical wonder

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

rance — a country characterized by its expertise, tradition and culture dedicated to the art of pastries. Some of the world's most delicious confectionery exports have come to life from the French, including macaroons and mille feuille and, of course, the famous pain au chocolat. Another noteworthy export: chef Amaury Guichon.

Having grown up in the Haute-Savoie region of France, neighbouring the French-speaking part of Switzerland, chef Guichon followed his passion for pastry by completing a two-year apprenticeship in Geneva, as well as continuing to deepen his knowledge of pastry at the prestigious Maison Lenôtre in Paris.

After 17 years of devoting himself to the pastry industry, Guichon realized his dream and decided to open his first pastry school, The Pastry Academy, in Las Vegas in 2019.

Today, chef Guichon is a world-renowned pastry chef who has been teaching high-level pastry skills in his master classes around the world, as well as via the The Pastry Academy, in the hopes of inspiring others to start their own version of a sweet career.

Q: Would you describe yourself as a pastry architect?

A: I think we could say that.

Q: Who inspires you and where do you get your ideas for cake decoration and design?

A: No one inspires me, per se, and creativity and designs can be found everywhere. My strength is being able to take a vision and make it come alive.

Q: Where did you learn your high-level pastry skills?

A: I did a classic intensive pastry training in France and Switzerland 16 years ago and worked extremely hard the past six years to develop my own style and techniques.

Q: What part of the world do you find has the highest appreciation and skill when it comes to all things related to desserts?

A: The easy answer would be France, as we have a very deeply rooted connection with the high-



This "heart in a cage" is just as sweet as it looks. This creation is made of *framboisier*, otherwise known as "raspberry shortcake," and is composed of two layers of a light Japanese cake roll, a fresh raspberry yuzu compote, a raspberry *chiboust*, a light vanilla yogurt mousse and a crunchy sweet dough

end pastry heritage; however, thankfully, I have been blessed with travelling around the world and meeting extremely passionate people in the industry. I believe the appreciation is growing worldwide at a very high pace.

Q: What are some of your favourite ingredients for baking and creating confectionery masterpieces?

A: As I am often associated with chocolate, I would say it is accurate to answer "chocolate," as it is easily usable as a flavour, a texture and allows us to create very complex designs.



Guichon is guided in his creations by his various inspirations, his sense of esthetics and the love of quality execution. This is what inspired him to open his own Pastry Academy in Las Vegas

Q: Between visual and taste, what comes first for you? Do you ever have to compromise either one to make a creation come to life?

A: The style I developed is without compromise: 100 per cent of both. But, if I had to make one, it would have to be on the esthetic [and] never the flavour, as it is the fundamental of pastry.

Q: What do you love about the dining scene in Las Vegas?

A: Even though Las Vegas remains a small city compared to other metropolises in America, the tourism attracts a very diverse food scene into the strip. If you need to celebrate in Las Vegas, you will always be able to find the perfect place.

Q: What has been your favourite confectionery masterpiece so far?

A: As cheesy as it sounds, I think the next one will always be my favourite.

Q: Who are some of the most noteworthy/highprofile people for whom you've made your creations?

A: Probably Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson or private events for large brands, such as Louis Vuitton.

Q: Who haven't you made a cake/pastry creation for, but would like to? A: Brad Pitt.

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring bakers, pastry chefs and cake artists? What is the main



thing you want your students at The Pastry Academy to take with them?

A: In this industry, if you want to accomplish any level of success, you have to be willing to make enormous sacrifices, to remain humble (the less ego, the better) and always remember to work for your customers.

Q: Your Pastry Academy is an intensive, 10-week program covering all the bases: pastry, plated dessert, chocolate, ice cream, danish, bread, candy and chocolate showpieces. The program starts from the beginning and goes all the way to more advanced skills, and so for whom is your academy designed?

A: We've had already-accomplished professionals looking to acquire more skills and learning more in-depth science behind pastry, people doing reconversion and young, inspiring pastry chefs coming out of high school.

Q: What's your favourite comfort food? A: Pasta.

Q: What is one thing that you will never, ever eat? A: Nothing — I am pretty adventurous.

Q: What will we always find in the Guichon refrigerator?

A: Avocado and fresh fruits.

Q: What is something most people don't know about you?

A: I try to keep my personal life private, as I believe people are more interested in my craft than in myself. Aside from my pastry and chocolate creations, most people do not know much about me.

Q: Do you prefer sweet or salty?

A: Savoury.

Q: Are you good at cooking? Do you love to cook?

A: I started my training with two years of cooking. I know lots of basics and I often cook for my wife, but I do not consider myself a great cook.

Q: What are your favourite combinations of flavours to implement in your pastries?

A: My philosophy is to extract the maximum amount of flavour of one highlighted ingredient using textures. I only allow myself two pairings that usually complement each other.

Q: What is the secret ingredient to your success?

A: My wife, as I met her at a crucial point in my career, and she helped me as much on a personal and professional level to become the man I am today.

Q: What does *la dolce vita/*the sweet life mean to you?

A: Being able to do what you love on a daily basis [and] making a decent living; it is extremely rewarding.

thepastryacademy.com @@amauryguichon @amauryguichon.pastryacademy





ROBBY NAISH: "THE OCEAN IS MY PLAYGROUND MORE THAN MY HOME"

Catching the longest wave has been Robby Naish's lifelong mission: "I want to ride one single wave as long as it goes." In his latest project, we witness his journey finding purpose beyond his career on water, and his accepting that just like a wave, life is finite

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

e spoke with Robby Naish about his legendary windsurfing career, and latest project, *The Longest Wave*, a documentary by Oscarnominated and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Joe Berlinger. In an intimate cinéma-vérité style, Berlinger captures Naish on his transition from competing, to life after professional sport. "It's an unbelievable environment to be able to go and play in and be challenged by. It's always evolving and changing and it never gets boring. But I also really love coming back to the land. The last thing I'd want to do is get on a boat and sail off into the sunset."

Q: In the trailer, you said, "I'm more of a dreamer than a goal setter." Can you tell us about how this motto has carried you through life until where you are now?

A: It was more being retrospective when asked. And when I observe and read how other people approach things, if you read quotes from successful people, usually their number one thing is goal setting. And I'm always sort of pondering, well that's kind of weird because I've never looked at things that way. So, it was never a plan. It's not like to set out to say, "OK, I'm not going to set out goals for myself, I'm just going to see what happens and wing it." It's just an honest assessment of how I've sort of meandered my way through life. I guess it's more because of the luck that I've had to have the career that I've got, to be doing the things that I've been lucky enough to get paid to do for a living, where planning and goalling would be very tough because a lot of the things that I've been involved with didn't exist until I started being involved with them. I'm not the kind of guy that sits down at my desk and says, "OK, I want to think of the next best thing." Even in business, I just don't work that way. My brain doesn't work that way. I just kind of see what happens, wing it. But so far, so good! I guess it's not the way you would recommend most people to do things, but for me, it's worked really well.

Q: Do you ever think of the circumstances/family that you were born into that allowed you to have the opportunity to pursue extreme sports? How have your parents/family viewed your career and supported you over the years?

A: The older I get the more I appreciate how lucky I am to have come from where I came from, when I came from there and how my parents raised me and continue to guide me. Luckily, both my parents are happy and healthy, and they're together. My dad's going to be 81 this year and my mom's only a couple years younger, and they're still going full on. They're going on cruises, and they just went to Greenland on a cruise, and they're about to go on another somewhere. My dad's a snowboarder. He still goes snowboarding by himself. He rides a motorcycle. My mom teaches Pilates five days a week, so they're still totally living life to the fullest.

As a kid they really gave us independence. It was a very different time then. There were no cellphones. My parents had no idea where we were when we were little kids. We'd get home from school, and off you went and it was fantastic. Even once my career started, the fact that they let me do that, independently, on my own, was amazing. Travelling on my own to the other side of the world as a kid, not just once – it was the Bahamas in '76, Sardinia in '77, Cancún in '78, and Greece

in '79, and back to the Bahamas in '80. And all of those unchaperoned, and it certainly helped to give me independence and self-confidence. Then through my professional career my parents were there as well.

My dad quit teaching high school in 1980 and started making boards full-time in about '77. He started making windsurf boards in the garage. We were riding together and surfing together. He started windsurfing about a year after I did and he ended up quitting teaching high school and making windsurf boards full-time, and opened a business in '79. Through pretty much my entire professional career, my dad was making my boards and I always had the best equipment. I ended up becoming sponsored by a big European brand. My dad ended up working for them and making all their boards, and so there was that sort of, not business relationship, but really close relationship with my dad because of doing the boards together for decades. Then once the sport turned pro, he was going to one or two events per year through the '80s because he made boards, not only for me, but the whole team. He got to experience it and again, we worked really closely on my equipment together, which was really cool.

Q: You say that access has changed so much now because of the Internet. You said there's no mystery anymore. That before, you used to get off a plane and cross your fingers that there'd be wind and waves. That there's so much more information now and that the world is a tiny place compared to what it used to be. Do you prefer the access to information, or was part of the thrill, part of being an adrenaline junkie, the fact that there was a little mystery involved?



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A: If you're young these days, there's a lot more information everywhere at your fingertips. There's still going to be mystery. You still don't know exactly what you're going to get. But say you're going on a holiday. For most places, you're going to have a pretty good idea of where you're going, right? You're going to have an itinerary because most people look it up and say, "Let's go to this museum, and let's go eat at this restaurant." It's like you'd have your whole trip planned out before you even go and you know what it looks like and you know where it is. There's still mystery, I guess, once you get there, even though you've read the menu before you even went on the trip, to see if you were even going to like the food at the restaurant. That's how some people work. I don't. I still want to walk up to the restaurant and read the menu through the window and see if it looks good. But it certainly changed the dynamic compared to the days when you had no clue. You didn't know. Is it a reef break? Is it a beach break? How cold is the water going to be? Oh shoot, I thought it was going to be warmer; I didn't bring a big enough wetsuit. There was just a lot less information available. You'd have to go get the encyclopedia and read and go, "OK, temperatures in Greece in February, OK yeah, looks like it's going to be in the 70°s, I better bring a long-legged wetsuit." It's just really different now. In some ways it's amazing. There's just so much information available. Everything is available.

