

VOGUE

AUG

SARAH
BURTON
TAKES CHARGE
AT GIVENCHY

ARUNDHATI
ROY
WRITES HER
OWN STORY

+23
MORE WOMEN
MAKING
THEIR VOICES
HEARD

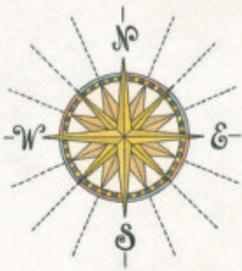
FEARLESS!

ANNE HATHAWAY
REINVENTS HERSELF



*“...almost at the same time
the voice of the lookout shouted,
— Land ho!”*

Robert Louis Stevenson. *Treasure Island*, 1883



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August 2025



FIRE DRILL

SINGER-SONGWRITER AMBER MARK WEARS A CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION DRESS.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY TESS AYANO.

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Last Look

Cover Look In Bloom

Anne Hathaway wears a Givenchy by Sarah Burton dress. To get this look, try: Vital Perfection Uplifting and Firming Advanced Cream, Revitalessence Skin Glow Foundation SPF 30, Synchro Skin Invisible Silk Loose Powder, ImperialLash MascaraInk. All by Shiseido. Hair, Orlando Pita; makeup, Gucci Westman. Details, see In This Issue.

Photographer: Annie Leibovitz.
Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.

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Letter From the Editor



STEPPING UP

ANNE HATHAWAY (LEFT) PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ IN A GIVENCHY DRESS, BURTON (ABOVE) PHOTOGRAPHED BY HER HUSBAND, DAVID, IN 2025.

And now she's started again—as creative director at Givenchy, where her understanding of what women want to wear is finding exciting new shapes and

forms. “You feel so looked after,” is the way Cate Blanchett describes putting on a Burton creation, which she has done many memorable times.

Anne Hathaway, our cover star, might say the same. She's photographed by Annie Leibovitz wearing Burton's debut Givenchy collection (which the whole world fell in love with last spring). Hathaway, of course, has had a career as indomitable as Burton's—but one that presents a contrast. Rest, for instance, seems far from Hathaway's mind; in her 40s the actress has stretched herself with darker roles, and she's utterly transformed in writer-director David Lowery's wildly unusual *Mother Mary*, in which she plays a troubled pop star who must sing with a shriek and contort her body through dance. Hathaway talks about finding her way into this role, discovering her limits, learning to fail, and being okay with that. Hathaway connected with Burton before the cover shoot, to find out more about her creative process, and if all that weren't enough, the actress also took the time to indulge her comedic side for a delightful new behind-the-scenes-at-*Vogue* video you can find on all our digital platforms.

Second Acts

THERE IS PERHAPS NO ONE on earth who needed a break more than Sarah Burton. She had worked at Alexander McQueen since her student days at Central Saint Martins. Twenty-six years—a period that spanned so many honors and triumphant fashion moments that the modest, unassuming Burton had become, almost in spite of herself, one of the defining designers of our age.

But she'd had enough. In September 2023, she stepped down from Alexander McQueen without another job in hand. This is a rarity in our industry, but Burton is herself a rarity—diligent and self-deprecating, a designer most comfortable behind the scenes who has always known what she's wanted to do and has tidily achieved it. The only thing she hadn't accomplished was rest.

So rest she did. For more than a year she read and spent time with her family in London. “I draped and drew and thought about things,” she tells Gaby Wood in our profile of Burton this month. “You never get time to do that normally.”

Amalita.

THE UNO



Skechers



BE

LOVE



PANDÖRA

Contributors



The Right Angles

“The women in this shoot were so delightful and eager to join me in realizing my ideas,” says the German-born photographer Barbara Probst (ABOVE, FAR RIGHT), who worked with fashion editor Max Ortega and a game gang of models on the engaging story “Graphic Content,” page 80. “The exercise of seeing two different perspectives of a single moment can be inspiring to all of us. It reminds us that we don’t see the world as it is, but as it appears from our point of view.”



Anything You Can Do...

In “Coming to America” (page 62), *Vogue* contributing editor Alexis Okeowo profiles Veronica Leoni, who has been the creative director of Calvin Klein for over a year now. More than injecting the ne plus ultra of American fashion houses with a distinctly Italian kind of glamour, Leoni, who grew up in Rome, has ushered in a new era: Never before has Calvin Klein been led by a woman. Numbered among the muses making her vision sing? Louisa Jacobson (ABOVE), 34, who, in addition to returning for *The Gilded Age*’s third season this summer, also starred off-Broadway in *Trophy Boys*, a show in which the members of an all-boys debate team were played solely by female or nonbinary actors. How’s that for disrupting a boys’ club?



Life’s Work

“My mother’s such a fabulous influence in my life,” the Booker Prize–winning writer Arundhati Roy (LEFT) told *Vogue* in 2017, when she was last profiled in these pages. (Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, was just coming out at the time.) “She’s the calcium in my bones, the steel in my spine, from warring with her.” Now, “Start of the Story” (page 66) pulls from early chapters in Roy’s new memoir, *Mother Mary Comes to Me*—out in September from Scribner—which traces the two women’s jagged relationship. (Mary Roy, an educator and activist, died in 2022.) *Vogue* sent photographer Sohrab Hura and sittings editor Divya Balakrishnan to Roy’s home in Delhi for the accompanying portrait, and though Hura had recently shifted his creative focus to painting and drawing, he describes getting behind the camera again for Roy as “fun.” “Arundhati was kind and generous,” he says. “She made it quite easy for me.”

PROBST WITH MODELS: MAX ORTEGA. JACOBSON: PHOTOGRAPHED BY TESS AYANO.
FASHION EDITOR: MAX ORTEGA. PRODUCED BY ART PRODUCTION. ROY: PHOTOGRAPHED BY SOHRAB HURA.
SITTINGS EDITOR: DIVYA BALAKRISHNAN. PRODUCED BY ALIZA FATMA. DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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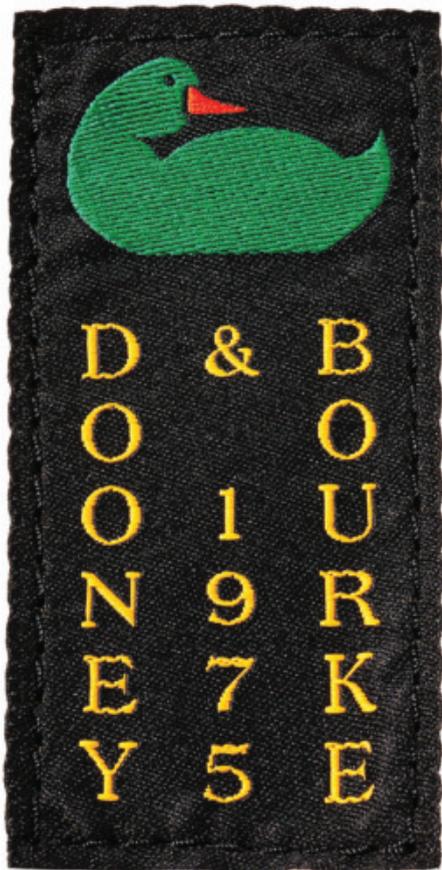


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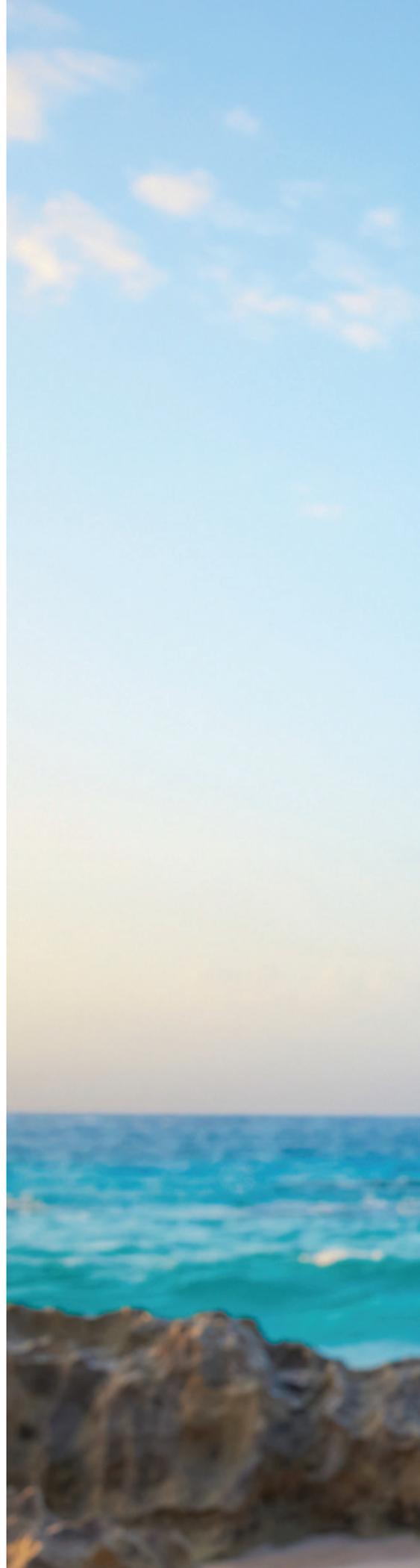
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LEARNING ITALIAN

After a career in New York, Paris, and London, Louise Trotter arrives at Bottega Veneta speaking a new language. By Chiara Barzini.

The location of my first meeting with Louise Trotter, the new creative director of Bottega Veneta, is confirmed just an hour before we're due to meet. It feels fitting: Bottega Veneta has long been known for a kind of elegant restraint, and until very recently Trotter has been deliberately private about her debut collection, keeping even her process closely guarded.

The address finally arrives: Villa Clerici, an aristocratic mansion nestled in the Niguarda district of Milan, north of the city. Once you're past the imposing gate, a hidden world unfolds—first an enormous Italian garden dotted with statues, then another large garden at the rear containing

two amphitheaters. Villa Clerici's interior rooms feature 18th-century frescoes, trompe l'oeil decorations, and coffered ceilings. It all feels opulent yet somehow restrained—sacred and slightly surreal at the same time.

I walk up the stairs in the quiet afternoon and find Trotter at the end of a long corridor, enfolded in a Raphael Raffel leather lounge sofa from the 1970s with >24

STEPPING IT UP

Louise Trotter at Milan's Villa Clerici. "I see fashion less as an art than as something to be used to bring joy," she says. Photographed by Venetia Scott.



SAPPHIRE RESERVE

custom Bottega Veneta leather, produced by Cassina. A wide window behind her overlooks the arched courtyard. “I realized we couldn’t *not* do the interview here,” Trotter says with a smile. She has a kind of whimsical mystery to her, mixed with an innate curiosity and intelligence. “In Paris, everything is grand and declared—in Milan, you have to find your own treasures.”

That notion seems to dovetail perfectly with the ethos of Bottega, which has always defied the noise of fashion. Founded in Vicenza as Bottega Veneta Artigiana in 1966 by Renzo Zengiaro and Michele Taddei, it has long built its identity on the idea that true luxury whispers. “My initial connection to the house was as a customer—I was collecting vintage Bottega Veneta,” says Trotter, who was struck by what seemed to be a radical ethos: “They were able to create a clear identity without any need for a logo, and I think that takes a certain confidence. You’re not making a statement to be seen—you’re showing who you are.”

The Latin phrase *nomen omen*—the name is a sign—rings true with her: She is, quite literally, a globe-trotter. Before Bottega, she brought a refined tailoring and minimalist aesthetic to England, America, and France, working variously at Gap, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfger, and the London brands Jigsaw and Joseph. In 2018 she became the first woman to lead Lacoste, and in 2023 she took over Carven. Throughout her career, she’s been less a disrupter than a very creative and vibrant custodian—someone who honors legacy through quiet reinvention.

This patient philosophy feels especially resonant in the fast-shifting fashion scenario of our current moment, when disruption has become the norm. Unfortunately, though, it’s still rather rare to see a woman leading a house of Bottega Veneta’s scale and stature. “Of course I would like to see more female representation—not just in design, but from a business side too,” Trotter says, adding: “I want to believe that I’ve succeeded because of my work and because of who I am, and not just because I’m a woman.”

To start her creative process for Bottega, Trotter has been spending time in Montebello Vicentino, where the house’s archives and artisans are based. “What’s fascinating is seeing how pieces from decades ago still feel relevant—I look at something 50 years old, and I still completely desire it. But we are still very much in a getting-to-know-each-other phase,” she says with a chuckle. What she will share of her

process involves a balance between learning from established systems and adding her own touch—“observing and stepping in,” as she puts it. She builds from the past, but is never beholden to it. “You have to know where a house comes from in order to move forward,” she says.

We got a peek of Trotter’s new work at this year’s Cannes Film Festival when Julianne Moore, a longtime friend of the house, premiered Trotter’s first design for Bottega Veneta: a black strapless gown with a tassel detail that embodied a refined, minimalist elegance. (Vicky Krieps, meanwhile, wore Trotter’s backless intrecciato, or woven leather, top over a pair of wide white trousers.) “Dressing Vicky and Julianne was a conversation—woman to woman, creative to creative,” Trotter says. “These looks reflect and honor who they are.”

Woven leather has, of course, been part of Italy’s artisanal heritage forever, especially in the hills around Florence, but Bottega Veneta’s breakthrough was to tilt the weave on a diagonal—an elegant shift that softened the bags’ structure and gave them a distinctive, lived-in grace. Trotter’s mission is to broaden this history so that the bags mold to the body and “feel like an extension of the person,” she says.

Trotter, who is a great flâneur (or, more accurately, a *cycleur*, accustomed to biking all around Paris), finds much of her inspiration in observing other women throughout the city. “I see fashion less as an art than as something to be used to bring joy,” she says. “Great design should make you feel confident and help you live your best life.”

The roots of Trotter’s sensibility can be traced back to her childhood in Sunder-

land, a coastal town in the north of England that melds rough beauty and industrial austerity—a duality that shaped her creative outlook. “What people lacked in wealth,” she says, “they made up in heart, and warmth.” Her grandmother was a seamstress who introduced her to the world of fashion, with Trotter spending hours experimenting with her sewing machine. What began with making clothes for her dolls (“I didn’t have too many because I was a bit of a tomboy”) continued with curtains and tablecloths and, eventually, school uniforms. “I was the horror of my poor mother,” she says, laughing. “She would buy my uniform and within the first week I had completely chopped it apart. At the time, clothing was a form of escape and transformation. It still is.”

That instinctive urge toward rebellion stayed with her. After graduating from Northumbria University in Newcastle with a degree in fashion, she

CONTINUED ON PAGE 88



SNEAK PREVIEW

Julianne Moore stepped out in an early look from Trotter’s Bottega Veneta at Cannes in May.

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BALMS AWAY

New products deliver enhanced lip service.

When my daughter was born a few years ago, I wondered if, as the mother of three boys, I would unleash all my pent-up female energy on her, imposing a set of gender norms that she'd immediately rebuff. Rebuff them she did not. "Me too, mama!" she demands in the mornings, perched on the bathroom counter, reaching for my lipstick. Children are who they are, and my littlest one—with her fascination for anything used to adorn, enhance, or decorate the body—is no different.

But what to share with her? I didn't want to mottle her perfect skin with my cheek stain; she didn't need mascara—she was already a walking Kewpie doll! Thank goodness for the influx of tinted balms that started arriving at the *Vogue* office, seeming like ChapStick's grown-up cousins—gilded columns, squat metallic tubes, a curved Brancusi-like swoop of a canister—do-no-harm products with a purpose, but also a little flare. If she was going to be a beauty addict, these were okay gateway drugs, I figured.

Little did I realize how delightful these balms would be! Last year, the dermatological wizards at Augustinus Bader launched a trio of perfect shades in collaboration with Sofia Coppola—a lip icon if ever there was one—that go on sheer and can be layered for deeper color. "I think I was able to bring a new perspective

by thinking about color in a way they hadn't explored before," the director, famous for her distinctly dreamy palettes, told me. They sold out almost immediately, and I found myself the recipient of envious glances when I pulled out the cobalt column on the subway: a visual IYKYK. The Candy Glow Tinted Butter Balm from YSL, whose sophisticated scent somehow also pleasantly recalled the fruity concoctions of my mall-dwelling youth, coated my lips in a plummy, slightly shiny purple. Estée Lauder now has a "melt-on glosstick" that purports to heat up on your lips. The Sulwhasoo lip balm in a shade of cotton candy was beloved by my daughter. (You can guess her favorite color.)

