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NEW BEGINNINGS

SIENNA MILLER

(IT'S A GIRL!)





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GUCCI

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Gucci Ancora, Spring Summer 2024
By David Sims





Ana, Fadia, Jiahui, Nyajuok & Violet, Rome

Gucci Ancora, Spring Summer 2024
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Rosalie Fuks, Lulu Tenney, and Vivienne Rokner
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VOGUE

Winter 2024



SQUAD GOALS

USHER, IN WILLY CHAVARRIA, RALLIES THE TEAM WITH A LITTLE COACHING HELP FROM MODEL CAROLYN MURPHY, IN MIU MIU. PHOTOGRAPHED BY CAMPBELL ADDY.

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Cover Look Next Wave

Sienna Miller wears a Gabriela Hearst sweater. To get this look, try: Just Skin Tinted Moisturizer SPF 15, Cheek Gelée in Happy, Sea Turtle Eye Trio in Warm, Faux Cils Longest Lash Mascara, and Lip Potion. All by Chantecaille. Hair, Evanie Frausto using Bumble and Bumble; makeup, Diane Kendal. Details, see In This Issue.

Photographer: Annie Leibovitz.
Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.

FASHION EDITOR: MAX ORTEGA. FOR USHER: HAIR, SHAWN "SHIZZ" PORTER; MAKEUP, LOLA OKANLAWON. FOR CAROLYN MURPHY: HAIR, EVANIE FRAUSTO USING BUMBLE AND BUMBLE; MAKEUP, RAISA FLOWERS. PRODUCED BY VIEWFINDERS. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

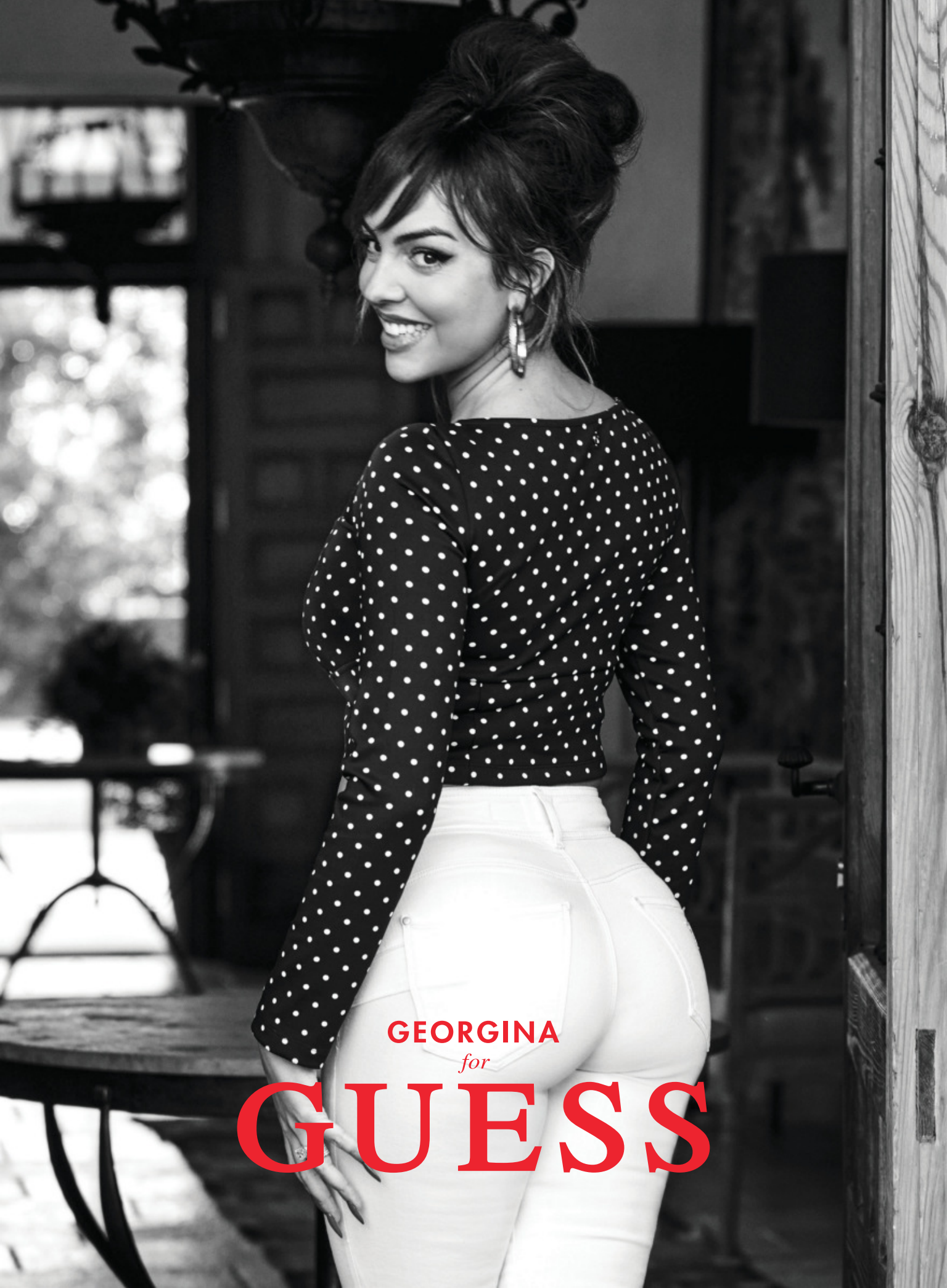
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FITTING