When you tell people that are younger that the world just wasn't always that way, they don't even get it. Like you didn't even know where you were going? Or telling people about driving before GPS and folding out those maps. I'd be driving around in Europe, trying to get from northern Germany down to an event in Holland, for example, and taking the wrong road and ending up at a border and being like, what? Opening the map and you're trying to drive and trying to read the map and figure out where you're going. It was just very different.

Q: It's almost like there's a lost charm in it?

A: Oh, there's a massive amount of lost charm in it. There's certainly too much of a good thing and a desire to make ourselves more efficient, to make our time more efficient, and to create more and more and more apps and things to make our time efficient. It's basically sucking all of our time away completely. You're way way busier now than before because of all this information that's available.

The best thing people can do these days when they get home from work is put their phone in a lockbox and just live their life for at least a few hours of the day. I mean that's what's so good about surfing, windsurfing and kitesurfing. You completely unplug; you disconnect from that stuff for a while. You get out on the water and you actually live your life. You think. Your brain can actually think instead of constantly being engaged with something.

Every time people are on their phone, they're

like, "OK, I got to do this, I got to do that, this is how I'm going to entertain myself," and it's insane. It's information overload and you do lose a bit of yourself in that. I'm watching my 14-yearold daughter trying to navigate her way through being a teenage girl and it looks very difficult because so much a part of your life is that constant communication and information. I mean you're doing your homework on the computer, you're socializing on the computer, you just can't get away from it.

I think it's so important to get away from it. And then the more I encourage her to do that, the harder it is because she feels like she's not going to have any friends if she doesn't answer her texts. It's just constant.

I don't have any notifications on text. I don't have a ring on my phone. I don't have any announcements on Facebook or Instagram or anything because I don't want that stuff bothering my brain all day. But for someone that's grown up in that, I'm sure it's not as easy as it is for me, who can just disconnect from it because I lived in that time when we didn't have it. I feel really lucky that I did have a real life without technology, because it was pure, it was better. I hate to say that: "Oh, life was better in the old days." You always hear old people saying that, and there's incredible benefits that have come with that technology, but I think this also sucked the life out of us.

Q: What's your relationship with the ocean and the water?

A: It wasn't really so much love for the ocean. It was the love for the activity. It was the selfish desire to keep playing and challenging myself. The ocean is my playground more than my home. I've always said that. I'm not a real waterman. I don't like being on boats. I get seasick. I don't like being underwater much. I like being above water. It's an unbelievable environment to be able to go and play in and be challenged by. It's always evolving and changing and it never gets boring. But I also really love coming back to the land. The last thing I'd want to do is get on a boat and sail off into the sunset. I'd rather shoot myself than do that, literally. There's a point at which there's too much water.

It's a big big part of who I am and that's where I've been able to escape. It's been where I've been able to clear my head. It's just being able to just get out and centre I guess you could call it.

I mean the ocean is cleansing, which is why I so encourage people, even if it's just stand-up paddling on a little lake in your hometown, getting out on the water is really good for your mind, body, spirit. I've been lucky enough to spend an awful lot of time on the water, so I know I'm really lucky to have had all those experiences.

Q: Berlinger is known to have a very specific type of profile when it comes to his chosen subjects. Common traits across the chosen subjects chosen

by Berlinger include attention to detail, a desire to succeed, the need for excitement, ability to keep a clear head and an unrivalled aptitude to manage stress. Do you believe you fit his profile?

A: I think I was certainly born with an odd personality. I was a really weird little kid. I'm very self-driven, very independent. I think that's helped me through the sports that I've been involved with that require a lot of independence. I mean I was travelling on my own. You know, you don't have a pit crew of guys helping you with all your stuff. You were travelling around the world with 300 kilos of gear. Rent a car, pile it on top of the car, drive five hours to the coast, get all your stuff together. You had to be pretty self-driven, or at least the more self-driven you were, the better off you were.

Joe's different. I watched his films and I just imagined the complexity of how he can juggle all of these different things, and how do you have that story in your head and then you take all the pieces and you film them and you weave them. Not so much in The Longest Wave. The Longest Wave is a bit out of his wheelhouse. It still ended up being a pretty in-depth, complicated, interesting story for an action sportsfilm. That's what's unique about it. I didn't just want to make some normal sports movie, and he really did that. But if you watch some of his other stuff, you're like, "How did he even get these interviews?" You end up watching a film and you're like, well, "Which side am I on? Is he the bad guy or the good guy?" Just incredible depth of editing where my brain's not that good at juggling so many things. It's just incredible. I imagine his office must have millions of those little sticky notes all on the wall, and he says, OK, "I'm going to take that interview and it goes there, and that interview and it goes there," and then he's going to weave this story that he has in his head. Very very impressive because it's so different from the way that I would be able to approach things.

Q: You say that *The Longest Wave* is about time, the concept of dealing with time and how we deal with time as we age. There's something so melancholy about thinking about time and the time we have left and how we're spending it on this beautiful Earth. How has your concept of time evolved over the years? How do you view time now and how would you like to spend the rest of your time on Earth?

A: It's so funny because everyone, I'm sure, has older people in their lives telling them when you're younger to "enjoy every moment because time goes fast." You know that kind of thing. And it's true, the older you get the faster time seems to go and I think it's because every single day, every minute, every second, every year becomes a smaller percentage of your overall experience the older you get. Every single day used to be 1 per cent of your life. It's faster when it becomes 1,000th of your life, and it's not easy especially given the complexity that life, at least for us in the West, has become through technology and all these things to help us

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Award-winning director Joe Berlinger departs from the world of true crime drama to dive into a world totally unfamiliar to him, directing *The Longest Wave.* "I've never worked with a sportsman, but I believe there is so much more to a person than the black and white soundbites you see of someone's life. I wanted to show the multiple sides to his story through this film. It is full of raw emotion," says Berlinger







LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL. LIFE IS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY, SUCH A GIFT...I ALWAYS SAY LIFE'S WHAT YOU MAKE IT, MAKE IT A GOOD ONE. YOU NEVER KNOW HOW LONG YOU HAVE HERE, SO LOVE HARD, PLAY HARD, WORK HARD

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be more efficient with our time, and to be busy and stay connected.

It really does suck a lot of the idle time that allows you to really sit back and think and go, "OK, is this who I want to be and what I want to do?" That reflective time we used to have more of is kind of gone, or seems to be at least in short supply now and I think it's probably easy in that situation to wake up and be like, "Oh my God, three years have just gone by. What did I do?" Frantically running around chasing my tail, doing whatever people do.

For me now, I'm just trying to slow it down. It's probably better than it is for a lot of people because I have a life where I can kind of still, even though I have a lot of balls in the air, I can do what I want today. If I don't want to go to work, I'm not going to go to work. If I want to go kite, I'll go kite. If I want to windsurf, I'll go windsurfing. If I want to fly to visit my family, I can do it, so there's nobody telling me what I have to do, which allows me a lot more flexibility in managing my time, and it's still hard. For someone who has limited time, you have to work. Your boss tells you you have to be there at 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. You have to work overtime. I think it must be even more challenging because your time isn't even, to a large extent, in your control. The free time that you have is limited and then there's a lot of things asking you for that free time and so you're trying to fit a lot into a limited amount of available time space of ... I don't know, I think if you went back 100 years, days probably seemed a lot longer and years probably seemed painfully long. Even back 500 years, time probably didn't move at all. And now because we're so busy and we have so much going on, time is really fast so you got to try and slow it down and enjoy it, savour it and make sure you actually want to use it the way you want and not wake up and go, "Oh my God, that's not what I wanted to do, but I already did it."

Q: Would you consider yourself an adrenaline junkie?

A: Yes, but not with reckless abandon. With calculation. There's a difference. I'm not one of those guys that would want to jump off a building with a wingsuit.

Q: What has been your greatest victory in life so far?

A: I wouldn't say one single moment, or event, or thing. At this point, probably longevity. The fact that I've been able to do what I've been doing for as long as I've been doing it is a pretty good victory. I really wanted to do this and tried myself up to have it last another year. "Maybe I can last another year? It would be great if I could make it last another year." I'm 58 and I'm still making it last another year.

Q: What is one thing you always want your children to know?

A: That I love them to death. Love them, love them, love them.

Q: What age do you wish you could permanently be?

A: Right now is pretty darn good. I haven't had any real bad ages. Maybe a tiny bit younger than now because I'm still scared of getting older right now and slowing down, and waking up and getting a little sore. I'd take it right now. I'd stay at this age. Selfishly, a year or two younger, but every year's experience adds wealth, knowledge and appreciation, so I wouldn't want to say 30 or 40 or 50 because I think I'm wiser and smarter to live better right now than back then. If it was just the physical age I was choosing and not the mental capacity, I'd go younger. If I could have the knowhow I have from today in my 30-year-old body, I'd probably do that, but if I had to take the whole thing as a unit, right now.

Q: What does *la dolce vita* mean to you?

A: That life is amazing. Life is beautiful. Life is such an incredible opportunity, such a gift and what you make it. I always say life's what you make it, make it a good one. You never know how long you have here, so love hard, play hard, work hard, and again you don't know how long you have. Some people unfortunately don't have a lot of time here, and make all these plans for the future, and then unfortunately, for whatever circumstances, that doesn't come because it's cut short for things maybe completely out of your control. Life's not fair sometimes. So yeah, live hard, live well, as well as you can, and be super optimistic and give yourself as much opportunity for good luck and good health as possible. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't do drugs. I'm not walking around in a plastic bubble being protected, but I live smart because I want life to be as rich as possible.

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Sessanta Miglia is a fundraising event inspired by the Mille Miglia in Italy

FORTHEDRIVE

Every year, luxury cars gather in the town of Grimsby to take part in the Sessanta Miglia. Its co-founder, Robert Hattin, explains how they're driving for change

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

hen asked when his love for cars began, Robert Hattin puts it down to genetics. "My father was a naval aviator in the Second World War, so he always liked mechanical, noisy things." He also mentions his time ice racing motorcycles before transitioning to cars and paying five cents to see *Johnny Dark* at his local theatre as defining moments. "It was the trashiest B- or C-rated film about this racer called Johnny Dark, but they had some action photos where they mounted the camera on the car, and that stuck with me to this day."