Hermès also released its Rouge Brillant Silky line earlier this year, while sans serif style-setter Byredo issued five new tinted balms this summer with names like Cloud Bursting (a cranberry-angled red) and Chain Reaction (a coral-adjacent pink). Such new products don't have to be gloss's lower-maintenance sisters either—some feel entirely different. Perhaps my favorite of the bunch is Fara Homidi's Essential Lip Compact; the sky blue disc has the satisfying heft

of a first-gen iPod—a perfect feeling in your palm—and pairs a transparent base with a cream-to-matte color. Cool-girl French makeup artist Violette Serrat reissued her best-selling Bisou Balm earlier this year—a product contradictorily described as a "sheer matte lipstick meets hydrating balm" that somehow delivers on its paradoxical premise. This July she issued an update: Balm Amour.

What accounts for the undeniable appeal? Perhaps, after the lengthy stranglehold of matte lipstick (drying, unsupple, precipitous if you stray outside the contours of your lips) or the sloppy excess of gloss, we're looking for a middle road, something a little softer and more adaptable, mirroring the flexibility we'd like to see a bit more of in the world. Or maybe, sensing ambient economic uncertainty, cosmetics companies are preparing for the lipstick—lip balm?—effect, the idea that even in times of relative hardship, consumers will splurge on little luxuries.

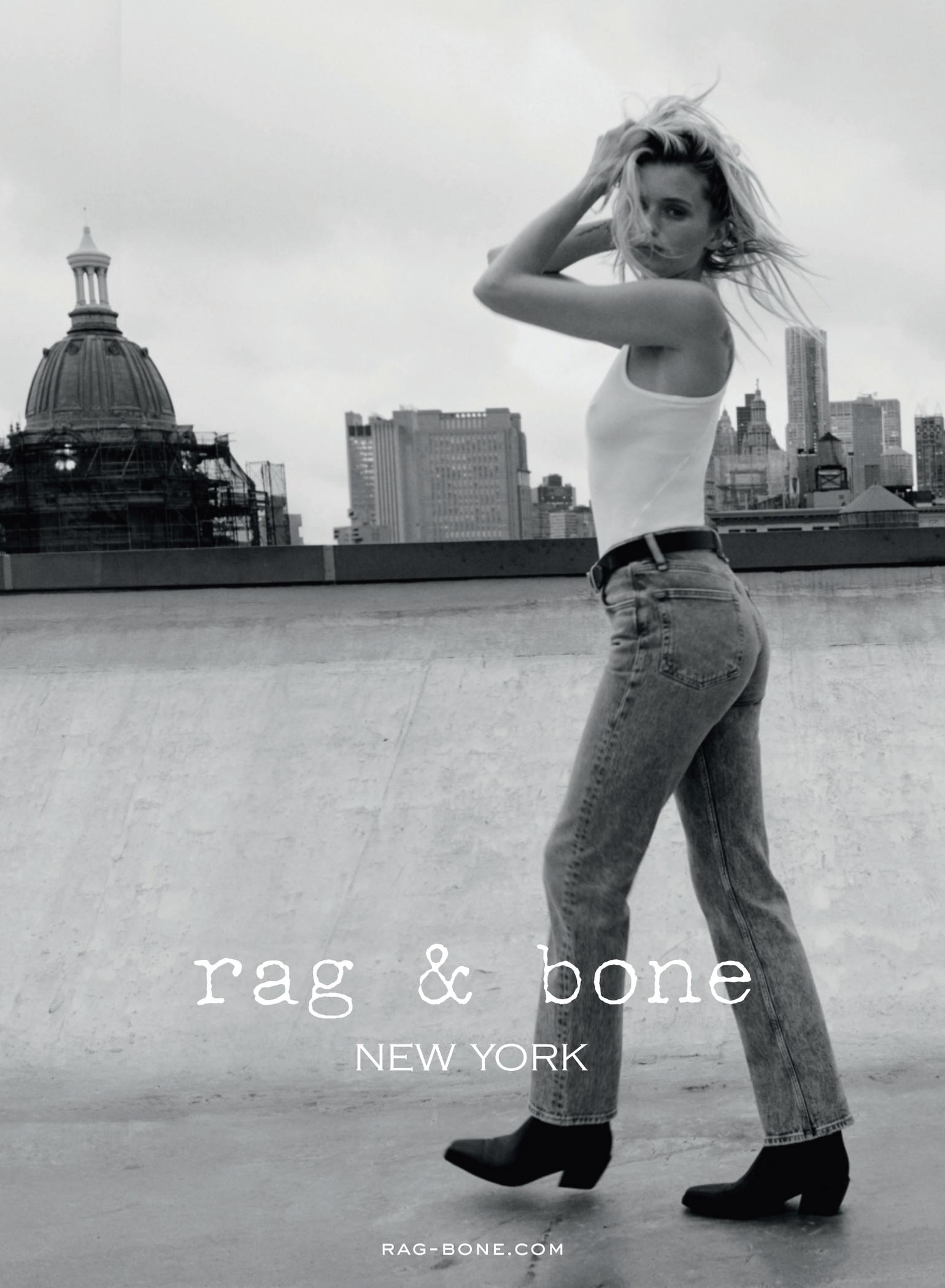
There's also the fact that these adaptive products meet you where you are—they're not about becoming another person, but more yourself, augmenting your natural hues. I thought back to dabbing the perfect pursed lips of my daughter and felt less guilty about her cosmetic initiation rites. That's not such a bad message to absorb.—**CHLOE SCHAMA**

LIP SYNC

With subtle color, the latest batch of balms amplify a natural look.
Alex Katz, *Vivien X 5*, 2018.



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HOUSE PARTY

Married couple Joe Bradley and Valentina Akerman are reinventing what the art gallery can be. By Dodie Kazanjian.

Last summer I kept getting emails about a new venue called Galerie Sardine. Who, I wondered, would want to name a gallery after a small fish that travels in schools and is packed tightly in flat tins? The artist Joe Bradley and his irrepressible wife, Valentina Akerman, that's who. "You can take it with you," Akerman says, when I visit them in Bradley's vast Long Island City studio. "It's also not a fancy fish, and we like that." Neither of them had ever run an art gallery before, but they took over a 1701 farmhouse in Amagansett, Long Island, and put on several shows that attracted throngs of local and far-flung art lovers, including the biggest fish in the art world, Larry Gagosian.

"Joe and I have been collaborating ever since we met," Akerman tells me. Their backgrounds could hardly be more different. Akerman, dark-haired and vivacious, is from Bogotá, Colombia. Bradley, quieter but just as playful, grew up in a family of nine children in the scenic little beach town of Kittery, Maine. His father was an emergency room doctor. Her now retired father was a professor of economics at the National University of Colombia and wrote a Sunday newspaper editorial. "He is an incredibly



luminous person who's engaged with the world," she tells me. "My decibel of life comes from my father." Her mother, now an author, was a Freudian therapist who worked with children and adolescents. "My schoolmates were scared of her." They thought she was "like a witch," Akerman says. "She's mysterious and a bit cold and a bit alluring all at once." ("She's a very glamorous woman," Bradley adds.)

Akerman's parents divorced when she was 16, and her mother began writing books about her childhood in El Chocó, an extremely remote jungle on the coast. Akerman studied architecture, came to New York to get her master's, then practiced for a few years at a high-powered architectural firm in New York, but withdrew after she was diagnosed with metastatic thyroid cancer. She was working as a freelance art director when Bradley came into her life.

Bradley's childhood love of drawing didn't fade as he grew up. He devoured comic books—R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman, "that sort of thing"—and pored over art books on Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Calder, Warhol, and Lichtenstein in Kittery's public library, and also spent time at the Portland Museum. "But it wasn't until I got to the Rhode Island School of Design that I was bitten by the painting bug and started *seeing*. All of a sudden, I was exposed to all of art history." A fixation on a small Cézanne landscape, "a ratty little painting" called *On the Banks of a River* (circa 1904–1905), struck him as "kind of abject and punk rock," and gave him the feeling "not that I could understand it, but that I could read it." (Bradley was once the lead singer of a punk band called Cheeseburger.) His career was just beginning when he and Akerman got together. His riotously colored paintings were already drawing attention—he had a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art's PS1 in 2006, seven years after he graduated from RISD. Roberta Smith of *The New York Times* described his early work as "ironic, anti-painting paintings... post-conceptual and challenging." He has had New York galleries ever since—first the Canada gallery, then Gavin Brown's Enterprise, Gagosian, Petzel, and, since >36

IMPORT EXPORT

Galerie Sardine began in a 1701 farmhouse (TOP RIGHT), but like Joe Bradley and Valentina Akerman (TOP LEFT), it is nomadic, with plans for shows in other countries. Photographed by Weston Wells.



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2023, David Zwirner gallery. The vibrant new paintings all around us in his Long Island City studio are on view this summer at Zwirner's London outpost.

Akerman and Bradley met in the early 2000s at a loft party in Williamsburg. She had to run to a dinner, but the few minutes they had together intrigued her. "It was a classic love-at-first-sight situation for me," Bradley says. "Valentina had this aura, a real glow about her." They met again three days later at an opening in Chelsea. "From that night on, we were never apart," Akerman says. They married in the early aughts and had Leif, the first of four children, shortly thereafter. Basil, Alma, and Nova came along at five-year intervals.

"Leif looked at me last summer," Akerman tells me, "and said, 'Oh, your biological clock was ticking, so you opened a gallery because you couldn't have more children.'" (Akerman is 49, Bradley is 50.) Sardine, their "fifth child," was born in the Amagansett farmhouse. They have been coming to Amagansett for more than a decade, renting different places and eventually buying and renovating a 1972 house designed by the architect Frank Israel. During the pandemic, they sold that house "in a state of panic," Akerman says, "because we just didn't know what was ahead," and eventually rented the farmhouse on Main Street. "For some bizarre reason, we've been moving every couple of years, even though we're this giant family." They kept the second floor for themselves and shared their ground floor with the galleries. (It was a tight squeeze, but nobody complained.) The idea was to show work of artists in a domestic setting rather than a white cube—artists who were friends and artists they didn't know, whose work they loved.

"It's an intimate space," Bradley says. "You're walking into somebody's living room, so the work coexists with stuff that you live with." The first show was in July 2024, a couple months after they moved in. They didn't meet Janice Nowinski, an artist in their second show, until she came to the opening—though they had greatly admired her dark, intense paintings. "She makes these really little but very tender oil paintings, very painterly, usually reclining female nudes," Bradley says. Several shows followed, including a larger one by their friend Sophie von Hellermann, who is based in the UK. She came to Amagansett with her partner, Jonathan Viner, and their two children and stayed with the couple for six weeks, painting on large canvases, screens, and furniture. She worked outdoors in front of the house, where passersby would stop to watch. "There was lots of laughter, dancing in the kitchen, trips to the beach, good food, and hard work!" von Hellermann recalls. "Sophie has this really beautiful, fluid relationship with her work," Bradley says. "She's working all the time. If

you sit down for dinner with her, she'll be drawing or making a watercolor." Larry Gagosian came and zeroed in on a painting—of Akerman in front of the Sardine house—and purchased it for his Amagansett home.

Bradley and Akerman invited all the artists they showed last summer—Hadi Falapishi, Steve DiBenedetto, Sam and Erin Falls, Isabel Rower, and several others—to stay with them. It was a time of rollicking outdoor dinner parties at long tables on the front lawn, with great food and high-spirited conversation. "They come to be with our crazy, big, loud family in this little house to show art and have a party together," Akerman says.

Like Bradley and Akerman, whose idea of fun is to pack up the kids and travel somewhere, Sardine is nomadic, setting up shop last October, during Art Basel, in an elegant Belle Époque apartment in Paris. Akerman pulled together a group show, "Naturalisms," which included quirky works by Justin Bradshaw, a little-known British artist; New York- and Providence-based Ken D. Resseger; and others. On the theory that if you serve good food, people will come, she

inveigled Bangkok-born Rose Chhalalai Singh, the chef and owner of Paris's beloved but now closed Rose Kitchen, to create "the most beautiful feast" for their opening. She also brought in Teresa Rotschopf, the Viennese composer and former lead singer for the electro-pop band Bunny Lake, to perform for them. "Are you seeing a theme emerge?" Bradley asks me, with a wink. "The seat of the pants."

This year's season started in mid-May in France, but Burgundy, not Paris. The exhibition, which is called "Ternura/Fuerza (Tenderness/Force)," presents four women artists—two painters, two object makers—in a 19th-century villa that is part of the legendary vineyard Romanée-Conti; it was at the invitation of Le Consortium Museum in Dijon. (How Akerman pulled this one off is too complex to go into.) Sardine's second Amagansett season kicked off in late May with a show by Cleveland painter Julian Kent, followed by shows of paintings from Joline Kwakkenbos with work from ceramic sculptor Isabel Rower, and then Japanese painter Tenki Hiramatsu. Pay attention—any or all of these artists could become stars.

Recently I visited the couple in their Upper West Side apartment, one of those great old buildings that seems to exist in a world of their own. The family has been there for three years and can't renew their lease; they'll have to move again. (So what else is new.) Akerman's mother, Amalia Lú Posso, lives on another floor in the same building and helps with the younger children.) Five-year-old Nova has turned one of the corridors into his own gallery, with their homemade Galerie Sardine logo and dozens of his drawings on the wall. I don't

CONTINUED ON PAGE 88



Joe Bradley, *Colt*, 2025.

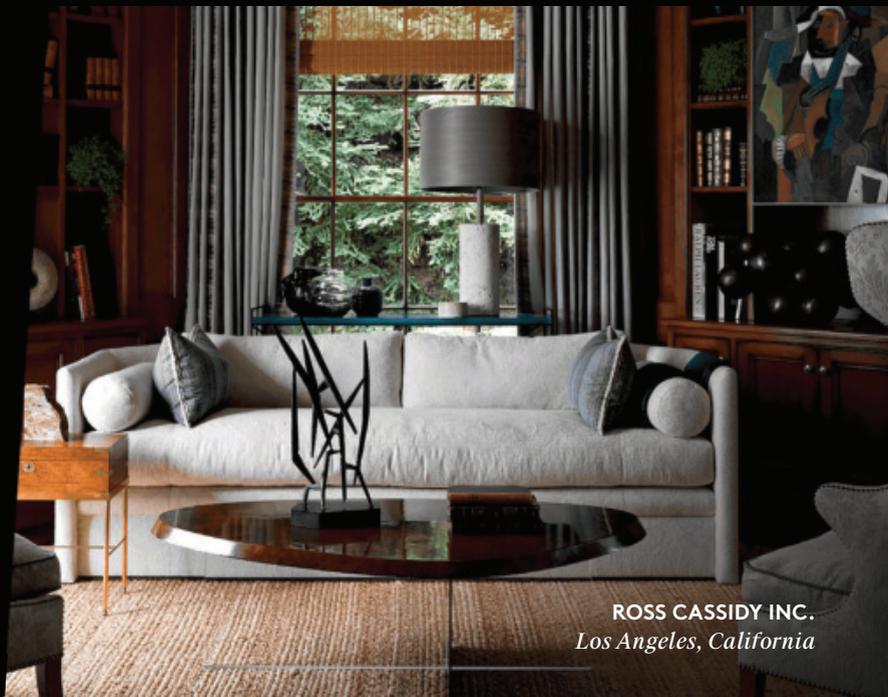
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WOMEN OF THE HOUR

Hathaway, wearing Givenchy by Sarah Burton (here and throughout this story; givenchy.com), photographed at The Metropolitan Museum of Art with 19th-century masterworks by John Singer Sargent (LEFT) and Édouard Manet (RIGHT).

Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.



A Life Less Ordinary

Anne Hathaway is known for her sunny, ever-positive disposition. But when a role as a tormented pop star demanded she explore her darker side, she didn't hold back. She talks to Maya Singer about learning to fail, giving up control, and coming out remade. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.



Anne Hathaway is screaming. Eyes wild, skin aflame. Cresting, her voice vaults to a frequency you figure could shatter glass. “How was that?” she asks Jack Antonoff, lowering her headphones. “Try another one?”

“Sure, let’s go again,” Antonoff replies, fiddling with various buttons and levers on his monumental recording console. “One more like that. Keep it frightening.”

“Got it: hounds of hell,” says Hathaway, nodding. Ever the diligent student. Then she turns to me, mischievous. “I have *no idea* where all this anger is coming from....”

Hathaway and Antonoff are spending this first balmy spring Saturday tucked away at a Manhattan studio because they are in the final stages of transforming famously plucky Anne Hathaway, movie star with a megawatt smile, into a moody pop diva. She’s dropped her two sons off at Little League and come here in low-glam mode (Knicks jersey, jeans) to record songs for David Lowery’s upcoming film *Mother Mary*, in which Hathaway plays the title character—a sort of Gaga–Taylor Swift hybrid who is, uh, having a moment. And not “having a moment” in the sense of basking in the glow of public adoration, but something more like its opposite. Searching for her own center and finding only darkness, she has fled her tour and sought out the old friend (played by Michaela Coel) who

helped craft her all-consuming public persona in the first place. It’s a strange, indelible film—which won’t surprise anyone familiar with Lowery’s previous work (*The Green Knight*, *A Ghost Story*). Hathaway coveted the part, she says, and it wound up challenging her more than any previous role.

“What struck me right away, reading the script, is that you can’t ‘perform’ Mother Mary,” says Hathaway. “If I got the part, I would have to become material David could craft with.” In essence, she had to make herself into a credible global pop star, one capable of executing complex choreography in a headdress and high heels and channeling the songs that Antonoff and Charli XCX were writing on her behalf. But preparing for all of this wasn’t simply a matter of dance practice or learning to sing by seething and sneering and, yes, sometimes screaming. “I had to submit to being a beginner,” she explains. “The humility of that—showing up every day knowing you’re going to suck. And it has to be okay. You’re not ‘bad.’ You’re just a beginner. Getting to that mindset—I had to shed some things that were hard to shed. It was welcome. But it was hard, the way transformational experiences can be hard.”

Hathaway radiates enthusiasm. It seems to be her default setting. She’s aglow as she talks about struggling through nearly two years of daily dance training, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. to start, plus singing lessons that instigated a minor identity crisis—not to mention navigating a long shoot in and around Cologne, Germany, that every participant I spoke to for this story agrees was intense. The point is, she came out the other side remade.

“I’d say, You have to show me how you’re feeling with your body,” recalls choreographer Dani Vitale. “You can’t tell me you’re angry; *show me*. Proprioception. That was the training, getting Annie out of her head.” And giving Hathaway permission to be messy, vulgar, temperamental, and—above

all—imperfect. “I remember that first day, being like, *Oh no*. Because she’s like a doll, you know? So pretty, so graceful. I thought, *Oh God, I have to break this person*.”

“I finally learned how to breathe,” says Hathaway of her sessions—ongoing—with Vitale. “My body was so locked up—I literally couldn’t take a deep breath. I’d been trying to open that space for years and I thought it was physically impossible. All my breath, it was stuck....” She makes a strangling gesture. A bit later, recalling her frustrations with her vocal coach, she stops mid-anecdote to strike a low note on the keyboard beside her. Idly, I assume. Then she explains that, just as she was reaching her breaking point, she was instructed to lie on the floor “and make sounds until something felt true.”

“My whole life, I’ve been up here,” Hathaway continues, tapping a high note on the keyboard. “Soprano. My mom’s a soprano—a beautiful singer. And I can touch those notes, but....” Hathaway plays the low note again, letting it sustain. “It turns out, I’m down here. That’s where I like to live.”

Here’s the thing about Anne Hathaway: She is incredibly nice. That sounds like faint praise, but spending time with her made me question whether I’d ever met a truly nice person. I know many *kind* people—but you can be kind and also sometimes snarky, impatient, aggrieved, aloof, and so on, and *no*, I am not talking about myself. But Anne Hathaway is kind *and* nice, and I kept waiting for her mask to slip, for her to do something *not* nice, but she never did. Not from the moment she greeted me with the kind of muscular embrace usually reserved for a long-lost loved one.

“No, that’s Annie,” attests Gucci Westman, Hathaway’s frequent makeup artist and friend, known as “Auntie Gucci” to Hathaway’s sons Jonathan, nine, and Jack, five. “Like, she doesn’t gossip. It just doesn’t occur to her to be catty—and then you don’t want to be catty around her. I don’t want to give the impression she’s not fun to hang out with,” Westman quickly adds, going on to say that she and Hathaway “have the best time” vintage shopping (in Japan, recently) and are often

FREE MOVEMENT

At the Whitney Museum of American Art with Franz Kline’s 1956 painting *Mahoning*. Hathaway’s new film *Mother Mary*, from writer-director David Lowery, is due later this year.



Male Model Standing before a Stone

1879-80
Oil on canvas
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of the Marquise de Sarrasin, 1912

A model sketch of a male model was likely made while Sargent was a student in the teaching studio of Charles Collins. Sargent provides a glimpse of the environment as he depicts the figure posed next to a stone (far left), perhaps being just emerged from behind the changing screen at left. The model was posed by the students, who were responsible for preparing the model and being models. Sargent's model likely only to critique the classical work and offer instructions as needed. The texture of this painting's surface suggests that Sargent may have reused a canvas, joining this study with an top of an earlier unknown composition.

SET IN STONE

Hathaway, flanked by more Sargent masterpieces at The Met. "She's a curious person and she's still learning and growing," says director Michael Showalter. Bvlgari High Jewelry ring.







HEY, LADY

Hathaway considers Amy Sherald's *Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama*, 2018, at the Whitney.

mulling home decor, which makes sense, inasmuch as Westman was the previous tenant of Hathaway's Manhattan home. "She's funny, she's curious—that's the main word I'd use to describe her. I just mean she looks for the good in people."

"You see how she treats everyone—and it's *everyone*—she's so kind," confirms Bradley Cooper, who got to know Hathaway when their Manhattan-based families wound up forming one of the world's most glamorous COVID pods. "We started hanging out as parents, having dance parties with children in my kitchen, and I fell in love with both of them," says Cooper, referring to Hathaway and her husband of a dozen years, Adam Shulman. He seems a bit in

awe of their marriage, describing it as "an emblem for that kind of commitment," in that they "enrich" each other. Which, sadly, is not terribly normal—though, according to Cooper, pretty much everything else about the Hathaway-Shulman household is. "I hate to use that word. But you've met Anne: She's very present and grounded, I'll put it that way. And kind," he repeats, before allowing that Hathaway has daggers out in one regard: "She's viciously intelligent." Okay.

On meeting, Hathaway hugs me, compliments my perfume, identifies it as one she used to wear, then confesses that she's an occasional late-night lurker on perfume Reddit. She insists on getting me water—herself. She

invites me to sit next to her while she screams into Antonoff's microphone. She peppers me with questions about my work, my life. And when she notices there's a photo of the filmmaker Chantal Akerman on my tote bag, she flips out.

"No way. No way. Spooky action, this is crazy," she says, eyes agog. "Because you have to understand, I just watched one of her films, *Saute ma Ville*, for the first time *last night*." There's a fair amount to unpack here. I'll start with "spooky action."

The phrase "spooky action at a distance" refers to quantum entanglement, wherein particles remote from each other are mysteriously linked. In *Mother Mary*, "Spooky Action" is the name of one of the titular pop



PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

On her home life in Manhattan: "Uno games, baking when there's time, teaching the kids to dribble a basketball in the apartment without upsetting the neighbors...."

star's songs; it also describes the relationship between Hathaway's Mary and Coel's fashion designer character, Sam. ("A creative connection that's also a spiritual connection, or maybe they're the same thing," is how Coel encapsulates it.) The reason for Hathaway flipping out, though, is that ever since she signed on to *Mother Mary*, her life has been pervaded by the uncanny—spooky action to which director Lowery also attests. "This film was a doorway into believing, yes, there's more out there," he says. I should note that neither Lowery nor Hathaway comes across as woo-woo. But on a regular basis now, Hathaway says she gets little pokes from the universe, like the coincidence of seeing Chantal Akerman's

face on my tote. Which she interprets as a prompt to watch more of Akerman's films—in a theater, she clarifies. "*Jeanne Dielman* doesn't seem like the kind of movie you watch at home, after the kids are in bed."

There are ways, Hathaway admits, that she feels like a beginner at film, never mind that she's been a familiar face at multiplexes since she was in her teens. A recent convert to the Criterion Channel, she's playing catch-up on the art house greats. Her interest in cameras and lenses is new. And acting—even that's terra incognita, her process evolving in a manner that dovetails with her self-discovery through dance.

"When I worked with James Gray on *Armageddon Time*, he'd say, 'Don't

ever try to nail it,'" recalls Hathaway. Meaning, don't plot out your performance; don't target emotional beats. "And when you impose your shape on a performance, when there's that scaffolding, it's less risky," she goes on to explain. "But what James wanted was a degree of transparency. And that experience—it was pivotal."

Maybe it was working with Gray, maybe it was turning 40—they occurred one after the other—but something sprung loose in Hathaway in 2022. Consider a few of the next films she made: *Eileen*, in which she plays a queer-coded Hitchcockian bombshell with a dark secret; the May-December(ish) romance *The Idea of You*, which sees her climax on camera; and *Mother Mary*. Consider,



GREEN DAY

"You see how she treats everyone—and it's everyone," says her friend Bradley Cooper. "She's so kind." In this story: hair, Orlando Pita; makeup, Gucci Westman. Details, see In This Issue.

BEAUTY NOTE

Japanese safflower, or benibana flower, in Shiseido Vital Perfection Uplifting and Firming Eye Cream helps strengthen skin for a fresh face.



Hathaway coveted the part in *Mother Mary*—and it wound up challenging her more than any previous role. “I had to submit to being a beginner”

as well, her relationship with the brand Versace, also cemented over this period: Has Anne Hathaway ever looked sexier or edgier than in that draped chain mail dress she wore to the Bvlgari High Jewelry launch in Venice two years ago, or modeling in the Versace Icons campaigns? Clearly, she’s been getting in touch with aspects of her libidinal self. Feeling, not thinking. Proprioception, speaking the language of the body, rather than using words. But that journey began well before she found herself in a dance studio with Vitale, trying to “crack open her thoracic.” To arrive there, she had to *want* to find what she had locked away inside.

Hathaway started working with her longtime stylist, Erin Walsh, when she was pregnant with her younger son, Jack. “It’s interesting to meet a woman at that moment in her life because she’s powerful and vulnerable at the same time, and also at the peak of a certain kind of embodiment,” Walsh says, going on to note that she sees similarities with Hathaway today. “I liken it to owning your sexuality, what it does when you step into that. She moves differently. That’s the easiest way to explain it.”

A woman who is in a moment of transition—powerful, vulnerable, embodied in a new way. Only now, she’s giving birth to herself.

I’ve been tiptoeing around this, but now I’ll just come out and say it: *Mother Mary* is a very weird movie.

It’s produced by A24, features songs by Jack Antonoff and Charli XCX, and the supporting cast includes FKA twigs, Hunter Schafer, and Kaia Gerber, so it is also a very *cool* movie, but be forewarned, if you’re anticipating a fictionalized version of *Miss Americana*, or something like that, forget it. Much of the story turns on the making of a dress—which is spectacular—and most of the film is just Anne Hathaway and Michaela Coel hanging out in a barn. There are also concert sequences that pay off Hathaway’s dance training (and show off Bina Daigeler’s next-level costume design), as well as a couple demented flashbacks. But really, the movie is made out of whatever magic Hathaway, Coel, and Lowery managed to conjure in that 13th-century barn near Bonn, day after day after day after day. It’s possible that everyone on the shoot went temporarily, mildly insane.

“It felt like shooting *Apocalypse Now*,” says Lowery of a pivotal sequence near the end of the film. “At one point Annie broke down and said, ‘I have to apologize, because I think what’s going to come out of me will hurt you.’ And Michaela took her hands and said, ‘I love you, I trust you,’” Lowery recalls. “We were in various stages of that for about a week, shooting that scene.”

“David’s writing is so vivid—we were forced into an intensity,” says Coel, who blew off steam by going to Cologne’s CONTINUED ON PAGE 88

A New Way Forward

In an era of ever-more visibility and exposure for both fashion and those who wear it, Givenchy's Sarah Burton has built her reputation on exquisite, hands-on invention—and an intimate discretion. By Gaby Wood.

J

“Just come forward to the mirror for me a second?”

Sarah Burton is standing in a grand studio at Givenchy in Paris, about to embark on a day of fittings for her first spring collection as creative director. A fit model, Hana Grizelj, moves toward her in a calico dress with white organza draping. Notations are written in blue pencil across each bra cup: *gauche/droite*. Nearby, pale boned dresses and black structured jackets hang on a rail as if worn by ghosts. Burton is wearing what she calls her uniform: jeans, white Converse sneakers, and a collarless white cotton shirt—one of many run up for her by Judy Halil, a pattern-cutter who has worked with her for 23 years.

While other designers might do a few sketches and, eventually, have a look at the final results, Burton has become known for building the clothes herself, working with a live model. She moves at speed into multiple dimensions, variously cutting, pinning, and deciding on fabric, or the shape of the season's shoulder. (“You can look at it on a stand,” she tells me, “but it's so different on a body.”) At Givenchy, Burton's colleagues tell visitors, only half-jokingly: “Don't put your coat on the rail—it might get cut up.”

“Maybe a crepe de chine lining, so it's soft,” Burton says to the studio staff.

She stands next to Hana, looks in the mirror, and squints.

“Does the corset need to be as long as this?”

The corset comes up by two and a half inches.

“This should be a bit shorter.”

In one swift movement, she shears a mane of organza from Hana's spine before kneeling on the floor, pincushion around her wrist, and attacking the hem with scissors.

“Keep turning for me, Hana....”

Burton's tone is calm, her care reminiscent of a surgeon's. There are several people involved in this process, including Matteo Russo, the head of womenswear; Tatiana Ondet, head of atelier from Paris; and James Nolan, who drapes initial designs with Burton in London—a combination of new Givenchy colleagues and loyal ones from Alexander McQueen, where Burton worked from 1996 to 2023. They participate as nurses attend an operation—you half expect Burton to call out for a scalpel, or a clamp.

Burton, who lives in London, has been twice to Paris and once to Los Angeles in the past week. Quite apart from this collection-in-progress and the outfits she's making for the red carpet at Cannes, the Met Gala in New York is six days away—in an atelier downstairs, seamstresses are hand-sewing jeweled embroidery onto Cynthia Erivo's extraordinary gown—yet nothing in Burton's manner discloses her sleep deprivation, or the balancing act of raising three young children while leading a historic fashion house.

She looks up at Hana from the floor and says, in her reassuring voice: “Have a walk in that for me.”

In an industry of people clamoring to be insistently remarkable, Sarah Burton, now 50, has built a career out of her belief in others. Unassuming by instinct, with the approachable manner of someone you feel you must already know, she has earned widespread devotion in return.

“*Be kind* has become a bit of a T-shirt slogan,” Cate Blanchett says, “but when you truly come across someone who has that in their molecular makeup, like Sarah does, it brings out the best in people. I think she's reinventing what genius looks like.”

Burton worked closely with Lee Alexander McQueen from the year she graduated from fashion college to the moment of McQueen's death by suicide 14 years later. While continuing to work under her mentor's name with commitment and grace, she made quietly clear her own contribution to fashion before leaving McQueen in 2023 and taking over at Givenchy last year. Delphine Arnault, CEO and president of Christian Dior and an LVMH director who was instrumental in Burton's appointment, tells me: “I've always followed her work, because she has so much talent. She's very precise technically on how to build a suit,

WORKING WONDERS

“If you try to tell somebody else's story, it's not real,” says Burton, photographed by her husband, David.



how to build an evening gown—it's almost couture." (Burton does in fact plan to add couture next year.)

Trino Verkade, who first hired Burton at McQueen and became a close friend, points out that Lee would not have asked, for instance, whether something was comfortable. "He wanted you to walk into the room and for everybody to look over," Verkade says, whereas "Sarah wants you to be able to wear it all night."

Her beautifully made and livable creations have made Burton many a celebrity's go-to designer for events full of drama, whether—to name a few from the past year alone—it's Timothée Chalamet's yellow leather jeans at the Oscars, Erivo's jewel-encrusted torso and train for the Met Gala, or Rooney Mara's Hepburn-esque minidress at Cannes. She has also responded to a more ceremonial public grandeur: The Princess of Wales has long relied on Burton, who made her wedding gown in 2011, her coat-dress for Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in 2022, and the tricolor dress and cape she wore for the coronation that followed.

From our first encounter, in her studio in central London, I noticed that Burton was in the habit of saying "off the record," even when nothing was being recorded. We negotiated around what I took to be her nervousness. It was understandable—among other things, the years after McQueen's death made her aware of the British press's notorious thirst for copy—but as I traced the pattern of Burton's expressions over time, I realized that she was most uneasy when she thought she might betray a confidence, or be seen to lean on someone else for her own advancement. Dressing someone, she explained, "is a very personal and intimate thing. For me, it's a real privilege. And I think privacy is one of the last luxuries we have." In this safeguarding of what others had entrusted to her, I began to see what she had built at McQueen: a fortress of intimacy.