In 2006, he became a member of the Aston Martin club. In 2015, he co-founded Sessanta Miglia, a fundraising drive for luxury cars commencing in Grimsby and ending in the Niagara region. "Car clubs are like tribes," Hattin says. "There's a Corvette tribe, a Ferrari tribe, a Lamborghini tribe. I said, 'We've got to bring them all together and have people come out who enjoy the passion of driving while raising money."

The name of the event translates from Italian to 60 miles and is inspired by the Mille Miglia, or 1,000 miles, a historic event through Italy's stunning landscapes. Since its inception in 2015, Hattin's event has grown from strength to strength. He shares how the first drive featured around 15 cars. This year, 80 vehicles took part. "In the world of volunteerism, if you don't have a passion for what you do, it doesn't get done. So, myself and my friend Paul Del Grande did this. We kept layering things on."

In terms of what cars can enter, there are no hard and fast rules. Rather, Hattin says, "It has to be rare, historic or have done something technically important." He follows this by taking us outside to show a Citroën 2CV sitting on his driveway, a car known for its historic impact and popularity as a symbol of affordable mobility in post-war France.

For that reason, you can expect to see anything from Bentleys to BMWs gliding through the countryside, each driven by someone with their own story to tell. "There's a certain passion being around vehicles and going for a drive," Hattin says. "But the common thread is a desire to help."

While the drive through Niagara is picturesque, winding through the region's rolling hills, what underpins it is philanthropy. All the money raised





goes to replacing the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH) in West Niagara, which has been approved for 2022, with new acute in-patient beds, a 24-hour emergency department, as well as maternal and newborn services. "In Grimsby, we have this dilapidated old hospital," Hattin explains. "From Hamilton to St. Catharine's, there's a 50-kilometre gap with no hospital, yet we have Grimsby in the middle. It was always underfunded."

Compare the first Sessanta Miglia to this year's drive, and you'll see the progress Hattin has made, both in terms of it as an event and in the philanthropic good it's doing. It's evolved from a simple start-and-end drive to include optional receptions at local wineries, meals at local restaurants and even the presentation of a few awards before people return home.

"I always wanted, in my heart, to have the best event," Hattin says. "Not the biggest, but the best. I wanted people to come out and say, 'I'm part of something interesting.' I wanted to figure out a way to get people to give so we could make a difference. It's as simple as that." www.sessantamiglia.com

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WE'VE GOT TO BRING THEM ALL TOGETHER AND HAVE PEOPLE COME OUT WHO ENJOY THE PASSION OF DRIVING WHILE RAISING MONEY

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With a father who worked as a naval aviator in the Second World War, Hattin's always had a passion for "mechanical, noisy things"

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CPLH=354

FEMALE FOUNDER

VENTURING VERONICA

From her early days interning at New York's most coveted magazines to now running her own global communications consultancy and strategic advisory agency, there's nothing but stars in Veronica Speck's future

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

icture this: you're in your early twenties, interning at *Vogue* magazine in the Special Events Department. You're assisting in the planning of the American Woman Costume Institute Gala at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and you're attending the most coveted event in the world: The Met Gala. You're wearing a couture gown that you hand-picked up off the rack by Giambattista Valli. And as you're walking the red carpet, Valli himself walks by with Rosario Dawson and says, "Oh, darling, you look beautiful in that dress." Just a few years later, at 25, you're sitting next to Leo DiCaprio and Tobey Maguire at the opening of Faena, with Argentinian hotelier Alan Faena and South America's best-known Michelinstarred chef, Francis Mallmann, to kick off Art Basel. "I have a lot of stories like that. I just don't understand how 'little me' ended up there. That's what happens when you say 'Yes' to things and figure it out later," says Veronica Speck, founder of VHS Ventures, a global communications consultancy and strategic advisory agency with a diverse portfolio of international clients in the luxury and lifestyle sector.

Speck, who's originally from San Diego, can pinpoint exactly when she knew she would design her life around New York City. "It was my eighth grade trip at 13 years old. My mother took me to a Broadway show, and we went to The Met. I kind of put moves in motion to work toward ending up there. I went to do my undergrad and graduate school in New York and during that time I immediately started applying to internships."

It was interning at publishing houses such as Condé Nast and Hearst, and working in the Strategic Partnerships division of Christie's auction house during graduate school where Speck learned how to navigate the world of PR and the razzle and dazzle that comes with it. "It was so funny, because at that time, Sex and the City was airing on HBO, and there was Gossip Girl and The Devil Wears Prada - it was just funny to have all these New York fashion-centred shows and to see kind of what it was like on the inside. I had to pinch myself. It felt like a dream come true, and it wasn't from knowing someone. I really did send a blind email and resumé. I've always lived by those principles: always ask for everything and put yourself in those situations," says Speck.

It was saying "Yes" to original opportunities and leveraging her experience in the art and fundraising world that led Speck to become the global director of public relations at Bernardaud. "In my limited French, I conducted the interview and somehow convinced them that I was able to take on the role. I love art, I love tabletop, I love porcelain and design, but it ended up being one of the most fulfilling roles, because it was so much more than that."

If Speck's life course is starting to remind you of *Emily in Paris*, you're not alone. From Paris to porcelain, Bernardaud opened a window into the culinary world, as 75 per cent of Michelin-starred chefs use the heritage brand for their beautiful culinary masterpieces. "Around the world, really, I had the opportunity to meet these amazing chefs and work with them to create these collections," says Speck. "That was a great example of learning a foreign language and a skill, and from there, that's how I met chef Daniel Boulud." If it weren't for that fortuitous trip to Paris, which solidified her love for food, design and working with world-renowned chefs, she wouldn't have met and eventually been a member of Boulud's executive team.

Shortly after her time at the hospitality group, the pandemic hit, and, as many of us did, Speck went home to California to see her parents in San Diego. After taking some time to reflect following a whirlwind few years, VHS Ventures was born. "I realized that I needed to diversify personally. Hospitality and chefs would be part of my new business, but not the whole business. I can bring in interior designers and artists, and luxury brands, fashion, etc., into the picture."

An expansion of scope was part of Speck's rationale for her new business, but so, too, was a novel idea of what it should mean to partner with her clients and their businesses. "Part of my end goal is to operate almost like a venture capital firm in which I invest in brands, whether it be financially or otherwise. I'm really investing in these individuals, companies and brands. Maybe, one day would be to sell to Kering, LVMH or Richemont, but ideally just to keep growing them and be successful together as partners."

A common thread throughout the brands that Speck represents is that many of them are femalefounded and centre around the idea of heritage and heirlooms. From fragrance to fine jewelry, Speck has a strong vision for whom she decides to work with. "[From] at least four of the designers I work with – interior designer Lulu LaFortune, Hattie Banks, Maison d'Etto — they're all items [from these designers] that are meant to be passed on for generations. I really love that view of the world [and] I find designers who feel the same way. If you have love for what you make, and it's amazing how much it shows, you can feel it in the pieces."

Looking ahead, Speck hopes to work with more clients like Studio Lél, which is a design collective from Pakistan founded by a mother and daughter, with artistic pieces that are made by local Peshawar craftsmen and refugee artisans displaced by the Afghan conflict. "Just the story and message and charitable element behind it are just fascinating – creating beauty and also doing something good for the world."

Speck is clearly personally invested in Studio Lél's success, and the same is true of all her clients. It's that personal connection with her clients that drives her; the fact that her clients represent more than that to her. "There's a quote I love about what's the point of climbing a mountain if there's nobody there to share it with? Or the quote from *Into the Wild*: 'Happiness is best when shared."

www.veronicahelenspeck.com @@veronicahelenspeck @vhs.ventures

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... WHAT'S THE POINT OF CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN IF THERE'S NOBODY THERE TO SHARE IT WITH?

"

Speck (right) pictured with one of her best friends, Lilah Ramzi, whom she met while interning at *Harper's Bazaar.* "I met my now best friend there, who's features, Shopping, and Parties editor at *Vogue* now. I've known them [friends from past internships] for over 10 years. They've become my sisters and best friends"





THE WORLD IS YOURS, NECKY JAN

A few months before the start of his new world tour, reggaeton star Nicky Jam reflects on his life story of success, downfall and redemption

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JESSE MILNS** STORY WRITTEN AND INTERVIEW BY **CEZAR GREIF** Q&A AND INTERVIEW BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

uring a famous scene in the classic 1983 movie *Scarface*, as the sun is setting, main protagonist Tony Montana looks up to the Miami sky when a blimp shows up, with the words "The world is yours" flashing across its screen. Paired with Giorgio Moroder's archetypal music, it's one of the movie's best and most poignant scenes. Forty years later, the world may well now belong to Miami-based reggaeton king Nicky Jam. With four billion cumulated views on YouTube, his Spanish-sung songs about love and loss have attracted a global audience far beyond the limits of urban music fans.

So, it was with great excitement that the *Dolce* team flew to Miami to meet with Jam at the famous Porsche Tower, directly overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. He arrived on time and was eager to share his memorable life story.

Surprisingly, Jam's story didn't start in the Caribbean, but in Lawrence, Mass., where he was born 40 years ago, the son of Dominican and Puerto Rican immigrants. "It was always hard," he remembers. "Massachusetts is very Irish. There were a lot of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in my town, and it was the crack era. It was very ugly." But, Jam admits that some of the reactions weren't totally unwarranted. "There were bad people who gave our race a bad reputation, and as a people, we all suffered. But, the reality of it is, we made Lawrence our town. Even though it was a crazy town, it was our town. When you make it your town, you live in it, and everybody speaks Spanish. It's like Miami. We made it our town. Even though it's part of the United States of America, it's our town," admits Jam, echoing the words spoken by Pacino in the Brian De Palma movie. The formative years of Nicky Jam were difficult, but crucial from a musical standpoint. "The rock era was still in style,"



Jam reflecting on his ascending career from the 16th floor of the Porsche Tower in Miami

Jacket: Palm Angels Pants: 1017 ALYX Shirt: John Elliott (Available at Saks Fifth Avenue, Brickell City Center) Hat: The Hat Dealers from LA Shoes: Nike

VISIT <u>WWW.DOLCEMAG.COM</u> TO WATCH BEHIND-THE-SCENES FOOTAGE OF OUR INTERVIEW WITH NICKY JAM + ADDITIONAL Q & A CONTINUED



4 4 COLOMBIA GAVE ME EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO BE THE MAN I AM TODAY 7 7

he remembers. "So, Metallica, Guns N' Roses. But combined with hip hop. Run DMC, LL Cool J. It was a combination. I think that helped me. I come from an era with so much music. Today, if you see the top 10 of the Billboard 200, it's all trap music. I was lucky to see a lot of music: rock, slow jams, R & B, and rap, too. I think that made me a way better musician, because I had all that music inside me. Today, I feel people are stuck with one thing. I'm not too happy about that. Even though I'm an urban singer, I would love to see a rock song be No. 1."