This is what Burton has brought to Givenchy, in a move that will not only enrich the world of fashion but seems set to free her, after many years, from the orbit of emotional debt.

At the north London home she shares with her husband, David; their 12-year-old twins, Cecilia and Elizabeth; and their nine-year-old daughter, Romilly, Burton leads me upstairs to a living room with rich, Holbein-green velvet-lined walls. Above the sofa is a large gold-framed photograph by the Dutch photographer Hendrik Kerstens, and on a high shelf, protected by Perspex, is a pair of armadillo shoes from Plato's Atlantis, the last collection McQueen finished.

"To embrace all the different sides of women—that's what's important," Burton says. "I love the idea of understanding sensuality from a woman's point of view"

Burton and I sit in sunlight, and our conversation stretches out with ease throughout the afternoon.

"Family came first, I suppose," she reflects. Burton—then Sarah Jane Heard—grew up as the second of five siblings. They lived in a small village outside Manchester, between rolling hills and wild moors, with Burton always more drawn to the latter. Her mother taught music and English, and took them to museums regularly; her father was an accountant. Their house was full of books. As a child, she drew all the time—people, nature, dresses. When the Heard clan needed to go somewhere en masse they traveled, with friends in tow, in a white van. Burton remembers that locals referred to them as "the orphanage."

Burton knew what she wanted to do from the age of eight, and after a foundation year in Manchester she studied at Central Saint Martins in London, the famous incubator for art and fashion. "Sarah didn't look like the other fashion students," her tutor there, Simon Ungless, recalls. "It was so refreshing for somebody just to come in in a great pair of jeans, rather than their knickers on their head."

It was Ungless who introduced her to his good friend Lee McQueen. "Everyone wanted to work for him," Burton recalls. "You'd be on a mission to get into those shows or be backstage." McQueen had graduated from Saint Martins three years before Burton got her first gig as a backstage dresser on his infamous Highland Rape show in 1995. She saw none of it: She was frantically pulling shoes off one model to make sure there were enough for the next. A year later, McQueen took her on. "I think Sarah was the only member of staff we had," says Verkade, who ran their tiny company.

As Burton learned from McQueen—a man she describes as a "genius"—she took on whole areas of the operation, building categories around his sketches, doing all the knitwear and all the leather. Eventually, she became the head of womenswear. "There's a big chunk of that brand that has always been Sarah, as long as we've been looking at it," says Verkade.

In her living room, Burton pulls out some sketchbooks from her early days at McQueen.

They're beautiful—collages of photographic references and sketches with swatches of fabric—but what's striking is how structured her drawings were then: architectural indications of the collar on a jacket, the seams on a dress, or the buttons on a cape. Decades later, Burton's sketches have become much looser—she and her pattern-cutters know each other so well by now that she only needs to suggest a design.

She shows me another sketch, in a frame. It's Lee's design for her own wedding—a slender oyster dress with antique lace. She had met the photographer David Burton in a pub in King's Cross, introduced by a friend. "I loved his honesty," she says. "He's very straightforward. And he made me laugh." They married in 2004.

McQueen died six years later. "Everyone was broken," recalls Burton, who was left to complete his final collection. She had never wanted to take on the role of creative director. Though Burton herself is circumspect about this period, Verkade explains: "She carried a lot of the emotion within the team. I think the team led her to take it, because she cared so much about them."

From the gilded stillness of Lee's unfinished collection, Burton moved in 2011 to a deconstruction of the signature McQueen peaked shoulder—now pulled apart and lightly rejoined at the fraying seams, or split in neat-edged velvet. Consciously or not, she was breaking it down in order to rebuild.

Over the years that followed, Burton's shows culminated in gowns that were so technically glorious they seemed to defy science: Ophelia's weedy grave turned to gold brocade, layered petals of shadow-dyed silk, wilting red taffeta roses, fractal explosions of organza.

At the same time, she presented for sale sleek, covetably powerful looks: sleeveless dresses cinched at the waist with wide leather belts, military-inspired trousers, classic white blouses with black and gold trim. To go through her archive is to see an endlessly imaginative and persistently real designer at work.

When she and David had children, they became "part of her care for things," as Verkade puts it. "Why don't you do a dress that's made of rain?" one of the girls will say, and Burton will get to work with sequins. At a desk in the next room, there's a chair on either side: Sometimes one of her daughters will sit opposite Burton as she works—she's been known to swipe a piece of graph paper from one of their schoolbooks and draw on that.

Two years ago, Burton's father died—a factor that contributed to her decision to leave McQueen. "It did make me think: I could do with a new challenge," she tells me. When she left, she realized she hadn't properly absorbed Lee's death—what she calls "the enormity of him going like that. I was quite overwhelmed by how tragic it was and how life goes so quickly and nobody's really given a moment to process it."

For a year, she got herself a small studio in west London. Only her assistant, Meg Themistocleous, was at her side. "I draped and drew and thought about things," she says. The creative productivity of this period has had an ongoing resonance: When not working or with her family, Burton is inspired by what she's reading (currently Edmund de Waal's memoir, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*), and

she's considering going back to print-making, which she loved as a student.

At least a dozen McQueen employees followed Burton to Givenchy. Her long-standing chief product officer, Karen Mengers, tells me that the move has been "a bit of a release for Sarah—it's the best thing that ever happened."

Sometimes when Burton thinks now about the differences between Lee and herself—though she tries to resist the ongoing comparison—she considers him a painter with broad brushstrokes, whereas, she says, "I always prefer a drawing to a painting." She doesn't just mean this literally: Drawing is Burton's natural mode, all immediacy of gesture and intimacy of scale. When she drapes fabric on a figure, she calls it "sketching in 3D." She's interested in what's closest to the skin. "You know the idea of the insides of garments being as beautiful as the outside?" she asks. "I always think that should be a given."

She loves the beauty in decay, and will spend weeks trying to get the right feeling of erosion in a rose

Dressing someone, Burton explains, "is a very personal and intimate thing. For me, it's a real privilege. And I think privacy is one of the last luxuries we have"

made of silk. In 2021 she designed a white dress with a seeping red print on the front, somewhere between a plant and a wound. When Burton speaks of her interest in "the anatomy of a flower," she means that she sees her jackets opening up like buds, or wants the back of a dress to feel like it's "unpeeling," but she is also drawn to the concept of the natural world decomposing until it decorates cloth like bloodshed.

Imperfection is "also the story of women," she says. "I'm not saying women are not perfect, but to embrace all the different sides of women—I think that's what's important. I love this idea of understanding

sensuality or sexuality from a woman's point of view." Burton is drawn to women whose own creative process she respects. When she designs, she keeps in mind women she knows—Blanchett, Mara, Kaia Gerber, Naomi Campbell—"women at different moments in their lives." When casting her shows, she selects models of varying ages and body types, and is attuned to how each of them feels in a particular garment.

More than one person has told me that Burton's clothes are "empathetic." The stylist Camilla Nickerson says she has not only felt it herself—"they come to the body in a way that is beautiful"—but also sees models change when she's styling them for the runway. "It is a tangible, emotional response," she explains. "You see people grow taller." Blanchett describes something similar. "You feel so looked after," she says. "When you put them on, there's a gasp, because they have this incredible surprise, but feel somehow inevitable."

During renovation work at Hubert de Givenchy's original atelier, builders discovered a cache of brown paper packages embedded in the walls, and inside these parcels, archivists found the patterns from Givenchy's very first collection in 1952. It was as if the origins of the house had been resurrected in order to bless Burton's new beginning.

"I thought: Okay, start with the silhouette," Burton remembers. "My silhouette—it doesn't have to be *that* silhouette."

She knew from experience that "if you try to tell somebody else's story, it's not real," and so while she experimented with more direct references—fil coupé fabrics with pattern shapes, for instance—she soon jettisoned those in favor of building up her own library of shapes. The first look that emerged from her inaugural Givenchy show was a model in a black net bodysuit over black '50s-style underwear, with the words embroidered in white across her chest: *Givenchy Paris 1952*. Burton was doffing her cap at the founder, but also starting from scratch. She was saying, *Look*: Here is a woman's body. We will clothe her piece by careful piece. CONTINUED ON PAGE 89

MARIA
GRAZIA
CHIURI

Actor Sarah Catherine Hook—lately seen as Piper on the third season of HBO's *The White Lotus*, soon to appear in Netflix's adaptation of the Emily Henry novel *People We Meet on Vacation*—wears Chiuri's design for Dior; Dior boutiques. Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.





STELLA
McCARTNEY

"Nothing flatters the form like a perfectly cut suit in beautiful, sustainable fabrics, and that's become iconic to my fashion house," says McCartney. "Something that makes you feel confident and like a boss bitch, and then you can hand it down to the next generation: It never ages, it never gets old." Model Liu Wen in Stella McCartney; stellamccartney.com.

WOMEN AT WORK

Endlessly inventive and inspired, a small cadre of female designers is still running the show in New York, Paris, and Milan—with their ideas of what women want to wear right now more finely attuned than ever.

Photographed by Amy Troost.

CATHERINE HOLSTEIN

"We're living in a moment where everything is constantly changing—I believe women want clothes that they don't have to think twice about," says Holstein, who launched Khaite in 2016. "There's a certain honesty I want to maintain: not diluted, not complicated, but forward-looking and direct."

She could hardly find a more fitting muse than actor Ella Beatty, who starred this year in high-profile New York productions of Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* (at Lincoln Center's Newhouse Theater) and Hannah Moscovitch's *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* (at the Minetta Lane Theatre). She wears a **Khaite** shirt and bustier; khaite.com. **Ana Khouri** cuff.



NADÈGE
VANHÉE

"It's about strength—
about being sexy and
sophisticated and just
owning it." So said
Vanhée of her fall 2025
collection for **Hermès**,
crammed full of sleek
silhouettes crafted
from ultrafine leather.
In her fetching LWD
(Hermès boutiques)
layered over a top
from **Isabel Marant**
(isabelmarant.com),
model Scarlett
White certainly gets
the picture.



CHEMENA
KAMALI

Model Stella Hanan
leans into texture,
shape, color, attitude—
all of it!—in top-to-toe
Chloé, as designed
by creative director
Kamali; chloe.com.





**VICTORIA
BECKHAM**

"I'm always searching for that chemistry between elegance and ease—the cut or construction that flatters in just the right way," says Beckham. "Because as a woman, I know what it's like to put something on and immediately feel like the best version of yourself." Ugandan Canadian actor Whitney Peak—set to star next year in *The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping*—wears a Victoria Beckham jacket; victoriabeckham.com.

BEAUTY NOTE

Style an aura. For a featherlight trail, Chanel Coco Mademoiselle Hair Perfume delivers notes of patchouli and rose without drying strands.

MIUCCIA PRADA

Sporty, sweet, a little subversive: Model Jessica Miller hits all of Miuccia Prada's grace notes in her jacket, crop top, and skirt, all by Prada; prada.com. Simone Rocha earring.



SILVIA
VENTURINI
FENDI

"The Fendi story is a female one, with my grandmother having five daughters and my mother three," says Venturini Fendi, who fêted her family business's 100th anniversary this year. "At home, there was a very avant-garde interchange of roles for the time." Channeling some of that dynamic history, model Karolina Spakowski's citrusy yellow jacket, skirt, and matching shoes and bag reconcile prim mid-century shapes with decidedly more modern markers. Just see the daring slit of the skirt, or that frothy lace top. All from fendi.com.





TORY BURCH

"There has never been a more important time for women designers," says Burch, whose namesake label turned 21 this year. "They are innovative, intuitive, and they intrinsically understand the body and how women want to feel: confident, beautiful, and strong." Model Adut Akech gleefully embraces both the dangly and the spangly in earrings and a dress by **Tory Burch**; toryburch.com.

BEAUTY NOTE

Air kiss: Valentino Beauty Puffer Gloss delivers moisture-locking hyaluronic acid for a patent-finish plumped effect.



PRODUCED BY ARTPRODUCTION.

**VERONICA
LEONI**

Model Paloma Elsesser
quells the noise—but
ramps up the volume—
in a coat designed by
Leoni for Calvin Klein
Collection; calvinklein.us.
In this story: hair, Esther
Langham; makeup,
Sally Branka. Details,
see In This Issue.

Coming to America

Italian-born Veronica Leoni ushers in a new era at Calvin Klein—one that's both her own and a love letter to the label's legendary founder. By Alexis Okeowo.

On a rainy day in early May, Veronica Leoni, the Roman creative director behind Calvin Klein, is at a fitting for her spring 2026 collection in New York's garment district, where the company has its headquarters. She examines a dress and a trench coat—all the while refining what she calls the transatlantic vision of the new Calvin Klein Collection: combining the “casual, deconstructed beauty” of Rome with the fast rhythm of New York's streets.

After six years away from the runway, Calvin Klein wants to reclaim its place as the prime mover for contemporary American excellence in minimalist fashion. Enter Leoni, 42, an animated pixie with a sweep of salt-and-pepper hair. When we meet, in a white-walled room next to a bare-bones atelier full of tables with sewing machines and hanging samples, she's wearing a slouchy gray button-down shirt, black drawstring dress pants, and Tabi boots. Tailors and a seamstress are at work as Leoni goes over the garments with her designer and patternmaker.

“My inner trend is actually chaos and disorder,” she says, laughing. “But I'm beyond a perfectionist—I can see the issue of a pattern from far, and I'm obsessed with 90-degree corners.”

Her debut collection for fall 2025 was one of the most anticipated shows of New York Fashion Week, the first time Calvin Klein had shown there since the label decided to stop

producing luxury collections—and parted ways with chief creative officer Raf Simons—in 2018. The house's namesake founder, now in his early 80s, sold the business to fashion conglomerate PVH in 2003, and was back in attendance at Leoni's show, along with other faces from the label's heyday: Kate Moss, Christy Turlington, and the photographer Mario Sorrenti, who shot a teenage Moss, his then girlfriend, for the brand's sultry Obsession campaign in 1993. Leoni's mother flew in from Rome; her younger brother, a butcher, came with his two kids. Greta Lee and Bad Bunny, both of whom have starred in Calvin Klein underwear campaigns, were there as well.

When Leoni and Klein met for a coffee the day before the show, “He said, ‘How can you be with me while you've got a show to prep?’” Leoni recalls. “I could spend hours and hours with him.” Klein told her that the collection was hers now, and to do what she liked. Leoni says that the only reason she didn't cry was because “I was too stressed.”

Klein's ex-wife, Kelly Klein, also came to be fitted before the show and seemed to be moved by being back at the headquarters after 20 years away, as was Moss. “Walking back into the

MAXIMUM MINIMAL

“My inner trend is chaos and disorder,” says Leoni. “But I'm beyond a perfectionist.” Hair, Giovanni Iovino; makeup, Arianna Campa.

Fashion Editor: Venetia Scott.

Photographed by Venetia Scott



EASY BREEZY

Actor Louisa Jacobson (seen, most recently, in *Trophy Boys* at the MCC Theater in Manhattan) wears Calvin Klein Collection. Hair, Sonny Molina; makeup, Yumi Lee. Details, see In This Issue. Fashion Editor: Max Ortega.





PRODUCED BY ARTPRODUCTION.

same building where I did my original castings brought back many memories for me,” Moss tells me. “The doorman, the atelier are still there. Veronica is bringing a fresh energy to the clothes, but you can see she is honoring the timeless minimal chic that Calvin did back in the day.”

The clothes were sleek, finely tailored, and minimalist in a palette of cream, gray, black, and khaki, with occasional bursts of color. Leoni rolled out a variety of long coats—some trench-like, others long blazers with padded shoulders or concealed buttons or low necklines and exaggeratedly long sleeves. Oversized scarves were swept over and attached to slim coats and a delicate blouse. Strikingly feminine dresses in pink and red contrasted with more severe dresses that covered nearly every inch of skin and liquid-like skirt suits.

Leoni says her image of New York’s mythical characters—the taxi driver, the sexy office worker—and the “heightened simplicity” of their outfits inspired the collection. Reviews were mixed: While many praised the collection’s overall refinement, others thought the clothes needed more sex appeal and insouciance.

“I get the critique, and I’m working on it,” Leoni tells me, before adding: “I love a bit of nerdy sexy. It’s a kink—the kink that comes from subtle gestures.” (Witness the exposed wrists below her cropped sleeves and exposed knees under the tailored skirts.)

Her friend the model Guinevere van Seenus wore a black dress with a deep-V neckline and a long skirt to the show; the end of the skirt was ruched and tied, with the tie trailing back up to the waist and cinched around it. It was “*interesting* and sexy,” van Seenus says, “while also being practical and comfortable.”

It’s worth pointing out that Calvin Klein’s association with sexiness never really came from the clothes, which have always been on the understated side. The brand’s underwear and fragrance campaigns are what made the brand hot. (And the main earner of the \$4 billion brand remains that ubiquitous underwear.)

“Calvin really shaped what is modern American style and modern American fashion—he created that,”

says Stefan Larsson, the chief executive officer of PVH. Explaining the decision to hire Leoni, Larsson said that “she showed a true understanding and love for the DNA, but she also had a really strong creative vision of looking at it through her own eyes. I feel like everything she had done up until now had built her up to be ready for this moment.”

Leoni was born and raised on the outskirts of Rome and, like so many teenagers of the ’90s, wore bleached denim and oversized shirts. “I was part of the CK One generation,” she says of the androgynous, skater-grunge vibe of the fragrance campaign. Her parents ran a café and bar, which only recently closed. Her grandmother made clothes for the family, including Leoni’s beloved navy blue pleated wool skirt that hit below the knee. Leoni learned how to sew from her, and soon was sketching outfits for her dolls and crocheting her swimsuits.

We are chatting at the apartment in Monteverde that Leoni shares with her wife, Sara Casani, 41, a film casting director she met 13 years ago. Leoni and Casani married in 2023 wearing suits from Quira, the brand Leoni started in 2021. “We met in Rome at a dance party organized by some friends in an iconic club,” Casani tells me. “Veronica evasively introduced herself and, smoking one of my cigarettes, told me she lived in Milan. We met again after a few months, and only then I discovered that we had grown up a few kilometers apart. We spent the evening talking nonstop. I was struck by her confidence and her total dedication—I found her so ambitious.”

The couple has been together ever since, with Leoni splitting her time between their apartment and New York hotels. (The collection is similarly split—half constructed in the New York atelier, and the other half in Italy.) Leoni was wearing a loose white button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up and jeans with distressed knees. The living room opened on to a garden filled with cacti: “My Frida Kahlo moment,” she says. A framed painting in the hallway read: “Let’s quit our fuckin’ jobs and go dancing.”

“She’s very sweet, and also quite quiet and humble, but you can feel her history”

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Start of the Story

In an exclusive excerpt from Arundhati Roy's new memoir, the author writes about her early upbringing for the first time.

Photographed by Sohrab Hura.

Mother Mary Comes to Me begins with Roy's childhood, in which she recounts moving from Assam, India, to the hill station town of Ooty, and later to Kerala, where her mother eventually set up a school. While they tried to find a foothold in Ooty, her mother's older brother and her grandmother attempted to evict the family, invoking an inheritance law that left daughters with little protection.

A teacher was what my mother had always wanted to be, what she was qualified to be. During the years she was married to and living with our father, who had a job as an assistant manager on a remote tea estate in Assam, in northeastern India, the dream of pursuing a career of any kind atrophied and fell away. It was rekindled (as nightmare more than dream) when she realized that her husband, like many young men who worked on lonely tea estates, was hopelessly addicted to alcohol.

When war broke out between India and China in October 1962, women and children were evacuated from border districts. We moved to Calcutta. Once we got there, my mother decided that she would not return to Assam. From Calcutta we traveled across the country, all the way south to Ootacamund—Ooty—a small hill station in the state of Tamil Nadu. My brother, LKC—Lalith Kumar Christopher Roy—was four and a half years old, and I was a month away from my third birthday. We did not see or hear from our father again until we were in our 20s.

THE FRIEND

Arundhati Roy, best known for her groundbreaking novel, *The God of Small Things*, at home in Delhi with her dog.

Sittings Editor: Divya Balakrishnan.



In Ooty we lived in one half of a “holiday” cottage that belonged to our maternal grandfather, who had retired as a senior government servant—an imperial entomologist—with the British government in Delhi. He and my grandmother were estranged. He had severed links with her and his children years ago. He died the year I was born.

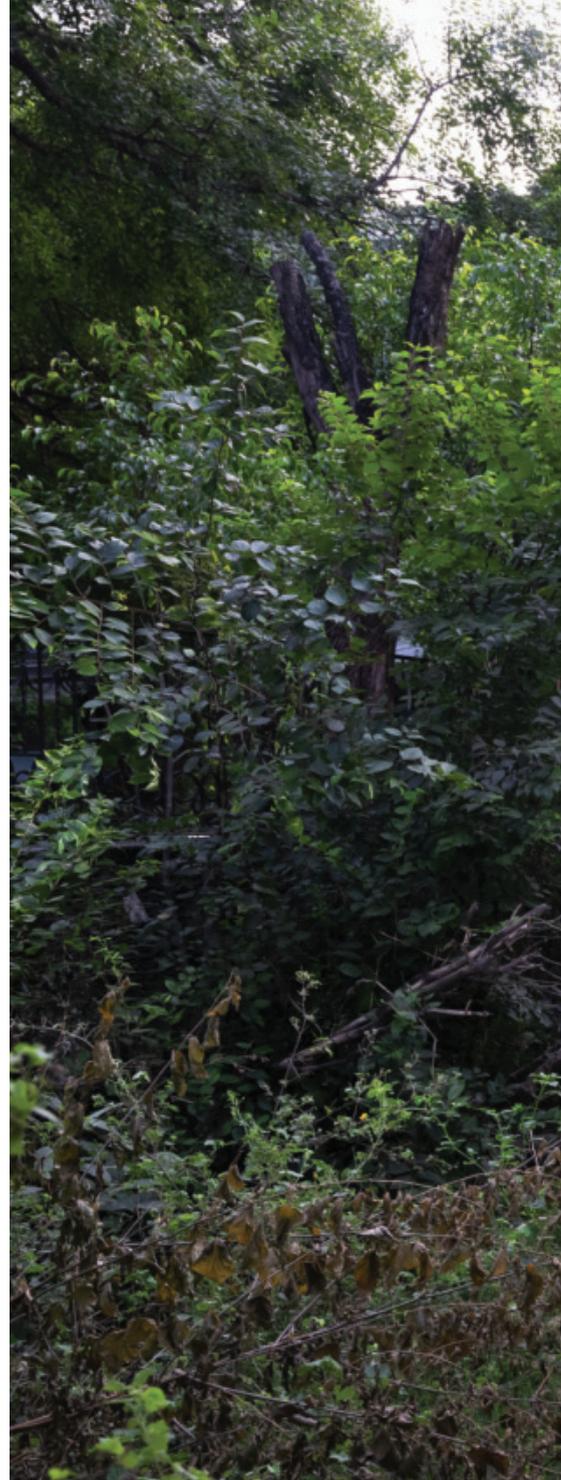
I don’t know how we got into that cottage. Maybe the tenant who lived in the other half had a key. Maybe we broke in. My mother seemed familiar with the house. And the town. Perhaps she had been there as a child, with her parents. The cottage was dank and gloomy with cold, cracked cement floors and an asbestos ceiling. A plywood partition separated our half from rooms that were occupied by the tenant. She was an old English lady called Mrs. Patmore. She wore her hair in a high, puffy style, which made us wonder what was hidden inside it. Wasps, we thought, my brother and I. At night she had bad dreams and would scream and moan. I’m not sure if she paid any rent. She might not have known whom to pay it to. We, certainly, paid no rent. We were squatters, interlopers—not tenants. We lived like fugitives amid huge wood trunks packed full of the dead imperial entomologist’s opulent clothes—silk ties, dress shirts, three-piece suits. We found an old biscuit tin full of cuff links. (Obviously my grandfather was an enthusiastic collaborator with the colonial government and took the *imperial* part of his professional designation seriously.) Later, when my brother and I were old enough to understand, we would be told the legendary family stories about him: about his vanity (he had a portrait of himself taken in a Hollywood photo studio) and his violence (he whipped his children, turned them out of the house regularly, and split my grandmother’s scalp open with a brass vase). It was to get away from him, our mother told us, that she married the first man who proposed to her.

Quite soon after we arrived, she got a teaching job at a local school called Breeks. Ooty was, at the time, swarming with schools, some of them run by British missionaries who had chosen to stay on in India after independence. She became friends with a group of them who taught at an all-white

school called Lushington, which catered to the children of British missionaries working in India. She managed to persuade them to let her sit in on their classes when she had time off from her job. She hungrily absorbed their innovative teaching methods for primary schoolchildren (flash cards for reading and phonetics, colored wood Cuisenaire rods for math) while being simultaneously disturbed by their kindly, well-meaning racism toward Indians and India. When she was away at work, she left us for a few hours with a sullen woman and occasionally with neighbors.

A few months into our fugitive life, my grandmother (the entomologist’s widow) and her oldest son—my mother’s older brother, G. Isaac—arrived from Kerala to evict us. I hadn’t seen either of them before. They told my mother that under the Travancore Christian Succession Act, daughters had no right to their father’s property and that we were to leave the house immediately. It didn’t seem to matter to them that we had nowhere to go. My grandmother didn’t say much, but she scared me. She had conical corneas and wore opaque sunglasses. I remember my mother, my brother, and me holding hands, running through the town in panic, trying to find a lawyer. In my memory it was night, and the streets were dark. But we did manage to find a lawyer, who told us that the Travancore Act applied only in the state of Kerala, not Tamil Nadu, and that even squatters had rights. He said that if anyone tried to evict us, we could call the police. We returned to the cottage shaking but triumphant. My brother and I were too young to understand what the adults were saying. But we understood the emotions at play: intimidation, fear, anger, panic, reassurance, relief, triumph.

Our uncle G. Isaac could not have known then that by trying to evict his younger sister, he was laying the ground for his own downfall. It would be years before my mother had the means and the standing to challenge the Travancore Christian Succession Act and demand an equal share of her father’s property in Kerala. Until then, she would shield and safeguard this memory of her mortification as though it were a precious family heirloom, which, in a way, it was.



GROWING SEASON

Roy’s memoir will be published in September. In this story: hair and makeup, Deepa Verma.

After our legal coup we expanded into the cottage, made ourselves some space. My mother gave away the imperial entomologist’s suits and cuff links to taxi drivers at the taxi stand near the market, and for a while Ooty had the best-dressed taxi drivers in the world.

Despite our hard-won but still-tentative sense of security, things



didn't go our way. The cold, wet climate in Ooty aggravated my mother's asthma. She would lie under a thick metallic-pink quilt on a high iron cot, breathing great, heaving breaths, bedridden for days on end. We thought she was going to die. She didn't like us standing around staring at her and would order us out of her room. So my brother and I would go off to find something else to stare at. Mostly, we swung on the low, rickety gate at the corner of the triangular compound, watching newlywed

couples on their honeymoon holding hands and walking past our home on their way to romance each other in Ooty's famous botanical gardens. Sometimes they stopped and gave us sweets and peanuts. A man gave us a catapult. We spent days perfecting our aim. We made friends with strangers. Once one of them grabbed my hand and marched me back into the house. He told my mother sternly that her daughter had chicken pox. He made me show her the blister on my stomach, which I had been showing off to

anybody who cared to examine it. My mother was furious. After he left, she smacked me hard and told me I was never to lift my dress and show my stomach to strangers. Especially men.

It could have been her illness, or the medication, but she became extremely bad-tempered and began to hit us often. When she did this, my brother would run away and only come home after dark. He was a quiet boy. He never cried. When he was upset, he would put his head down on the dining table and

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Ahead of the Curve

Landscape architect Sara Zewde has built her practice not by crafting a distinctive style, but by cultivating a singular responsiveness to the needs of the community and the land. By Chloe Schama. Photographed by Antonio Yursa.



Last summer, if you happened to be standing on the shore of the Delaware River near the funky, loft-laden Fishtown neighborhood of Philadelphia, you might have seen a strange event take place: the end of a pier, seeming no more substantial than a child's construction blocks, succumbing to years of neglect and toppling into the water. Known as Graffiti Pier, the structure—until the 1970s used to load coal onto passing ships—had been a semi-illicit canvas for street artists. (Philadelphia is considered the birthplace of graffiti.) Then came Instagram, and like many a vibrant backdrop, the foot traffic turned over to pedestrians wielding selfie sticks instead of spray cans.

The sudden collapse of the pier highlighted the conflicting obligations of urban landscapes that have outlived their initial intent—particularly those where history, art, and subculture converge. Do you prohibit access to a site like this, increasing its transgressive appeal, or do you turn it into something friendly and accessible? Back in 2019, preparing for the (still pending) purchase of the pier, the non-profit Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) engaged the New York landscape and urban design firm Studio Zewde to envision a future for it as a public space that might reconcile some of these competing impulses.

"They were like, 'Whatever you do, don't make it the High Line,'" the firm's founder, Sara Zewde, tells me when I visit her Harlem studio, a bright and sunny former beauty parlor, where windows face the broad thoroughfare of Malcolm X Boulevard. She's speaking not of her clients at DRWC, but the street artists whose opinion she has assiduously sought over the last six years to help her navigate the paradoxical

premise of the project. "Graffiti is all about breaking the rules," she says, "so how do you make it a place of rules?"

Zewde, elegantly dressed in a simple, pleated black top from Nin Studio and pants from the sustainable brand Another Tomorrow, pulls down a foam-board model of the pier, marked with miniature tags, but also scrawled notes from street artists she's spoken to. "How are you preserving the original art?" reads one in blue all caps. Another: "More walls. Bigger walls." It wasn't exactly easy to communicate with these underground stakeholders, she points out; there were emails, phone calls, a Philadelphia dive bar where the studio kept an open tab to encourage unhampered conversation.

But such is the deep investment that Zewde brings to her practice. At the age of 39, she is one of just a handful of Black, female landscape architects in America; *The New York Times* reported in 2023 that this demographic made up just 0.3 percent of the profession. (Among architects, Black women make up less than 0.5 percent.) This has made her uniquely sensitive to the ways in which landscape and design have been used to delineate power—but it has also made her expansive in her vision.

In the fall, Zewde will deliver a manuscript about Frederick Law Olmsted to Simon & Schuster. The book, forthcoming in 2027, is not about Central Park, but about his early career as a roving pseudonymous correspondent for the then fledgling *New York Times* in the antebellum South, reporting (in part) on the physical structure of plantations. Olmsted's chronicles were immediately followed by his history-making work in New York, the creation of the most famous people's park in the world, a place where all who enter are in theory on equal footing.

At Dia Beacon, the upstate New York campus of the Dia Art Foundation, another example of her approach will open this fall. Ever since 2003, when the contemporary-art organization converted a Nabisco box-printing factory into a museum, the rear, south side of the space has looked out over acres of unimpressive lawn, stained by industrial residue. "It was an incredible, vast expanse," says Jessica Morgan, Dia's director. "But it needed work. It was unappealing and also inaccessible in many ways."

Morgan chose Zewde for the project in part because she wouldn't come with a signature style, but rather a responsiveness to the surroundings. In September the rear windows will frame gently graded meadows, with undulating strips of lawn, a soft theater of

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BEYOND THE WALLS

Zewde, photographed in front of Richard Serra's sculpture 2000 at Dia Beacon, where she is designing a previously undeveloped landscape. Zewde wears a Pleats Please Issey Miyake dress.





Inside Out

Can interior design be as personal as therapy?
The chameleonic, loyalty-inspiring work of Charles & Co.
suggests an answer. By Gaby Wood.

HOUSE CALL

Julia Corden (LEFT) and Vicky Charles, in a London home their firm is decorating for a client. Corden wears Emilia Wickstead. Charles in Erdem pants. Sculpture by Emily Young. OPPOSITE: The living room with a sofa by George Smith. Hair, Nao Kawakami; makeup, Florrie White. Sitings Editor: Tabitha Simmons.



Photographed by Simon Upton

P

“People tend not to cheat on their interior designer,” says Vicky Charles, who, along with her business partner, Julia Corden, has spent the past decade embedded in the private lives of public people. “You can cheat on your architect or your contractor but not on your designer, because they get to know your life.”

When Vicky and Julia founded their interior design firm, Charles & Co., in 2016, they were 39 and 35, respectively. Their assets included a hard-earned reputation (Vicky had spent 20 years overseeing interior design at Soho House), stellar connections (Julia is married to the actor James Corden), and an instinct for discretion. Other than that they were, in their own words, “winging it.” Since then their client list has grown to include David and Victoria Beckham, Amal and George Clooney, Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis, Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds, Harry Styles, Emma Stone, and many more. Some 70 percent of these clients come back—and those, Vicky says, tend to need, on average, attention paid to at least three homes. (Charles & Co. has designed four interiors, including offices, for the Beckhams.)