At a very early age, Jam started getting involved in music. He recorded and released his first EP at 14 years old, an age where many kids still lack the self-confidence to put themselves out in the world. "At the beginning, music was just something that I liked," explains Jam. "Rapping was just magic. I would just rap everywhere. I never thought it would take me to be a superstar or be a famous person; I just loved it. I loved to see the faces of the people when they saw me do it, because I was so young." It's still a bit of a shock to learn the exact age Jam started doing hip hop. "I started rapping when I was eight years old," he remembers. "It was in English; I was doing freestyle. It made me feel like I was special. Normally, kids who start rapping at eight or nine years old, when they get older, they suck. I was good and got better and better and better."

Jam's life story is full of surprises, and the biggest one might be that at 10 years old, after moving to Puerto Rico with his family, he had to learn a new language. Jam had been raised speaking English and didn't speak Spanish. He put all his energy into fitting in. "When I went to Puerto Rico, I focused on learning the language," he remembers. "You learn the language quickly when you live in the country. I needed to." But, how did Nicky Jam also transition from rapping in English to doing it equally successfully in Spanish? His explanation may surprise you. "It's weird to say this, but, in a way, I'm a genius," he boasts. "I know that whoever says, 'I'm a genius,' he's probably crazy. But, the reality of it is, I dominate every part of music. I rap, I freestyle, I sing, I have melody, I do it in two languages. I can sing a commercial song, but also a hard-core rap song. I feel that, musically, I'm just very smart. My mind goes so quick. The funny thing is, I left the States when I was 10 years old, so I almost forgot my English, but now I've been living here in Miami for five years, I got it back. My mind is crazy, but crazy in a good way."

After releasing his first EP, he quickly gained popularity in Puerto Rico as a hip-hop artist and eventually met his idol, Daddy Yankee. The two artists then formed a duo called Los Cangris. They achieved success in Puerto Rico through hit singles such as "En la Cama" ("In the bed") and "Guayando" ("Guava"). However, Jam struggled to adjust to his new lifestyle and began using drugs and alcohol to an extent that concerned his musical partner. Los Cangris separated in 2004 after a disagreement between the two musicians. After the breakup of Los Cangris, Jam struggled personally and professionally. Depressed, Jam gained a large amount of weight, eventually reaching 136 kilograms (300 pounds). He took a job in a hotel, performing lounge music. Despite these difficulties, Jam developed his singing voice at that time, learning to incorporate singing vocals into his music, as opposed to just rapping.

In 2007, Jam moved to Medellín, Colombia, trying to stop using drugs and focus on music. He was well received by the people in Medellín. "Colombia gave me everything I needed to be the man I am today. They gave me a second chance at my career, they gave me so much love. When you have love, you feel that you can conquer the world. The love that Colombia gave me was necessary for a guy who was down, who felt that his security was on the floor. I felt I had a whole country backing me up, to keep working and go forward. I didn't feel that with my own country. Not that my own country wasn't good, but because I let my country down, because I wasn't good. I did a lot of bad things. I needed to move to another place."

While in Colombia, Jam became healthy. He lost 45 kilograms (100 pounds) and tattooed a significant portion of his body, including his whole neck, which he considered a symbol of his recovery. Artistically, he drew influence from the romanticism of a style of Colombian music named *vallenato.* "Colombia is so rich in culture. The people are so humble; they give you so much love," he explains. "They stop doing whatever they're doing to help you. Even though they come from poor families, they're always smiling, always having a good time. They're so clean; everybody smells so good. Women are so beautiful; they enjoy music to the fullest. Colombian guys always have music in their cars when they pick you up at the airport. After living in Colombia for almost 10 years, Nicky Jam settled in Miami in 2016

Black shorts and jacket: Bottega Veneta Beanie: Urban Outfitters Shoes: Nike





FALL 20

RAPID FIRE

Q: Favourite brunch meal? A: French toast, three eggs over hard.

Q: What makes a song sexy? Is it the rhythm, the lyrics? A: A combination of everything. The lyrics, obviously, because what you say is sexy, but the melody can be sexy as well. It's a combination.

Q: Where do you feel most at peace?

A: The ocean. That's why I like Miami. I have my boat and I'm always in the water. I would say the ocean or when I'm with my dad. When I go back home and I'm with my dad, I feel like no matter what's going on in the world, I'm with somebody who has so much wisdom and so much soul. And I feel like your parents are closer to God in some way. I feel like we're still in the world crazy, and they're already more in touch with God. I feel like I'm closer to God when I'm with my dad.

Q: What is your biggest fear?

A: I've had a lot of fears in life, but today my biggest fear is not to be there for my kids when they need me. I think it's the only thing that worries me. I don't care about anything else. No material things, no music, no nothing. I just hope that when my kids need me, I'm there. That's my only fear.

Q: What does la dolce vita mean to you?

A: The sweet life? The reality of everything is that I haven't had a sweet life. It's been a crazy life, but I love it. I love my crazy life. I've had sweet moments, but the sweet life, it doesn't sound like a Nicky Jam life. *La dolce vita* sounds like a person who lives on a farm and has no worries and has a very simple life. To be honest with you, to be a performer the way I am and to live my life, there's no *dolce vita*. I did live a simple life for a time. I went to a farm in Colombia, a very beautiful farmhouse, one of the most beautiful homes I've ever seen in my life. Not expensive, just beautiful. A cow came through my window, I fed it. I didn't even know cows eat food. I thought they just ate grass, but this cow would eat anything I gave it. That was the closest to a sweet life.

Q: If you had to share an inspirational message with your fans, what would it be?

A: Live your life, because there's only one life. If you're going to hug somebody, hug them like it's the last time that you're going to do it. If you're going to laugh, laugh like it's the last time you're going to laugh. If you're going to kiss somebody, kiss somebody with passion, like it's the last time you're going to kiss that person, because you only have one life and you have to live it to the maximum. That's the only advice I could give because at the end of the day, we don't get a second chance at life. We just have one. Colombia in general is beautiful, but Medellín is magic. It's always fall there; the weather's always good. They call it 'eternal spring - eternal primavera'. It's insane. Colombian music gave me a different way of writing. Normally, a reggaeton artist would write about, 'You mess me up and you'll see what I'm gonna do.' Always about sex. Colombia made me write more about, 'I messed up.' I didn't know how to value a woman. It's OK to say that, and I bring that to the table in songs like "El Perdón" with Enrique Iglesias and "El Amante." They have melody and they talk about things that normally a man in the urban world wouldn't talk about. But now, everything went back to the sex. It's just the way it is. It's going to come back; you just have to wait for your time."

Throughout his career, Jam has insisted that the backbone of his music remains reggaeton. But what musical elements make a song a "reggaeton song"? There's no one better than Jam to explain this. "The foundation is music from the Caribbean," he says. "It's a mix of dance hall from Jamaica and the wordplay from Puerto Rico and the hip hop. All this combines to make reggaeton. What makes a reggaeton beat is the percussion [it makes a sound of a bass drum on the first beat, then leaves beat 2 empty, plays the snare on the offbeat, the kick on beat 3 and then plays the snare on beat 4]. There's so much urban music where you don't know what's what. You take Bad Bunny. Obviously, he comes from Puerto Rico; he sings something like, 'ya yo me entere la la la la la la la.' That's electronic music, that's not reggaeton. But, the way he's rapping and singing, that's reggaeton. Everybody's making a cocktail of vibes. That's what's making the top 10 right now on the radio stations and on the charts. But, the reality of real reggaeton comes from that beat (he sings the beat again). That beat comes from a 1990 song in Jamaica called "Dem Bow," from Shabba Ranks. From one beat, we made a whole style of music called reggaeton. If it doesn't have that beat, it's something else. It's a combination of music, but it's not reggaeton. Reggaeton has that beat, and it's the Caribbean/ Puerto Rican version of dance-hall music."

Jam's breakthrough record, both in the U.S. and internationally, is largely considered to be his 2017 album, *Fénix*. He's the first one to admit how important it was for his career. "I remember when I was a kid, my uncle told me, 'We're like a fénix; we rise up from the ashes," he says. "When I was in Colombia, I remembered those words from my uncle. And I said, 'That's me, fénix.' I took it one step at a time. I thought, *If I can get a No. 1 hit in this country, I can probably make many deals to have my music distributed everywhere.* And that's exactly how it happened. We didn't have all that we have today, Spotify, etc. We just had the views, we just had YouTube. But it worked."

What is impressive is the number of Jam songs with an enormous amount of views online, some of them with more than a billion views. One of

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LIVE YOUR LIFE BECAUSE THERE'S ONLY ONE LIFE. IF YOU'RE GOING TO HUG SOMEBODY, HUG THEM LIKE IT'S THE LAST TIME THAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO IT. IF YOU'RE GOING TO LAUGH, LAUGH LIKE I'S THE LAST TIME YOU'RE GOING TO LAUGH.