That level of loyalty doesn’t stem from the color of the cushions. It’s because Vicky Charles—proudly adaptable—listens to the way you want to live. This goes for a centuries-old canal house in Amsterdam or a lodge in upstate New York, a house in Barcelona or a hotel in the Alps. “So many people say to me, ‘What’s your style?’” Julia reflects. “Well, our approach means that there is no style.” Instead, she



GOING DUTCH

Charles & Co. recently completed design of this canal house in Amsterdam. In the entry (ABOVE), custom wall coverings are by Watts 1874. OPPOSITE: A sitting room includes an antique chandelier from Piet Jonker.

suggests, with the air of a life coach, she and Vicky “take you on a journey to know yourself better.”

We are having breakfast at a restaurant in central London, where Vicky and Julia complement each other with ease. Both British, and friends for some 13 years, they have distinct roles in the company: Vicky gets on with the creative work while Julia oversees finance and thinks about the bigger picture. Julia—Jules to those who know her—petite and poised, blond hair pulled back into a bun, orders chia seed pudding. She’s recently returned from Los Angeles to live in London full-time with her husband and three children—in a Victorian house they renovated in record time. Vicky, a warm and

pointedly no-frills mother of two teenagers, whose American husband, Joe, works in finance, is here overnight from her home in upstate New York. When not traveling with suitcases full of samples, she’s chopping wood or shoveling snow or walking the dogs, and today she’s looking ahead to several long hours of rolling up her sleeves on-site. She launches herself with relief at the boiled eggs and soldiers. “I just crave the simple things when I come back,” she says. Plus: “I never know when I’m going to get food again.”

They tell me that they reject clients who are not committed enough to the process. “Vicky is very, very particular about what clients she takes on,” Julia says. “I won’t do it through an army







WITH THE GRAIN

The dining room of a 19th-century brownstone in Brooklyn designed by Charles & Co. includes a custom stenciled floor from Pintura Studio. OPPOSITE: An original fireplace mantel has been preserved in the bathroom.

of assistants,” Vicky explains. “If I’m designing your home, we need to have the rapport.”

A Charles & Co. project takes two to five years, by the end of which this pair knows everything about you. Once, a husband and wife each asked Vicky—independently of one another—what they should get the other for Christmas. “No names,” Vicky adds with a sidelong glance. Are they still married? I ask. She shakes her head.

“Vicky inspires trust by always listening,” says Amal Clooney, who, with her husband George, was their first residential client. “She is not only a really talented interior designer—she has become our friend.”

“If you were going to set up a dinner party for Amal,” Julia speculates, talking to Vicky across the table, “you’d know exactly the colors, you’d know the scent, you’d know the crockery, you’d know the cutlery, you’d know what food they’ll

be serving, you’d know the lighting she’d want....”

“And her shoe size,” Vicky adds.

But unlike a stylist, who dresses a public self, Vicky is interested in what’s not on display. If she knows shoe sizes, it’s for slippers or Wellington boots. And in our homes, she contends, “we are essentially all the same. We all need a bathroom and a toilet, and we’re all trying to raise our kids not to be assholes.”

Vicky makes it easy to see what Ashton Kutcher means when he tells me that “great designers could have been therapists.”

It’s mid-December, and Vicky and Julia are checking on a mews house in Marylebone. The client—whose fifth home this is with Charles & Co.—may want to stay there for Christmas. Though they’re three years into the job, this seems like it might be a challenge. There are several men at work on every floor, and plastic sheeting is

everywhere. They’ve excavated the basement to add a new floor with a vaulted ceiling, and the whole of the back of the house has become a window three stories high. Vicky pauses in the kitchen to adjust an Austrian Woka chandelier: Should it be centered on the kitchen island or on the hood over the stove?

Many of these projects need to sit somewhere between home and hotel. As they pass through, clients want Charles & Co. to have thought of everything, from pajamas in the bedroom to milk in the fridge. Call it the Goldilocks effect: You arrive to find the place just right, only no bears will take offense. It can raise unrealistic expectations. Just recently, Vicky had everything prepared for a client’s arrival—Grey Goose vodka, cocktail olives...only to receive a call hours later: “Where are my cigarettes?”

David Beckham has long paid attention to interior design—an interest that has only flourished since he



THE ITALIAN JOB

Villa Cacciarella, a vacation property designed by Charles & Co. on Italy's Monte Argentario peninsula, overlooks the Mediterranean. Most of the furniture, including the globe-light chandelier in the living room, was sourced from antiques fairs. Details, see In This Issue.

and his wife, Victoria, started working with Vicky. He loves to buy furniture and has been photographed perusing antiques fairs. The Beckhams' country house in the Cotswolds, one of the stars of their eponymous documentary series on Netflix, is a flowing sequence of spaces with pale stone walls and warm-toned velvet upholstery. There's a pool table in one room, deer antlers in another. It's chic, calm, at ease with its context. David tells me that "Vicky helped me translate my ideas to reality. She has great taste and attention to detail and produces work of real quality."

This is palpably true. But if, beyond these qualities, there's one thing that unites Charles & Co.'s projects, it's warmth. The clothing designer Molly Howard, who worked with Vicky on the home she shares with musician Ben Lovett and their daughter, tells me that when you walk into their living room now, it "just instantly feels like a hug." Amal Clooney says that, for her family, "home is our favorite place to be. It is a place filled with love

and laughter and we are incredibly grateful for that."

Though it may not have a single style, Charles & Co. does have a touch, and its lack of ostentation has led it to have a stealth influence on the way spaces feel, far beyond those it designs. Blake Lively, who is in the early stages of a Charles & Co. project, tells me that "everyone who knows, knows. Vicky Charles is the talent, heart, and soul who contributed to much of what we see in stores, magazines, mood boards, design shows, hotels, restaurants, and homes today."

Vicky and Julia first met through Nick Jones, the founder of Soho House. Vicky had worked for Jones in various capacities since she was an 18-year-old waiter at his Cafe Boheme restaurant in Oxford. For a while, when she first moved to New York, she worked for him in hospitality. "You have to be really good at getting on with the mayor and also be prepared to clean the WCs,"

Jones tells me. "It's a top-to-bottom job, literally." By the time Vicky and Julia met, Vicky was head of design at Soho House. Julia had moved to the city for six months while her husband, James, starred in a play on Broadway, and both women had new babies. They became fast friends. Not long afterward they were in LA having dinner with Jones and James Corden.

"I was about to turn 40," Vicky remembers, "and James was saying to me, 'What are you gonna do for the next 20 years?'" He pointed at Jones, his friend. "Are you still gonna work for this loser?"

She realized she didn't want to be at Soho House when she was 60.

"I was like, I'll help you," Julia says.

"I knew the design world, but I didn't know how to set up a business," Vicky explains.

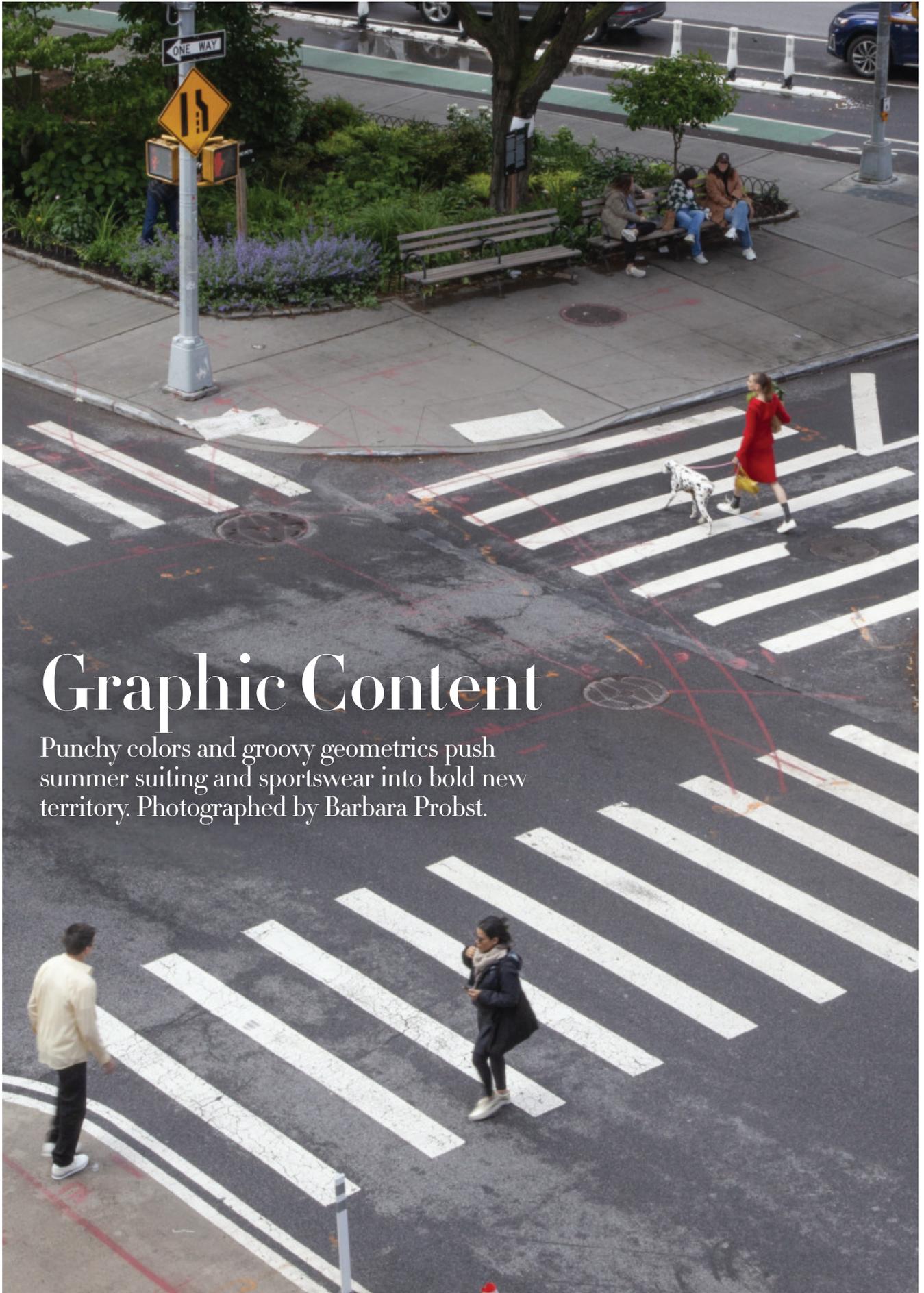
"Neither did I!" Julia insists.

When they were coming up with a name for their company, Julia paused over "Charles and Corden." She remembers feeling: "I think somebody's taken" CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

PRODUCED BY NICOLE HOLCROFT-EMMESS. INTERIORS STYLIST: SARA MATHERS.



Photographed by Danilo Scarpati



Graphic Content

Punchy colors and groovy geometrics push summer suiting and sportswear into bold new territory. Photographed by Barbara Probst.



FRESH, DIRECT

An exaggerated, almost kid-like collar; a curving silhouette; and a ripe shade of red give the workaday skirt suit a compelling new shape. HERE AND OPPOSITE: Model Mia Armstrong takes to the streets of Manhattan in a Miu Miu skirt suit and earrings; miumiu.com. Khaite bag; khaite.com. Prada shoes; prada.com. Fashion Editor: Max Ortega.



INDUSTRY PLANT

AT LEFT AND OPPOSITE:
Model Colin Jones
keeps things lean and
green in earthy Hermès
separates; Hermès
boutiques. Model
Ajah Angau Jok (FACING
AWAY) opts for power
pink in Carven;
carven.com for similar
styles. Juju Vera
earrings; jujuvera.com.



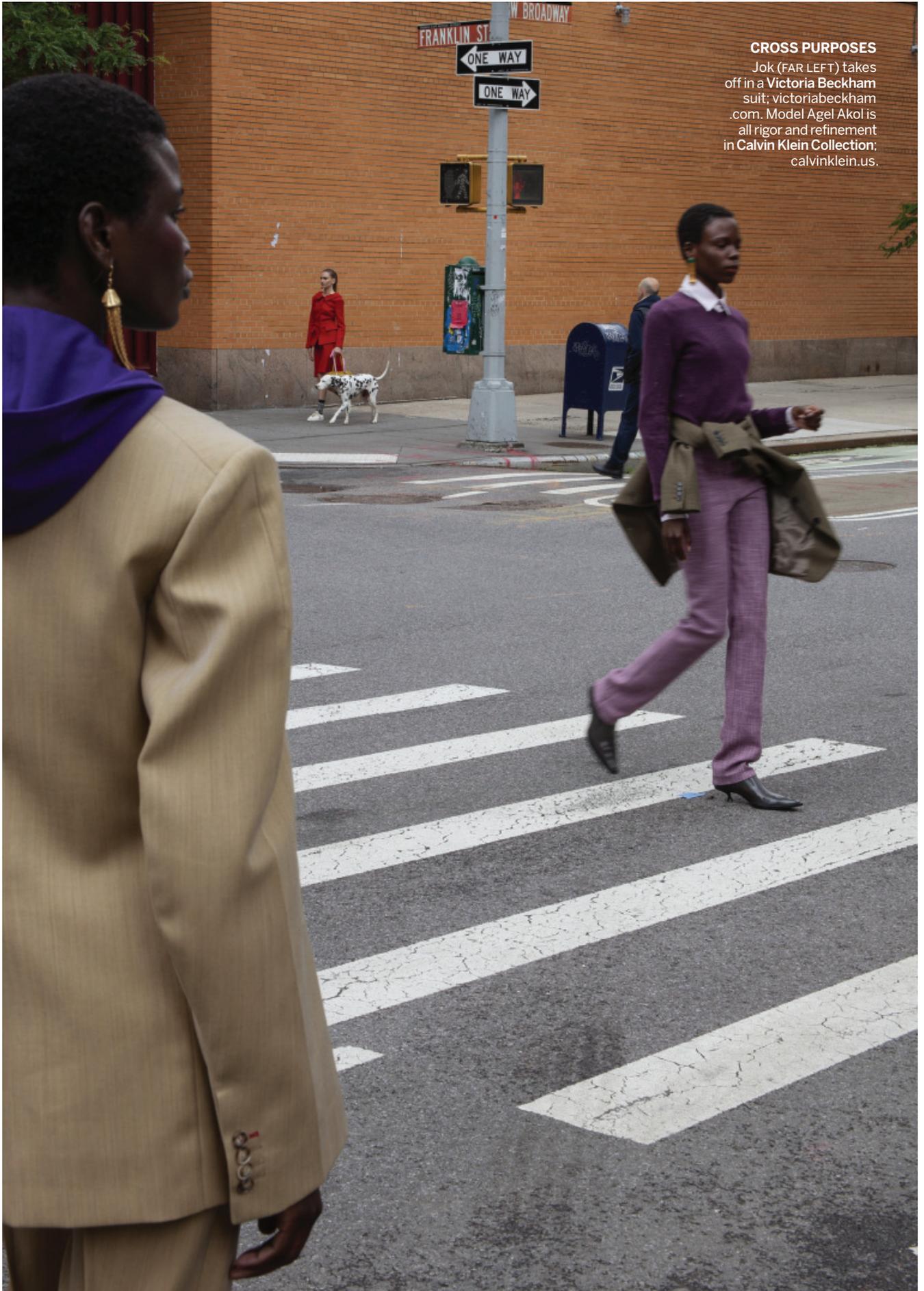
West Broadway & Franklin Street, 05.23.2025, 5:23 p.m.



WORTH A SHOT

Jones sets the scene in a zippy Miu Miu polo (miumiu.com) and an Audemars Piguet watch. Model Devyn Garcia (CENTER) wears Tory Burch; toryburch.com. Jok takes on a sportif motif in Wales Bonner; walesbonner.com.

CROSS PURPOSES
Jok (FAR LEFT) takes
off in a Victoria Beckham
suit; victoriabeckham
.com. Model Agel Akol is
all rigor and refinement
in Calvin Klein Collection;
calvinklein.us.







KEEP IT MOVING!

Garcia (LEFT) layers up in full **Phoebe Philo**; phoebephilo.com. Jok (AT REAR) wears **Prada**; prada.com. In this story: hair, Lacy Redway; makeup, Romy Soleimani. Details, see In This Issue.

LEARNING ITALIAN

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came of age in the vibrant London rave scene of the '90s. "There was something magical about that world," she recalls, reminiscing about finding her way into secret, nomadic parties. "It was a real period of self-expression and freedom," she says. "Joy is the word that I would say. There was a feeling of discovery in the air—a culture unfiltered by social media, where everything felt fresh and urgent."

That joy, however quietly, still pulses under her work—and her life. Recently she brought her teenage daughter to see a Tyler, the Creator concert in Paris. "It was the most beautiful experience," Trotter says. "To see her taking a bite out of life as a young person... to see her enjoy, and sing, and dance, and be free."

When not working in Milan, Trotter lives in Paris with her husband and their three kids. Recently, she's been immersing herself in music documentaries and visiting the Tatiana Trouvé exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice and Steve McQueen's "Bass" show at Dia Beacon. This summer, the family will spend time by the sea in Sicily, in Ragusa and Modica, where they'll enjoy a rhythm of swimming, cooking, tennis, and open-air films. A slower rhythm, to be sure, though the dialogue between life and design never quite stops.

From where Trotter and I are sitting, the view is hauntingly cinematic: Ivy is curling over old stone, with the symmetry of the arches casting long shadows across the tiles. As we part ways, I get the distinct sense that whatever Trotter's first collection holds, it will reflect everything she is: observant, grounded, and unafraid to whisper rather than shout. Her mysterious and whimsical smile says enough: It's going to be something unexpected—and beautiful. □

HOUSE PARTY

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see any of Bradley's works here, but a big painting by Carroll Dunham, two smaller ones by Paul Thek, and an even smaller one by Lee Lozano hold court in the spacious sitting room.

Bradley's new paintings, which I saw in his Long Island City studio, are strikingly different from anything I've seen him do before. For the first time, the hints of human figures that hovered over some of his work have come out in the open in full, primitive force. Sinuous lines hold everything together, a joyous stew of colors and floral patterns that sit inside and outside the blocky human and animal figures that could have dropped in from a comic book or a prehistoric cave painting. There had actually been a premonition of this in the *Angel's Trumpet* painting in his

show at Zwirner last spring. "Working on *Angel's Trumpet*," Bradley tells me, "a fleshy, pink female form emerged front and center in the painting—kind of a busty Venus with an odd potato-shaped head.... There's usually one picture that feels like an outlier, and these typically end up pointing the way forward."

As Gavin Brown tells me, "Joe has been through a number of bodies of work, each one defiantly and fearlessly different from the previous.... There is something about Joe's work that has a strange emulsion of sophistication, primitivism, knowingness, and the unconscious. His was about as pure an approach to painting as I had encountered in decades. It doesn't surprise me that he has taken yet another very bold leap."

I ask Bradley about this bold leap to figuration.

"It's funny," he says. "It can be a bit nerve-racking, sort of like you're revealing more and more of yourself—and you're hoping you're not so bad in the end." □

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

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techno clubs. Eventually, she convinced Hathaway to join her. "It's very brave work that she's done. Look at that dance in the barn—it's scary," she adds, referring to one of the film's arresting moments, a solo performance by Hathaway of surpassing emotional nudity. "The physicality she had to learn in preparation for this job—and it's not just us in the barn, it's the crew, it's the producers, and so of course this day was terrifying, a little monster on her shoulder, but no one realized until after the first take. And then to keep doing it—take after take. That requires a lot of strength. Gallons and tons."

"The crew, these massive German men, they all broke into tears when she was done," recalls Vitale, who choreographed the dance. "It was the craziest day. I mean, everyone got challenged. But it made us all super close. It's like David started a cult by accident."

Call it the spooky-action cult. According to Vitale, she, Hathaway, Coel, Schaffer, twigs, and Gerber maintain their *Mother Mary* group chat. Maybe they discuss the stuff everyone clammed up about when they talked to me. I don't mean they went silent about anything specific—more like there's a general air of "What happened on *Mother Mary* stays on *Mother Mary*." At a certain point, conversations hit a wall, or, as in my wonderful chat with costume designer Daigeler, U-turn back to friendlier subjects, like getting Iris van Herpen to design the film's all-important frock, or Issey Miyake references in the pleating.

The craziest fact I did manage to learn about the making of *Mother Mary* is that zero songs were ready to go at the time shooting commenced. As in, Hathaway had no idea what this fictional global pop star she was playing sounded like.

She knew what she looked like, thanks to Lowery and Daigeler's vision and her own contribution of "blond with fried roots." And she grasped how *Mother Mary* fit into the zeitgeist, blurring the line between pop idol and actual deity, and she could imagine the character's internal conflicts, as they were adjacent to ones she herself had navigated, coming of age in the public eye. *Where is the boundary between public and private? Between the life and the art? But music? No.*

"It was so confusing," says Hathaway, with the glow of someone who has been surprised with an extraordinary gift. And that's how she means it. "I had to learn.... Because if I'd had the music a year before we ever turned a camera on, I would have tattooed every note of it on my soul, and there would have been a whole process, very specific. And that was not available to me. In the end," she continues, "I am very grateful I could not take control."

It seems to have been that dance in the barn that locked the *Mother Mary* sound into place. As Charli XCX explains in an email, she and Antonoff were looking at footage from the shoot, and its gothic, "almost Poe-like" tone had already begun to shift their direction; then they saw the dance number. "And Anne's movement was super graphic, very thrashing and jerky and bold in this super magical and scary way," Charli writes. "It felt volatile and gripping, so Jack and I went away and thought about that."

So, in a sense, you might say Hathaway cowrote her *Mother Mary* songs. Or at the very least, inspired a few of the screams.

It was too nice to stay indoors, so Hathaway and I decided to walk to Adorama, a camera shop in Chelsea. She's been getting into photography—tinkering for now, though she likes the idea of wandering the streets with a vintage Rolleiflex, the camera Vivian Maier used, snapping candid while no one's looking. Fat chance. On the 15-minute trek over she was asked for three autographs and two selfies—she obliged, very *nicely*, of course—and we also got papped. This while she was doing her best to be discreet—bug-eye sunglasses, baseball cap. Anne Hathaway has been famous for a long time.

Indeed, Hathaway's 25 years of celebrity were a key reason Lowery wanted her for *Mother Mary*: She is nearly unique among actresses of her age range and stature in being able to bring a certain

iconic aura to the role. Lowery's intention was to subvert and manipulate that aura. But there are plenty of people—36 million following Hathaway on Instagram, to start—who very much like Anne Hathaway, star, and who want her to sparkle just as she always has. Vivacious, Valentino-glam Anne. And Hathaway isn't opposed to that, up to a point. She is still close to Valentino and his partner, Giancarlo Giammetti; she will undoubtedly wear the label again. Two of the upcoming films on her slate, *The Devil Wears Prada 2* and *The Princess Diaries 3*, see her reprising beloved roles. She's also reteaming with the *Idea of You* director Michael Showalter for the thriller *Verity*, based on Colleen Hoover's bestseller, and reuniting with her *Interstellar* director Christopher Nolan to take one of the starriest roles in his very starry adaptation of *The Odyssey*. (Other key cast includes Matt Damon, Tom Holland, and Zendaya.) This is all stuff she knows how to do. What she also wants are more opportunities to submit—her word—to the unknown. To begin, and begin, and begin.

"She's a curious person and she's still learning and growing, and you have to be sort of humble to come in with that attitude," says Showalter. "Which is refreshing in an A-list actor. And that is your first impression: star. She's very glamorous." Once you get past the polish and the poise and the buoyancy, however, Showalter goes on to explain, "there's a whole other side to her most people don't get to see. And it's intrinsic to who she is. It fills out the picture."

Here's some stuff you might not know about Anne Hathaway. It's not the stuff Showalter is talking about, just some things I've learned or observed. She played basketball growing up and she's crazy about the Knicks. Like, so crazy that the closest she came to being not-nice to me was furrowing her brow in grave disappointment that I wasn't following the Knicks' exciting post-season run. Leisure-wise, "hanging out" is mostly what she likes to do: chill with her kids, her husband, her friends. "Uno games, baking when there's time, teaching the kids to dribble a basketball in the apartment without upsetting the neighbors..." This information came to me in the form of what seems to be another of her great leisure pursuits: text messaging. That's a joke, sort of. She's insanely busy at the moment so a lot of her life, I'm guessing, is mediated through her phone. But when Hathaway is home, she's "so, so grateful [her] husband is a great cook and an early riser." (Among his many other wonderful qualities, she takes pains to note.) There's no breaking news here. The news is the way she's breathing it all in.

It was when I met Hathaway at the recording studio that she'd first mentioned her mother's singing voice; according to Hathaway, she can really belt. And growing up in New Jersey, she'd always been frustrated that she couldn't produce the same "effortless, powerful sound." Later, packing up for our field trip to the camera store, she told me about her childhood forays into the world of orchestral music, a serious pursuit "until acting swallowed everything." Right from the start, she wanted to play the trumpet. Her mother said no. "And I said, Why? And she said because of my braces. She said, You can play flute. And I told her, But I don't like the flute..."

For a year, Hathaway was made to play flute. "It was awful. And I was bad. And at the end of the year I went to my teacher and explained my predicament and asked, Is it too late to switch if I can convince my mom?" She continues talking as she slips into incognito mode—sunglasses, cap. "And he said, Well, there's summer school. And so I go home and I lay out this whole plan to my mom, and finally she realized, I really did mean it, I just wanted to play trumpet—am I shouting?" She's not, but she apologizes anyway.

"It's good this room is soundproof," Hathaway adds with a laugh, tapping the foam padding on the wall with a slender, manicured finger before walking out the door. "I get passionate and then I get loud." □

A NEW WAY FORWARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

"It was a beautiful moment," Arnault remembers. "She did it in the salon of the Givenchy house—you were really close to the designs, so you could see all the details of the craftsmanship, the colors, the textures."

Black jackets with wide shoulders, cinched waists, and twisted seams were followed by bustier dresses with cropped tulle skirts; by a rounded trench and a wide-collar peacoat; by an hourglass biker jacket and back-to-front suiting slashed open.

"It was really about talking to women about what they would want to wear," Burton tells me. "That's a question that can get lost in a show because you're like: *It has to be fireworks.*"

There was little ornament. "It's very easy to embellish something," she reflects, "but it's not as easy to do a beautiful shape."

Given the circumstances, Burton's back-to-basics gesture was a radical act. Either the work of Hubert de Givenchy or Lee McQueen's own tenure at Givenchy in the late '90s could have produced in her an anxiety of

influence. Instead, she created her own blank page. "I've got plenty of time to add to it," she says.

Arnault agrees: "I think it's a new chapter for Givenchy—she is working on creating a new vocabulary. I was really happy with the show, but also really happy for her: It's a great moment in her life."

In Paris, Burton is talking to architects about knocking down the inner walls of the Givenchy studio. "Everything's quite compartmentalized," she explains, "and I can't work like that—I like to work in a democratic way where everybody sees everything and everybody is part of it. The teams I work with become family."

While I'm with her, Burton is called downstairs to check on the progress of Cynthia Erivo's gown for the Met Gala. As the pieces are assembled on a dummy—one ruby-jeweled sleeve at a time—the scene feels akin to a knight being prepared for battle, though the result is less like armor than something Elizabeth I might have half ripped off her own body: the skirt—nine layers of tulle and taffeta—is open at the front, the collar on the corset sliced apart at the back.

The combination is signature Burton: "It's slightly subversive, it's all dissected, and it's masculine-feminine," she suggests. How will Erivo manage to put it on? Burton nods. "We'll have to lace her into it."

There is still the question of what Burton herself will wear to The Met—a question she deflects at every turn. Suddenly her gaze slides across the room to a cream muslin covering on a clothes hanger, gathered prettily at the top. "I could wear the garment bag?" she suggests.

After a long day in the Givenchy ateliers, Burton and I meet for dinner at a restaurant on the Quai Voltaire, where we order gin and tonics and slabs of steak. Burton has changed into a crisp white cotton shirt with a diamanté-encrusted collar. "I got it from work," she tells me, in the tone you might use if you'd found something in a broom cupboard.

I ask her about her legacy—a topic which I realize even as I broach it is probably too grand for Burton. One thing she does say is that she would like to encourage people—like herself as a young girl—to think that "the world's your oyster—you can do whatever you want to do." She takes pains to point out just how many roles there are in a creative industry like her own. "I think it's important to celebrate all those other people in the building who are making the clothes and coming for fittings." If there is beauty in making things, she suggests, there is beauty in every aspect of it.

When I ask Burton whether she thinks clothes can make history, she focuses on the personal—on clothes that have meaning for an individual, and perhaps a family. I wonder if she is thinking of her own children.

“Nobody needs any more stuff,” she says. They need “things that make them dream, things that they can have a connection with, things that they can put in their wardrobe and pull out in 20 years’ time and give their daughter, or treasure. Things that are beautifully cut, things that are made with care, with love; things that are made for women’s bodies.

“I think,” Burton concludes, “they need something that will make them feel amazing.” □

COMING TO AMERICA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

underneath everything that she does,” says van Seenus, who spends a lot of time taking in art with Leoni. (After the fitting, Leoni and I went to Hauser & Wirth to see a show of Francis Picabia paintings, one of which mirrored the blues and red in her collection.)

Leoni was good at math and preparing to study architecture when her mother told her that a university in Rome was starting a fashion studies program. After finishing that degree, Leoni was eager to “get my hands dirty and start to play,” as she puts it. She interned at a family-run fashion house, where she engaged in all aspects of design. Then she managed an interview with Jil Sander for a head knitwear design job—she still has the white crepe de chine shirt she wore. “This must be my talisman for the rest of my life,” Leoni says, laughing. “That very moment—7 a.m., Four Seasons Milan—is the beginning of all this.”

That time was one of the most enjoyable of Leoni’s life. “We were just the wildest—we had so much fun,” she recalls. She and her tight group of friends went out dancing at clubs and to concerts. “And then I got serious,” she says, “and I left Milan and moved to London.” In 2014 she joined Céline, working for Phoebe Philo on “the hottest ticket on the market,” Leoni says.

She commuted to Paris twice a week and flew to Rome on the weekends to see Casani—“this crazy triangle.” At the end of 2017, Leoni left Céline and returned to Rome before signing on to design a capsule collection of performance outerwear for Moncler under Remo Ruffini. But Moncler was a “very different taste from what I love to do,” Leoni tells me, and so in 2021 she started Quira, named after her grandmother Quirina.

“It was the opportunity for freedom,” she says, “a chance to play the game my way.” Quira’s sharply tailored clothes with dramatic shapes and surprising

details were built around an idea of an intelligent, sensitive woman, and aimed to “uplift the minimalist to a certain level of extravaganza,” she says. The label, which is currently on pause, became a finalist for the LVMH Prize. “And then Mary-Kate [Olsen] arrived in my life,” she says. Leoni was hired by The Row as Olsen and her sister Ashley expanded their presence in Europe. But in 2023 she started talking with the Calvin Klein company, joining them in the fall of 2024.

Leoni is the first woman designer behind Calvin Klein, and one of the few women currently directing a major fashion house. “I feel privileged, but I’m very sorry to feel privileged,” she says. “I would just like to feel like every other one of my colleagues: in a fair, ambitious market where you try to do your best to gain your space.”

On a hot spring afternoon in Rome, just days after Pope Francis died, Leoni and I have lunch in a serene hotel courtyard. A weekday lunch in the city was something of a novelty for her: After years of living between several cities for work, her hometown is finally her base—her first time having a job here. “The calendar is organic,” she says. “There’s moments where I’m more needed in Italy, and moments where New York is more dominant. New York is bringing to the project a very different energy than Rome—it’s almost a way of making sure I stay true to myself and to the brand. New York injects continuity and dynamism. Rome is more deconstructed—it brings a sort of casual glamour, a warmer relationship with beauty.”

Friends and family are getting used to having her around. She can now attend birthday parties, or see a movie on short notice. When she’s not at work, Leoni likes to take care of her cactus garden, try new restaurants (but will still—always—have a smash burger and fries upon arriving in New York), go to independent cinema and theater with Casani, and see everything from contemporary dance and ballet to live music, where she can be found “standing and screaming and singing.” (Billie Eilish is next up.)

Her new design studio in Rome is up one of the city’s green hills, away from many of the tourists but within walking distance of her apartment. She’s a bit of an industry outsider here, having never worked at the city’s big traditional houses—Valentino, Fendi—where many young Italian designers start their careers. Her studio is light and airy, with doors that lead to gardens. Several big mood boards and racks of samples dominate the main room, where Leoni is working with her small, diverse team on the spring collection, which she will show

in September. Leoni is tasked with producing only two shows a year. “We’re stretching our timing a little bit more for creativity,” she says. “This is the place for experiments to happen.” At the moment, they are playing with silhouettes, shapes, volume, and vibes before working with their patternmakers and factories.

“It’s spring, so you want to inject a lightness as much as possible,” says Leoni, who is exploring the “ultrafemininity” and American glamour evoked by the ’80s television show *Dynasty*. “My mom was *obsessed*,” she says. Leoni is now obsessed with the idea of a woman slipping on a single cotton piece and feeling effortlessly dressed up in a second. “I love to play with fabrics,” she says. “I always feel there are a few fabrics that will dictate the shape that a piece will go in, instead of the opposite. I love poplin, I love cotton. The white shirt is the most important item for me.”