"You look like James Bond," joked *Dolce* Editor-in-Chief Michelle Zerillo-Sosa. "Bad boy James Bond, then," replies Jam

Suit & Shoes: Suit Supply Turtleneck: H&M

Ishow with my story that, no matter where you come from, and how much at the bottom of the bottom

Jam standing on the "dezervator," the elevator built by developer Gil Dezer specifically for the Porsche Tower. It can bring the cars directly up to the units in fewer than 60 seconds

State Sugar

Suit & Shoes: Suit Supply Turtleneck: H&M

FALL 2021

them, the 2015 song "El Perdón" ("Forgiveness"), his collaboration with Enrique Iglesias, later won Jam his first Latin Grammy for Best Urban Performance. In 2016, Jam's song "Hasta el Amanecer" ("Until sunrise") became his first song to reach one billion views on YouTube. The song won the Billboard Music Award for Top Latin Song. "El Amante" ("The lover") also reached No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100. His collaboration with J Balvin, "X," from the 2019 album *Íntimo*, peaked at No. 41 on the Billboard Hot 100. The video debuted at the No. 1 spot on YouTube's global music chart and amassed more than 200 million views in two weeks. "I have more than five songs with a billion views," he reflects. "It makes me feel good that I'm one of the old-school cats, but I'm still competing with the younger kids in terms of numbers and views. My legacy is my story. How I came from the ashes and how I made it back, how I have all these young kids today enjoying my music. That's what makes me happy."

His most recent records contain a few songs sung in English, which is a first for him. But, he largely sticks to Spanish for his biggest singles. "The language is just more beautiful," he explains. "Way more beautiful. No disrespect to the English language. We sound more romantic, we sound sexier. You can talk to any English-speaking person, [and when] you speak Spanish to them the right way, they will be blown away."

In August 2021, Jam announced that his first tour since COVID-19 will kick off in early 2022. The Infinity Tour will visit major cities across the U.S. and Canada, starting Feb. 3, 2022, in Boston. Jam can barely hide his excitement at the prospect of getting back onstage. "You can expect a singer who's crazy about doing a show, and that's the best thing you can have," he reveals. "The reality of it is, I used to do so many shows, I was sometimes aggravated by it. But today, I want to perform; I need it. And people are going to feel it. There's nothing better than having onstage a singer who's crazy about singing for you."

Q: You say you're transparent about the mistakes that you've made because the mistakes made by the 20-year-old boy are what make the 40-year-old man. Can you tell me about why this is important for you to share and how it will always be part of your legacy?

A: The reality of everything is that that is my legacy. My legacy is not the Billboards and Grammys and all these awards or all these accomplishments. My legacy is my story. For the people to know where I came from, the hole I came from, how much I suffered and all these obstacles that I had to becoming successful. I show with my story that, no matter where you come from, and how much at the bottom you are, if you have discipline and faith in God, you can make it. I'm living proof of that. That's my legacy. That's my story.

When I was a kid, I remember my grandfather

died before I was born and there's a street in Puerto Rico and the name of the street is the name of my grandfather. The reason for this is because he helped everybody on the street. He would give his money for a funeral; if somebody needed a hammer, he would help them. That's my role model, that's who I want to be and I'm doing that with my story. I know a lot of kids that talk to me and say, "Thank you for your story. I stopped doing drugs and I'm living a better life." My past was very dark, I was in jail. I've done all types of drugs. I was just a rebel because I lost my mom and I didn't care about life. I was just numb. It's good to help people and it's good to hear people say, "Thank you for what you did in my life". I think music could probably do that, but I think my story has done it way more than my music.

Q: Part of your health journey is working out. I heard that you have a scheduled basketball workout schedule from 4 to 7 p.m. How has sports helped with your mental health?

A: Sports helped me in everything. It changed my life. It changed my way of feeling the way that I feel about myself, because you look good. I sleep better. I do better shows on stage and I just love the sport. I love basketball. I play seven games a day. I train and do weights in the morning. I changed my life and changed the way I was eating and turned myself into a healthy person. I think that's the best thing in the world. I didn't do that my whole life. I was just punishing my body, and punishing my soul and making myself not even care about myself. When you love yourself, it's easy to love everybody else.

Q: What makes you proud to be a Latin artist and can you talk about how the Latin music genre is continuously growing and becoming mainstream in the U.S. market?

A: I love being a Latino, like anybody would love where they come from. I love my people, I love my culture, and we have so much that people don't know about. I'm happy that finally people know about how good we are and all the talent we have, and it's not just the typical Pablo Escobar, dealing with cocaine and prostitutes, etc. ... We have so much to give. We have so many beautiful things. We have hard-working people, beautiful music, beautiful food.

Q: How would you describe your style, and how does it play into your work? Have you always been interested in fashion?

A: My style is very urban. I'm very bad boy, hardcore, "I-don't-care" type of vibe. I'm very risky. I will tattoo any part of my face, but even the kids love that when they see me. I like the attention, I like having that. The crazy thing is that even though I have all these tattoos, you can still see my soul. You can still see that I'm a good kid, that I'm humble and that I'm a nice person. I'm glad that I have all these tattoos, and you can still see through me and say, "He looks like he's a cool guy, a nice guy." It's just my vibe; I'm very simple. I don't like wearing too much stuff, because I think I already have too much on my body. Just T-shirts, plain T-shirts, and I love dressing very retro. I love the '80s, I'm fascinated by the '80s, '90s.

Q: Can you tell me about your latest project, La Industria Bakery & Cafe? Did you ever imagine that music would lead you into different opportunities outside of music itself?

A: You know, you dream. I dreamt about so many things, and, of course, having a restaurant was always one of my dreams. Having hotels, acting, having my podcast show - all of these things. My mentality was that I cannot be stuck in one thing. I have to do a lot of things. During the pandemic, I was going to these brunches in Miami, and I realized that Latino people don't have a brunch. It wasn't really part of the culture of the Spanish people. I wanted to do a Spanish brunch place and I'm a really big fan of pancakes. La Industria Bakery is one of the most successful businesses I've ever had. It's insane. We make money in pancakes like a five-star restaurant makes in high-class gourmet food. I'm very blessed and very happy, and it's cheap to make pancakes. People know it's Nicky Jam's spot and so they all go and take a picture. It became a tourist place for the Spanish people, and everybody else from Europe who comes here — they want to go to "The Industry Bakery" and eat pancakes. I'm opening up three more: one in Colombia, one in Puerto Rico and one in Orlando, Fla.

Q: You said once, "I'm always working like I'm about to lose everything." Can you speak on that in general and how it navigates your work ethic?

A: I am a workaholic. I feel like I work more now than I did in the peak, or buzz of my career. I lost everything once, so my mentality now is that I'm not going to go through that again. I just work every day like I need it. Even though today I'm comfortable, and I don't really need to, that's what makes me more successful. The reality of everything is that I'm the type of guy who loves spreading my energy and I love other people to feel that. I don't stop. I wake up every day at 7 a.m., I go to the gym from 9 to 10 a.m., I work on music from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. I play basketball from 4 to7 p.m., and I'm working on other businesses. I'm opening three more restaurants, opening a hotel, I have my podcast show, I'm working on so many songs, so many projects, and it feels good. There was a time in life where I couldn't work, because nobody cared about me. Nobody cared about my brand. And now that I have a brand, I should take advantage of that and be grateful for what God gave me.

⊙@nickyjam ⊙@dolcemag

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Santia Deck has been chasing her dream ever since she was just a little kid. Two years ago, she became the highest-paid woman to play professional football, signing a multimillion-dollar deal with the Women's Football League Association (WFLA). Her talents aren't limited to the field, either. She's also a published author, a fitness model, TV personality and host, and social media influencer with hundreds of thousands of followers. And now she's made history again as the first Black female athlete to own her own sneaker company, TRONUS. She's keeping her eye on the prize

INSPIRATION

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

antia Deck grew up playing football and just having fun with her three brothers in Houston. Little did she know this was actually the start of something really big. "It's kind of crazy how things come around, and now I'm doing it professionally," she says.

As a self-described tomboy, she says she went along when her brothers went to football camps or training, and, in high school, she trained for track and field with her brother, her training buddy. He was always a bit faster, she adds, but it gave her an opportunity to do drills that most women don't get to do until college, if that. She won a full track-and-field scholarship to Texas A&M University-Kingsville and graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and literature, writing a book, *The Struggle* (CreateSpace Publishing), to shed light on child abuse and give hope to those who are on a healing journey.

But, even in school, she knew she wanted to encourage other girls and young women, too, in their own fitness journeys, and she started posting videos of her track workouts. Viewers started commenting, focusing on her abs. "So, that became my thing," she says. "I was doing cross-promotion with other influencers. Everyone would always say, 'Follow her, check out the track athlete with the ripped abs."

When Deck's mom noticed her growing following, she told her daughter, "You should brand your look. What do you want to be called?" Deck wasn't sure, maybe Princess of Abs, she thought. But her mom asked her, "Why be a princess when you can be a queen?" And, that's how she got the title Queen of Abs.

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Santia Deck isn't afraid to work hard, and it shows. Now, as a professional athlete, some of her workouts are next level, including parachute training for speed and strength

Now the 29-year-old is making headlines around the world as a powerful role model to budding young female athletes. In 2019, she became the first woman to sign a multimillion-dollar deal with the WFLA. Because of the pandemic, they haven't played yet, but they will launch the season in May next year. "It's been crazy how much response I've gotten, from good and bad," she says. Bad? Really? Yep. In fact, when she first signed her deal, some bloggers were posting that she should be in the kitchen cooking and having babies instead of trying to play in the NFL. "First of all, I'm a girl, and yes, we are trying to get the same opportunities as men, but I'm playing with women," she says.

Last year, Deck really hit her stride when she launched TRONUS, her own running shoe company. She's always loved sneakers, but, as a female athlete, she was well aware of the limitations when it came to collaborations with recognized brands. And so she decided to create her own company, offering affordable shoes. The other big thing is that she wants to be able to sign female athletes to her shoe company one day, sponsoring them but paying them what they are actually worth.

Deck spent several years developing a sleek futuristic sneaker, creating a super-comfortable "walking on air" kind of experience - the running shoes are a big hit with everyone from teens to her 89-year-old grandmother. And she's happy with the fact that she has control of the company. "It would have been a lot easier if we could have used somebody else's money, but we understood that it's bigger than that at the end of the day," she says. She wants to be able to create generational wealth, and pass down the company to her family. "So when I have children, I want them to be able to own it one day ... and that was more important to me than anything else, as well," she adds. Recently, Deck signed a deal with Foot Locker, and the sneaker outlet is the first major retailer worldwide to feature TRONUS products.

Inspired by women like Serena Williams and



Nothing will stop Santia Deck from pursuing her dreams – on the pitch and now as an entrepreneur

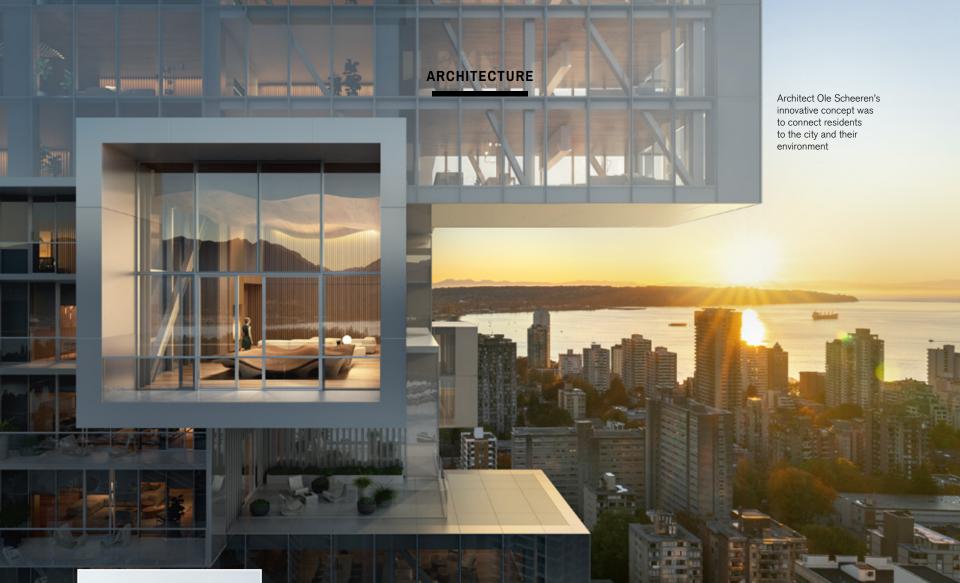
Rihanna, her own mom and her faith, too, Deck found the courage to pursue her dreams. "My faith in God would be the first thing ... just to know that anything is possible," she says. "And I would say, honestly, [that] my mom has definitely been the anchor in all of this." Add to that the tremendous support from her fans and her followers, and Deck feels boosted in her endeavours. "All of it combined made me say, 'OK it's scary ... but I don't think it's impossible' - the worst that could happen is that I tried to create a shoe company, which is still pretty cool," she says. And then she thought that, if she could open doors for other women, that simply outweighed any of the negative thoughts she had. "So, I said, 'I'm going to just jump and see what happens," she says. "And it went well!"

It's funny the things we discover about ourselves as we go through life. For Deck, she has recognized that she loves being an entrepreneur. "Being an athlete, I thoroughly enjoy football and rugby ... but it's also been pretty cool to just see everything transpire and turning my dreams into reality has been a beautiful thing," she says.

What is her advice to women? "I would definitely say, 'If you want it, go get it,'" she says simply. "You will always have people telling you that you shouldn't be doing this, 'because you look like this, you walk like this, you talk like this, it's not possible."

Instead, she adds passionately, "Go full throttle, put all of your energy into it. Don't listen to the naysayers. Protect it like it's your baby."

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1515 represents the most ambitious project yet for Colin Bosa and Bosa Properties

1515: BOSA PROPERTIES AND ARCHITECT OLE SCHEEREN BRINGING INNOVATIVE 3-D LIVING TO VANCOUVER

The distinctive design, with horizontal elements introduced into a vertical building, will make 1515 Alberni Street one of the landmark structures in perhaps the world's most beautiful natural urban setting

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

hile he certainly couldn't know it at the time, 18th-century English naval explorer George Vancouver was sailing one of the world's most naturally beautiful and scenic settings when he was exploring British Columbia's Burrard Inlet in 1792, the home of the city that now bears his name and Canada's third largest metropolitan area. In the next few years another beautiful element will be added with the construction of

Fifteen Fifteen, a 42-storey luxury condominium set amongst the beauty of the city's Coal Harbour enclave between downtown and Stanley Park.

Fifteen Fifteen, located at 1515 Alberni St., will be one of those rare structures that catches both the eye and imagination as it features 18 "observatory homes," which extend out from the building as living pods in a cantilever design, which introduce horizontal elements to a vertical living environment. Developed by Bosa Properties and Kingswood Properties, Fifteen Fifteen is designed by the distinguished international architecture firm Büru Ole Scheeren and represents the first North American design by the noted German architect Ole Scheeren, bringing imaginative thought to the challenge of capturing and embracing the views of Vancouver's natural beauty.

"For many years, I have explored the questions of how we want to live — in relation to our

own private spaces as well as our communities, our cities and the environment — and what architecture means in this context," says Scheeren. "Born from an idea of three-dimensional living, Fifteen Fifteen's strong sculptural form introduces horizontality to an urban tower and is about connectivity — connecting people to each other and to their surroundings — and offers an interactive way of living."

Currently in preconstruction with residency expected in 2026-27, prices of the 202 luxury residences have yet to be determined. The project represents the most ambitious yet for private Vancouver-based and family-owned-and-operated Bosa Properties.

"My father immigrated to Canada from Italy in 1958 and eventually became a carpenter and then formed a construction company," says Colin Bosa, who joined his father's firm in the 1990s and is now CEO. "Three things drive us: As a family business, we really are all about relationships, and we see that with our trades and suppliers and our employees. As an organization, we also value opportunity as it brings growth for our company and our employees, and the third is to continually progress as an organization. Not just the company, but the buildings we build and just in looking at the quality and handcrafted nature of Fifteen Fifteen is setting a bar that makes it so exciting."

Fifteen Fifteen will feature elegant interiors emphasizing wood and other natural materials in luxury residences with a range of floor plans that maximize space for the efficiency of everyday living. Bosa has partnered with Bang & Olufsen to design leading-edge smart home technology that will feature technologies available not from today but in a few years' time upon the building's completion. The project also will include full concierge services and valet parking, as well as amenities that promote socially engaged lifestyles, such as a fitness studio, hospitality and entertainment spaces, a private dining room and an owner's lounge.

However, it is the building's striking and captivating design that has so intrigued urban enthusiasts and admirers of innovative architecture, making Fifteen Fifteen one of Vancouver's most eagerly awaited towers. The distinctive appearance is the reward that comes from Bosa Properties' due diligence in conducting an extensive international search to find just the right architect.

"We have a phenomenal site in downtown Vancouver, and there are not too many opportunities to design and build a project of this quality," says Bosa. "We did trips throughout Europe meeting different architects, and we were quite impressed with Ole's approach to design. And what he came up with for this project was quite unexpected and blew us away. When he came to Vancouver, he was struck by its natural beauty but also by the vertical silos of buildings.





His notion of connecting to nature through his horizontal projections would be different, and that's where his idea of 3-D living came from — to open up the building to the city in a different way."

With its proximity between mountains and ocean, Vancouver has long been known as one of the world's most livable cities. In fact, The Economist Intelligence Unit acknowledged it as the first city ranked among the top 10 of the world's most liveable cities for 10 consecutive years. Because of its moderate climate and emphasis on the outdoors, in the past most people have chosen to live in Vancouver for its lifestyle. But Bosa says that is changing, as an influx of technology companies is resulting in high-tech jobs that are changing the economic make-up of the city.

"From a macro-economic and development standpoint, we all know what makes Vancouver great – the climate, the natural beauty and all the amenities the city has," he says. "But what we're seeing now is the creation of technology jobs, and not just the Amazons, but a lot of these jobs are homegrown and creating a lot of jobs, and that's relatively new to the city. Vancouver has become a great incubator for businesses which are new and growing, and that is happening at a pretty fast rate."

Fifteen Fifteen will be bringing elevated elegance to Vancouver's condominium lifestyle and will become a statement tower in a statement city of global stature and an embracing beacon to all who are lucky enough to call this residence, and this city, home.

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ULTRA-LUXURY LIFESTYLE & TRAVEL

MONEY SCREAMS, WEALTH WHISPERS

Sh. The secret's out. Ultra-luxury lifestyle consultant Jaclyn Sienna India shares the latest trends and hidden gems inside the lives of the extremely wealthy, and *Dolce* took some notes

WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

Jaclyn Sienna India is the founder of Sienna Charles, the first female-founded ultra-luxury lifestyle and travel company. Sienna Charles handles the travel and luxury lifestyle planning for CEOs, celebrities, billionaires and public figures ranging from George W. Bush to Mariah Carey

aclyn Sienna India transformed her first job in hospitality into her luxury lifestyle business by becoming a student of the ultra-high net worth. Today, her company, Sienna Charles, advises billionaires, public figures and celebrities ranging from George W. Bush to Mariah Carey on ultra-luxury travel and lifestyle experiences.

At a time when inspiration in the form of breathless scenery, gourmet meals and exciting adventures is only an Instagram away, satisfying the demands for an exclusive experience from the ultra-high net worth comes with its own challenges. India shares her insights on the trends in the luxury market and how she's able to curate experiences for those with the highest of expectations and where money is no object: "People have more money than ever. They're not looking for mediocre service; they want the best of the best and they're going to continue to demand that — as they should." Having travelled to 90 countries — and still looking to check off exploring many more destinations, such as Papua New Guinea and the Trans-Siberian Express railway — India gives us a look into her growing "Black Book" of people, places and things that will help inspire your next wellness experience, adventure or passion whether abroad or in your very own home.

Q: Can you tell me about your trajectory in becoming a luxury lifestyle expert?

A: When I was going to university, I started working at a five-star restaurant in Philadelphia, and it was my first time working at a luxury establishment. I became enamoured with food, wine and luxury service. I just became a student of the ultra-high net worth, wanting to study them and study about their habits and their patterns and why they wanted it a certain way and used that to fuel lots of my own success in terms of how to be better and have better expectations. I just

became really obsessed with it. I really wanted to bring that ultra-luxury service and personalization to the travel world. I started my company in 2008, and I vowed that every moment would always be about the client. It would be a personal experience about them totally, and we would never book anything that I didn't personally know. I've travelled to 90 countries. I'm on the road 200 days of the year, and it's really been just building out my black book of people, places and things in order to pair clients with.