On the business side, Calvin Klein Collection is setting about building up its distribution and partnering with wholesalers and retailers. “We’re starting from scratch again,” Leoni says, adding that what she is aiming for in her next collection is recognizability—where the customer would know a piece was Calvin Klein before they saw the label. Rather than simply recycling looks from the archive, she is picking up where Klein left off when he retired and innovating from there.

“I’m not nostalgic,” Leoni says. “I think of it more like having an energizing perspective on the past and trying to bring it into today’s context. This is a brand-new conversation. I try to be seduced by the past, but not to be taken away.” □

START OF THE STORY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 69

pretend to be asleep. When he was happy, which wasn’t often, he would dance around me boxing the air, saying he was Cassius Clay. I don’t know how he knew who Cassius Clay was. I didn’t. Maybe our father told him.

I think those years in Ooty were harder for him than for me because he remembered things. He remembered a better life. He remembered our father and the big house we had lived in on the tea estate. He remembered being loved. Fortunately, I didn’t.

My brother started school before me. He went to Lushington, the white people’s school, for a few months. (It must have been a favor to my mother from the missionaries.) But when he began to call local children like ourselves “those Indian children,” she pulled him out and enrolled him in Brecks, the school that she taught in. When I turned five, she put me into a nursery school (for Indian children) that was run by a

frightening-looking Australian missionary called Miss Mitten. She was a cruel woman with freckles on her arms. She had a slit for a mouth. No lips. She made it clear that she didn't like me. (She said she could see Satan in my eyes.) Our classroom was a shed on the edge of a patchy meadow where a few thin cows with prominent hip bones grazed.

On days when her asthma was really bad, my mother would write out a shopping list of vegetables and provisions, put it into a basket, and send us into town with it. Ooty was a safe, small town then, with little traffic. The policemen knew us. The shopkeepers were always kind and sometimes even gave us credit. The kindest of them all was a lady called Kurussammal, who worked in the knitting shop. She knitted two polo-neck sweaters for us. Bottle green for my brother. Plum for me. When my mother became completely bedridden for a few weeks, Kurussammal moved in with us. Our edgy lifestyle came to an end. It was Kurussammal who taught us what love was. What dependability was. What being hugged was. She would cook for us and bathe us outdoors in the bitter Ooty cold with water she boiled in a huge pot on a wood fire. To this day my brother and I need to be almost boiled to feel properly bathed. Before she bathed us, she combed the lice out of our hair and showed us how to kill them. They made a satisfying sound when I squashed them with my thumbnail. Apart from being a lightning-quick knitter, Kurussammal was a superb cook. She specialized in producing food from almost no ingredients. Even boiled rice with salt and a fresh green chile tasted good when she put it on our plates.

Kurussammal's name meant "mother of the cross" in Tamil. Her husband, who visited us often, was Yesuratnam, "Jesus jewel" or "jewel of jewels." He had a goiter on his neck that he hid with his woolen muffler. He, like us, always smelled of woodsmoke.

Eventually my mother grew too sick to hold down her job. Even the massive dose of steroids she was on didn't help. We ran out of money. My brother and I grew undernourished and developed primary tuberculosis.

After a few more grim months of fighting on all fronts, my mother gave up. She decided to swallow her pride and return to Kerala, to Ayemenem, our grandmother's village. She was out of options.

I was heartbroken about leaving Kurussammal. But I would meet her again a few years later, when she moved to Kerala to live with us.

As our train crossed the border from Tamil Nadu into Kerala, the land

turned from brown to green. Everything, including the electric poles, was smothered with plants and creepers. Everything glistened. Almost all the people who slid past the train window, both men and women, wore white and carried black umbrellas.

My heart sang.

And then sank.

We arrived in Ayemenem uninvited and manifestly unwelcome. The house whose doorstep we appeared on with our invisible begging bowl belonged to my grandmother's older sister, Miss Kurien. She would have been in her 60s then. Her thin, wavy, gray hair was cut in a style that used to be called a pageboy. She wore starched, papery saris with big, loose blouses. My mother assured her that we would stay only as long as it took for her to find a job. Miss Kurien, who prided herself on being a good Christian, agreed to let us stay, but made no effort to hide her disapproval. She did this by ignoring us and showering her delicate affections on other relatives' children who visited her.

My grandmother lived with her too. Her conical corneas had deteriorated and she was almost blind, but she still wore her dark glasses. Even at night. She had a ridge that ran across her scalp—sometimes she let me run my finger over it. And sometimes she allowed me to braid her thin hair into a rat's tail before she went to bed.

Every evening she would sit on the veranda and play her violin. I was too young to tell how well she played, but as darkness fell and the sound of crickets swelled, her music made the evenings and the dark nights more melancholic than they already were.

Life in Ayemenem was like living on a ledge that we could be nudged off of at any moment. Every few days the adults would quarrel. When they fought, the whole house shook. As soon as the shouting began, I would flee. The river was my refuge. It made up for everything that was wrong in my life. I spent hours on its banks and came to be on intimate, first name terms with the fish, the worms, the birds and the plants. □

Excerpted from chapters two and three of *Mother Mary Comes to Me*, published in September by Scribner.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 70

newly planted trees, and smaller Juneberry bushes lining the paths. Apart from the aesthetics, Zewde's design also addresses water-related climate change, a threat Dia was intent on addressing. "She's a rising superstar," Morgan says. "People respond to her—because she's clearly listening."

Zewde grew up along the Gulf Coast, born in Houston and raised near New Orleans, in Slidell, Louisiana. Her parents are both Ethiopian immigrants who met in the US, her father becoming an accountant and her mother a teacher and real estate agent. Design didn't feature prominently in her family's life, but "growing up in that region," Zewde tells me, "seeing rituals taking place in central spaces, it started to shape how I thought of place and culture." She is speaking of Mardi Gras and Carnival, but also the neighborhood crawfish boils, and the general blurring of households, where the women would gather in one place, the men in another, and the children—Zewde has one younger sister—flowing freely between them. Zewde's family returned to Houston for her teenage years, where a more suburban architecture, lawns and driveways marking disparate spaces, gave her a sense of how profoundly a built environment could shape the way people live.

But perhaps the most formative element of Zewde's young adulthood took place when she was a college sophomore, as she watched the devastation of Hurricane Katrina unfold from her Boston University dorm room. She became involved with community groups engaged in rebuilding, but the limits of her technical understanding frustrated her. BU didn't offer an architecture major, so after graduation she studied city planning at MIT. That took her, in 2010, to Rio, where she worked as a consultant to the city government; she taught herself Portuguese in six weeks before she departed. (Still fluent, she can chat in a confident stream, and spends every January in Rio.)

City planning work was unsatisfying, though. She was "writing reports about nuances," as she puts it, rather than having a hand in crafting them. She went back to school a final time, to Harvard, for landscape architecture. (She now teaches in the same program, traveling to Boston twice a week.) And, in 2018, she started Studio Zewde first in Seattle, then Harlem—the move spurred by Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts's *Harlem Is Nowhere* (the title an allusion to the famous Ralph Ellison essay), a book that looks at Harlem as an idea rather than a 45-block stretch of Manhattan. "I always say that I moved to Harlem," Zewde says. "I didn't move to New York City." Now, she spends weekends in Central Park and at the Guggenheim—where she recently saw the Rashid Johnson retrospective—but also Marcus Garvey Park, around the corner from her office and apartment, and eats at Fieldtrip on Malcolm X Boulevard or ends her nights at The Good Good or Musette Wine Bar. Though she is a reader (recently finishing Ta-Nehisi

Coates's *The Message* for the second time), she is also someone who takes pleasure in the lifeblood of the city—its barbershops, libraries, and cafés. “My absolute favorite place in Harlem is my stoop,” she says, “and my second favorite is everyone else’s.”

Not incidentally, the inspiration behind her initial move to the neighborhood is also motivating her thinking around her design for the rooftop terrace at the soon-to-reopen Studio Museum in Harlem. “Our founders’ decision to situate our museum in Harlem was no coincidence,” says Thelma Golden, the museum’s director and chief curator. “Sara and Studio Zewde were not only attuned to the area’s spiritual remnants, but to the neighborhood and the community as it is today.” The plants there will reflect the area’s varied and evolving history with an eclectic amalgam of juniper, banana plant, chicory, and more—“We were like, Maybe the weirdness is the thing,” says Zewde. (The benches will be consciously called “stoops.”) “Thelma is really pushing us to think about a garden as a gift to the neighborhood,” Zewde continues. “What has always struck me about Sara’s work is how human-centric it is,” says Golden.

When the Dia Beacon project came across her desk, in 2021, Zewde was initially hesitant, thinking the aim was little more than carving out walking paths around the museum. But the issues were larger. There was a beloved legacy landscape in the front of the building—the grass-perforated grid walkway designed by the artist Robert Irwin. (Irwin spoke extensively with Zewde about her project before his death in 2023.) And the basement of the building had experienced flooding during Hurricane Sandy. As we walk through Zewde’s Harlem studio, she shows me projections for a 100-year or 500-year flood. Because the land was reclaimed from the nearby Hudson River, and built up for the railroad that runs alongside the museum, the building sits in a kind of bathtub.

Most architectural responses to storm-related climate change involve defense—dikes, walls, fortifications. The Whitney Museum in Manhattan, also perched along the Hudson some 70 miles south, has a 15,500-pound emergency door akin to the ones on US Navy destroyers. But Zewde took a more sanguine-seeming approach to, at least, the weekly or monthly environmental challenges: “The water wants to be there,” she says. The grading and plantings are oriented toward channeling and absorbing it. “Sara’s approach was unlike everyone else’s,” says Morgan. “They were about pumping and damming and shoring it up and getting the water out. Whereas Sara’s attitude was very much,

Well, water always returns. Let’s keep it away from the building.”

On a drizzly Friday in May, I drive up to Beacon, pulling up to the famous Irwin garden at the front of the building. A staff member shows me to the back of the museum. I’ve been to Dia Beacon maybe a dozen times since it opened, but I’ve never been out the back door. “You wouldn’t have,” says the staffer, “there was nothing here.”

Standing on the gravel, I see, for the first time, Lawrence Weiner’s giant text-based work, painted on the corrugated sides of the museum, previously visible mostly to Metro-North passengers speeding up the Hudson Line. It’s been a wet and rainy spring, so just a few seedlings are poking through the damp turf. The trees still look very young. A certain amount of imagination is required at this incipient stage in the garden’s life—but a garden always requires a certain amount of vision, a hope and belief in the future.

Zewde, who is currently single, tells me that she would love to have a family if the opportunity presented itself. She does have a cheerful one-year-old niece, who likes nothing more than playing with plants. “I look forward to taking her to the landscapes I’ve helped shape—where she might roll down a grassy hillside, swing on the swings, rest on a bench in the shade of a tree, or, when she is older, even fall in love,” she says. “Designing landscapes is, at its core, the art of crafting places that nurture joy, ritual, memory, and fellowship. These are the things we pass on to the next generation. They not only inherit them, but they thrive because of them.” □

INSIDE OUT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 78

that name....” (Her husband had it in fairly constant use.) But she liked the old-world abbreviation for “and company,” and it allowed her to smuggle in the first two letters of her last name.

Before she met James, Julia had worked in a talent agency and then at the nonprofit Save the Children. Nick Jones had told her that Vicky was, aside from being highly creative, “amazing at dealing with ‘tricky’”—a skill Julia felt she could also claim. The two friends quietly evolved a business through word of mouth. “For me, it was a project about elevating Vicky’s talent,” Julia says. “And I suppose,” she reflects, “in a way, I do that in my daily life with my husband.”

Behind the scenes is where Julia prefers to be. (“If more than three people look at me at once I go red,” she says.) Though she is too discreet to say which clients came through her, it’s clear that her experience of the spotlight helps.

“They know that we know what an NDA is,” she explains. “The types of clients that we attract really, really appreciate—and probably pass on the message—that we won’t step over that line.”

Charles & Co. has offices in London and Northern Italy but New York serves as its headquarters: The space is on the 21st floor of an Art Deco building in Midtown. Light streams in from all sides. The main room is surrounded by trolleys of stacked steel trays full of samples—each trolley a different project, each tray a different room. Shelves of Perspex boxes contain fabrics, wallpapers, and tiles in every conceivable color. In preparation for a client meeting, Vicky has arranged some samples on a large wooden table, but the client has canceled: His family has been evacuated from their home in Malibu because of the threat of wildfires. A sign of things to come.

Vicky’s spatial awareness is such that whenever she enters a room, she clocks every inch of space. “She does this thing,” Julia says. “Her eyes sort of flicker, genuinely like a sort of robot vibe.” Then she’ll make a pronouncement: That wall needs to go. Or: You need to move that window. She has a few governing principles: Start with the rug. Have lighting at different levels. Don’t put cold colors in a bathroom because when you’re naked, you’re going to want to get something nurturing back.

But mostly, it’s emotional intelligence that’s required. Though she begins with a long list of questions—what kind of shower head do you like, do you have a coffee machine spec—things only really get going when people touch the samples and react to them viscerally. This process, she says, can be “intense,” because people often surprise themselves. “You put things in front of them, and they’ll gravitate to certain colors. And who knows if they had sunflowers in the fields as a kid, and that’s what makes them happy. There aren’t enough words to describe color and the emotions that come with color.”

Whatever they choose, she’ll build on it—combining patterns of different scales, using tones in the right proportion. Gradually, she’ll find out what holds meaning for the client. It might be a grand piano or an old rocking chair or a piece of furniture fallen in love with while traveling in India. “Is this special to you?” she’ll ask. “Then let’s make it work.”

Molly Howard says that she “never felt bulldozed by her, which I know seems like it should be obvious, but I also know that that’s not really the case with a lot of these relationships.” For Howard and Lovett, Vicky planned a vinyl room around Lovett’s giant speakers and made sure stripes appeared here and there to pick up on Howard’s clothing brand, La Ligne. The legs on a classic Alvar Aalto

table-and-chair set were sacrilegiously cropped to child height. “Things need to live,” Vicky explains. “They’ll die if they’re museum pieces.”

Kutcher and Kunis’s LA home has a giant board-form concrete barn designed around their 10-foot-long chandelier. But it was also dreamed up by Vicky with their two small children in mind. Kutcher reports: “She was like, Let’s make sure that we’re not using precious fabrics, because it’s going to get crap spilled all over it, and at some point, a kid might take out a Sharpie and decide to draw on it.”

If these spaces are designed to reflect human behavior, they can also remodel it. Kutcher says he became a much better compromiser as a result of the design process. “Because, you know, at the end of the day, you’re not building a space for yourself as much as you’re building a

space to share,” he says. He describes the different ways that he and Kunis tend to reach decisions and suggests that Vicky was able to “tune in to both of us.” “I can look around the room I’m in right now,” he says as we’re speaking on the phone, “and I can see the beautiful compromises that Mila and I made.”

January. The Marylebone client decided not to spend Christmas in London after all. Meanwhile, wildfires have ravaged Los Angeles. Julia, who moved back to London just 18 months ago, shows me a map on her phone of the progression of the fires, and of where they used to live, nearby. Some of their friends have lost everything. And as for clients: It seems insensitive, at this point, to ask. “Knowing how much some people have invested in their homes emotionally, the idea of people losing their home,

anywhere in the world.... It’s really poignant to us,” she says.

Over the course of a few days I watch the mews house mutate into its final form: extra rugs are auditioned, vintage lamps found, beautiful ceramics are displayed next to Dutch Master-worthy bowls of plums and grapes. It’s what Vicky describes as “an extra layer of love.” All of the seating and joinery is bespoke. Upstairs the bedcovers have been steamed and the bathrooms stocked with products. Candles are burning and the whole house smells of Figuiet by Diptyque.

How does it feel? Like it’s always been there. You imagine that any minute, the owner and his children could walk in—into the best version of their lives, ready-made, waiting for them. And isn’t that the point? As Ashton Kutcher points out: “The most important thing about any space is who’s in it.” □

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Fendi bag

To mark Fendi's centennial this year, Silvia Venturini Fendi produced a fall collection that felt at once richly redolent and utterly au courant. Case in point: the reimagining of the Spy bag, introduced back in 2005 and swiftly spirited to cult status. While its slouchy silhouette is as effortlessly appealing (or should that be appealingly effortless?) as ever, the new Spy comes with a playfully twisted handle—a suitably subtle update to a landmark low-key classic.

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