Q: Luxury now includes a second passport, access to health care and the freedom to go when and where they feel safe and secure. That being said, what has been the most frequent and wanted passport requests? Is this common among the ultra-highnet-worth individuals?

A: It's pretty common. So, when the main lockdown first hit, no matter how much money they had in the world, they weren't able to be as free as they

wanted. I think that they really restructured things to make sure that they could not be bound by any rules and do whatever they want, and it kind of fuelled this egocentric "can't-tell-me-what-to-do" kind of thing. I've helped people get passports ----Europe and South America among the ones that we get the most. And a lot of times, it's a quite easy conversation, because you can get things through investment into purchasing homes or investment into the economy. We have experts we work with for that. As much as also buying assets instead of renting them. During the pandemic, we've found that a lot of people were essentially buying the yachts, buying the planes, buying the extra third, fourth and fifth vacation homes, so that they could just fire up their jet or go to their yacht without having to then search on availability and share it with other people from a sanitary perspective.

Q: Who have been some of your most notable clients?

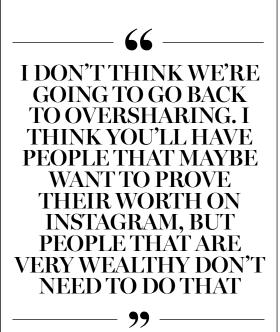
A: An interesting one was George W. Bush. We worked with him about five years ago. We did a trip to Ethiopia with him, and that one got out because, when we were in Ethiopia, he brought 30 secret service with him, and so it became sort of a media frenzy. That one got out. We have worked with Mariah Carey, but I would say the main people we work with could be celebrities, public figures or just everyday billionaires. We don't pigeonhole the type of people that we work with; it's people who understand the taste level.

Q: What are they looking for? Are they looking for luxury or experience?

A: I mean luxury is different things for different people. Maybe that dollar food experience is luxury. I think whenever there's a trip, they're looking to gain something. Whether they're looking to gain relaxation, ultimate wellness or family time, I've found very early on in my career that people travel for their passions. They're looking to go deeper on wine, history or food, to learn more - there's always an objective for a trip when you're dealing with the most successful people in the world. They don't do anything just for the sake of doing it. They're always looking for an objective, and, so, we pair that objective with the person and their preferences and match it with all the options, and we try to help them with that objective. A lot of times, it may be education for their kids, there's always a reason as to why they want this experience ... just really knowing that there is that objective is really key in being successful and then helping them achieve that.

Q: So, everything is becoming more private, right?

A: It's extremely private. If you look on Instagram now, you'll see that people are showing less and less of where they are travelling and stuff. Since the pandemic, since our clients are essentially top of their industry, you have a guy who's running the banks or running the top tech companies or top companies, and he's not posting, or his wife's not posting that they are on a yacht or travelling, because most of their employees are on unemployment or they can't eat. So, we were always about privacy and discretion, but we found that privacy and discretion are more important than ever. I think that will be a trend that's here to stay.



Q: Top three hotels?

A: I just really love hotels that really have a sense of place of the area. I really like Aman Tokyo, Hotel de Russie in Rome and the Peninsula Hong Kong. I think they really embody the place, and you really feel that you know where you are. When you arrive at Hotel de Russie, it couldn't be any more Roman.

Q: Top three favourite places to travel to?

A: China, Japan, Italy and France — those four. I love everywhere. I've been to 90 countries, and it depends on what I'm in the mood for, but those are places that I go back to constantly that I feel are being rediscovered and never ending.

Q: Top three health retreats.

A: My favourite one is the Amanbagh. They do the Ayurveda treatments; it's a good one to do a program at. And, I really like Lanserhof in Germany. They have this really cool program where they teach you about chewing, and how all the digestion actually happens while you're chewing. I like that one because it teaches you something. I also like SHA wellness in Spain.

Q: Favourite restaurants?

A: I'm trying to think – I like so many places. Odette in Singapore, Gaggan in Thailand and Noma. I really like Enrique Olvera's Pujol in Mexico City. I love fine dining. My husband and I cook a lot at home, and so when I go out to eat, I like to see the chef's expression of the region, so I think that's really important.

Q: What trends in the industry have you been seeing over time?

A: Buying assets versus renting them. Buying planes, buying yachts, buying second, third and fourth vacation homes, so that you have full access, control and ownership of them, I think that's one that's going to stick forever. We were the first to see that and incorporate it into our services, whether we're helping them charter those things or broker them or if they own them. That expectation level is rising.

And, so I think that those are two. We talked about the privacy. I don't think we're going to go back to over-sharing. I think you'll have people that maybe want to prove their worth on Instagram; maybe they're going to want to share, but people that are very wealthy don't need to do that.

Q: What carry-on items are your must-haves whenever you fly?

A: Socks, because I'm always cold. I have a pair of cashmere socks. My skin care ... I use Biologique Recherche. A big Ettro tote that I essentially throw everything in that I haven't done for the week or the month, so all the magazines and all the crazy rip-outs are there.

Q: Where is one place you're dying to visit, but haven't yet?

A: Papua New Guinea is definitely on my list. I'm always freaked out by it, though, because I always think I'm going to get eaten, because there's cannibals there. I really want to go there, but that's more of a personal, long journey, so it's on my list, but I have not gotten there. I do want to do the Trans-Siberian Railway through China to Russia. I want to explore more of remote Thailand by train.

Q: What is the best inside travel secret you've learned throughout your years in the business?

A: Don't eat carbs before the flight home, so it really helps with no jet lag. That's a big one for me, to eat really healthy 24 hours leading up to when I go home.

Q: What does *la dolce vita*, the sweet life, mean to you?

A: For me, it's about being thoughtful, being still, not running from thing to thing, being able to take your time. That's what I'm always striving for.

READ FULL INTERVIEW WITH JACLYN SIENNA INDIA AT WWW.DOLCEMAG.COM

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MIRRORED LOVE Filtered through fantastical crystals and Venetian mirrors, we're bringing back all the glitz and glamour Dress IRENE LUFT Jewels SÉVIGNÉ

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FASHION



SAVING FASHION, SAVING THE WORLD

Author, photographer, curator and activist Bonnie Young is well-known for her designer clothing, which has adorned stars and models such as Gigi Hadid, Bella Hadid and Priyanka Chopra. Her designs are often splashed on the pages of *Vogue, NYT* and *Harper's Bazaar*. But now, she's made a commitment to using only fabrics and textiles in her collections that are destined for landfill, proving that upcycled fabrics can be just as fresh and inspiring as the original rolls — without taking a toll

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

ack in the '90s, when Ralph Lauren offered Bonnie Young a job with a substantial salary for her work, she practically fell off her chair. As a student at Cornell University, she would get a lot of parking tickets because she was often in studios late and driving back to her apartment off campus and illegally parking her car, which ended up getting impounded. She didn't want to tell her dad, but she needed money to pay the tickets and get her car back. Luckily, the father of one of her friends at school was best

friends with Ralph Lauren, so he put her in touch. So, it's not as if she were on a fashion trajectory. "Literally, that's just how I got into fashion," she says. Even still, as a little girl, she would sometimes show up for dinner at home with lace tights and amazing shoes, which her sister really didn't get. "I want to look nice," Young would tell her. At her core, Young was always an artist and, for her, creativity is bred in the bone. Take her dad, for instance. He wanted to become a rock star, but became a doctor because, well, it's just the stereotypical story, she says, and he really couldn't choose that path as his career. "But, he's extremely creative. He's 83 and he still does open mics now," she says.

Young didn't sit back and relax in a comfy chair at Ralph Lauren, though. Instead, she moved to Australia. "I've had wanderlust my whole life," she says. And, in another fortuitous moment, when she returned to New York and worked for Ralph Lauren full-time, her boss hated travelling. So, Young got to spread her wings and travel to places like New Mexico, London and Italy, doing fabric research and visiting vintage stores. But Young was still just 24 years old. She ended up moving to Italy and became the Creative Director for Donna Karan International for the better part of her career, until she started her own company designing luxury clothes for children and launched her label, BY. Bonnie Young. She opened a store in Aspen, Colo., and went on to create collaborations with companies like Adidas and Swarovski. "So, my fashion story is ... just being at the right place at the right time," she says.

Young has had an incredible career with recognition from around the world, with Hollywood stars showcasing her designs, and she has worked on some amazing projects, including designing costumes for *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2* and other creative collaborations with Lands' End, Koral Los Angeles, Orta Blu and an exclusive collection of jewelry, T-shirts and accessories for the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar.

In fact, Young's collections have always been inspired by her travels to places around the world, and she has been repurposing fabric for years now, taking leftover cashmere, for instance, to create other items. "I've always used upcycled fabrics. I can do it because the company is small and it's very exclusive, so I am not ever going to produce 300 dresses. I could say, 'All right, there's 100 yards — that's it. I'm just making 15 dresses: first come, first served." For sustainability, she says, she's always been able to run the business that way.

Still, Young is cautious about calling something "sustainable." Says Young: "Sustainability has become a buzzword. It can never be fully sustainable; it's more like 'purposeful' fashion." And now she's focusing even more on purposeful fashion: her SS 2020 collection was designed based on the availability of otherwise obsolete materials, preventing wastage. Since then, Young never starts from scratch anymore. All her collections are created using upcycled materials from fabric stores across New York.

According to the Department of Environmental Conservation in the United States, 85 per cent of all unwanted NYC clothing ends up in landfills, contributing to an industry producing more greenhouse gas emissions than international flights and maritime shipping combined. "Now I ask, 'What do you guys have left over?' I can upcycle that and make a new look, so that we're not throwing millions of metres of fabric into landfill," says Young. "I don't want to say that [my collection is] 100 per cent upcycled, but I'd say it is 80 per cent upcycled.

Life is interesting, isn't it? Especially as we get older, we often have a different way of looking at everything. "The world has changed as I've aged," Young says. "I mean, the last two years have really taken a toll on all of us." It's just so different now, she says. New York has really shifted since the '90s and even in the early 2000s. Her daughter is



20 now, and, even if she wanted to, Young says that there's nowhere for her daughter to go and have nights out until 4 a.m. But, the pandemic has also changed New York, she adds, and it has reverted to somewhere in between the cool, gritty city it used to be before it became the "billionaire haven," since many of them have left the city and have still not returned. "I think people are more connected now," she says. "There's a lot more humanity here."

Young tries hard to link what she is doing in a collection or with her fashion company and use that as a voice for a bigger cause. And she's committed to philanthropic endeavours. In addition to her work with Solving Kids' Cancer, she's also the founder of Fashion Fights for Children's Rights, an initiative to align her brand with various children's charities such as ECPAT and Nest Foundation.

Right now, Young is at a good place in her life, living in New York with her husband, a photographer/creative director, and she's proud of her three children and what she has passed on to them. As luck would have it, her daughter Celia is an amazing singer and was a finalist on season 16 of *The Voice*. And, yes, her mom designed everything she wore on the show.

www.bonnieyoung.com



LAST OF ITS KIND

After speaking with four creatives and visionaries behind No. 7 Dale residences, a united thought emerged: The city's never seen a project like this before

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEWS BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

estled in Rosedale, one of Toronto's oldest heritage neighbourhoods, No. 7 Dale is a landmark building bringing ultra-luxury boutique residences to the market. Its founding is a collaborative one, brought to life by a team including architect Siamak Hariri, landscape architect Janet Rosenberg, interior designer Alessandro Munge and VP of development operations, Josh Shteiman.

Where Hariri's career has seen him gain international acclaim designing projects for institutions including the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum, Rosenberg is one of Canada's most distinguished landscape architects, working on everything from public to private gardens. Munge has won a number of awards for his interior and architectural design work around the world and Shteiman has spent over a decade in the real estate development sector, working on residential and commercial projects. It's an impressive roster, and one that's pushed No. 7 Dale to what it is today.

They collectively describe the work process as seamless, lending their expertise and different disciplines to ensure the overarching vision was met. Where Shteiman calls it "a natural fit," like "passing on the baton from one discipline to another," Munge says their partnership was founded on trust. "What we presented was always respectfully accepted because it was right," he says. "It wasn't about us as individuals but us united as a team. There was a mutual respect for one another and the disciplines we know best."

From early conversations, No. 7 Dale was planned to be something different. "The concept was to create a landmark residential project that exudes care, luxury, refinement, craft and presence," explains Hariri. "Something that fits into the extraordinary historic landscape of Rosedale while acknowledging we're living in a contemporary world."

The result, touted as "the first and last

development of its kind," brings together the natural surroundings of the neighbourhood with design details that have been both curated and crafted to exude elegance and a refined sense of care. It includes 26 private suites overlooking the Rosedale Ravine, with interiors defined by a soft colour palette, stone accents and high ceilings.

Every suite in the building has been finished with Dada's modern kitchen cabinetry, bespoke suite furnishings and features including glass fireplaces and oak flooring. The building comes complete with a 24-hour concierge service, private trainer room, chef's catering kitchen, fitness studio and spa, and a historic tea house, restored and overlooking the ravine. It will be ready for movein by fall 2021.

Because of the way the project is situated, Munge describes it as having a "positive contradiction" between the building's north and south sides. "The north side has a more neighborhood aspect to it, and the south side has

The build is integrated into the neighbourhood's natural features, with heritage trees conserved and new trees planted



Principle at Studio Munge







ravines and city views," he says. "It's a quiet place for buyers and they can choose, unless you get a penthouse where you get both. The south is more tranquil, lifting up the blinds in the morning to see nothing but trees and beautiful landscapes that have been there historically. On the north side, you're instantly part of the neighbourhood's fabric in a very understated way."

After speaking with all four members of the team, you understand the word "understated" is integral to the thought process. It's clear they wanted the property to be quiet in its presence and unassuming in its wealth. "It's not flashy or in your face," Munge continues. "There's an understatedness to it, and I think our interiors of the public spaces and residences play off of that. It wasn't about wealth to be shown off."

Hariri agrees. "It doesn't need a graphic approach to architecture but rather a crafted one. The homes in Rosedale sit quietly, with that combination of sandstone, brick, detail and refinement. We wanted to speak to that context and almost disappear into the landscape as quiet excellence."

Because of the heritage of the neighborhood and the different rating system it has architecturally, the building came with its challenges, and a process of the developers proving they wanted to give back to the neighborhood and do it justice. "I think there's beauty when a project starts with a



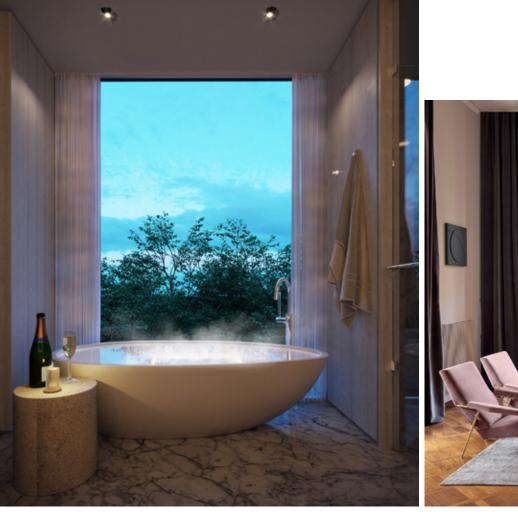
good story based on authenticity and has emotion behind it," says Munge.

Though technically a condominium building, part of its success comes with it feeling residential. "One of the big things we hear from clients is that they don't like moving into condominiums after they've had a house," says Rosenberg. "They want to keep all the qualities a house offers, which is what this property does. It gives you the incredible attributes of condominium life without you having to give up anything you had in a private house."

The regional benefits play a big part in this. Set back from the street on almost three acres of land, much of the greenery surrounding the property has been both preserved and rejuvenated with heritage trees conserved and over 1,000 new trees planted. "Good landscape design doesn't hit you over the head," Rosenberg continues. "It isn't contrived. It has a series of successions of height, textures and palettes. We don't want it to look like we were there. It's also about creating spaces that allow you to be who you want to be in them, whether you're walking, sitting, listening, meeting or eating."

This sense of residential living doesn't just come from the overall design of the project, it comes from the way the smallest details have been thought through. Whether it's the brickwork, chosen to mimic the feeling of walking into Rosedale homes, or the approach to greenery, No. 7 Dale slips into the landscape.

"This project seemed to come at the right time with what was going on in the world with the pandemic," says Shteiman. "The desire shifted towards having homes that don't compromise on luxuries if they're looking to downsize. We don't call these condos because they're residences and proper homes. They're huge, expansive,





All of the 26 suites are private, finished with high ceilings and a soft colour palette



open-concept, with lots of outdoor space for entertaining and all the first-class luxuries you'd put in your home if you had one of that size."

The fact this project was realized at a time when the world was going through a pandemic is telling. The project speaks to a shift in desire, as Shteiman says, but also to how much time we've spent in our own homes over the last year. "Our personal spaces have never been more important," Hariri adds. "We've discovered how important beauty, delight, wonder and magic are in our lives, and how much of that is delivered by our interiors and personal space."

Another key component of No. 7 Dale is its potential to push boundaries. It is, as mentioned, promised to be the first and last of its kind, and the team shares that sentiment. For Hariri in particular, it comes down to how everything was brought together as one. It's something he refers to as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a German term that translates to "a total work of art," used to describe works that are a complete, cohesive product. "That's great architecture," he says. "Where everything is working entirely together as one, so it gives you a totalized experience and atmosphere."

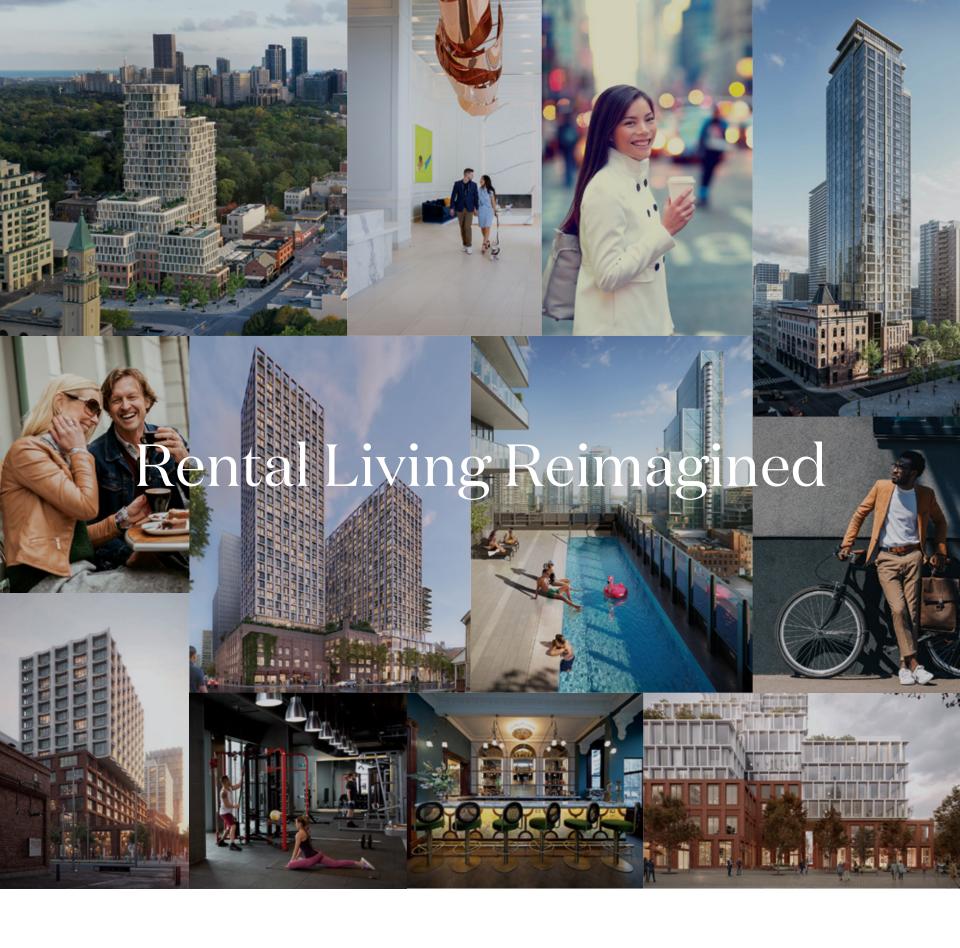
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