GEORGINA
for

GUESS

Letter From the Editor



MILLER'S CROSSINGS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SIENNA MILLER WITH HER DAUGHTER, MARLOWE, IN 2015; THE ACTOR, IN STELLA MCCARTNEY, IN 2005; WITH HER BOYFRIEND, OLI GREEN, PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ.

When her daughter Marlowe, now 11, came along, with her then partner (and now great friend) Tom Sturridge, another side became clear. Sienna was an *amazing* mother—and so no wonder that she wanted to do it all over

again. She's fallen in love with a wonderful man, the actor Oli Green, and they are expecting a girl in December.

I'm so happy for them both, but I also marvel at the double standard women, especially famous women, face when they don't fall into established codes. As tabloids have been keen to point out, Green is more than a decade younger than Sienna. Can you imagine a man being judged in the same way? Chloe Schama's cover profile this month—Sienna was photographed by Annie Leibovitz—reminds us of the confining expectations placed on women and how important, and how liberating, it can be to ignore them altogether.

If Sienna is fun to be around, Usher is a one-man happiness engine, a superstar brimming with charm and talent. He's already had a must-see Las Vegas residency, and now he'll be delighting all of us with a performance at the Super Bowl in February. Campbell Addy photographed him with the model Carolyn Murphy, who wrote me afterward that the experience was "pure joy." Call it the Usher phenomenon—instant chemistry. Can't wait for the halftime show.

Amalita.

Free Spirits

I DON'T REMEMBER WHEN I first met Sienna. She's one of those people you feel you've known forever. She has that effect—so warm and open, it's effortless becoming her close friend. And once you're in her world, it's a happy whirlwind. I'll never forget visiting her tiny downtown hotel room before the Met Gala back in 2006. I found myself surrounded by an avalanche of beautiful clothes and empty suitcases. I could barely make sense of it, but in an instant she'd picked out a gold, very short, drop-dead-chic Burberry dress (at a time when not many people were wearing very short, drop-dead-chic dresses to the Met), and off we went. Her style is innate. It's part of who she is.

But *that* we've always known. The source of the early fascination with Sienna was obvious: a young newcomer, impossibly beautiful. She was an It girl playing It girls (Eddie Sedgwick, Tippi Hedren) who went out a lot and had famous boyfriends. And so the attention, especially from the British press, was intense. What those of us who knew her understood was that she was also an actress of uncommon range. She would prove that with fearless performances as, say, Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in London's West End, or as a grieving mother in *American Woman*.



CLIMATE ACTION

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Contributors



Caught Up

For the pictures accompanying “The MVP” (page 60)—Alessandra Codinha’s profile of Usher Raymond IV as he gears up for both the Super Bowl LVIII halftime show and the release of his ninth album, *Coming Home*—*Vogue* contributing fashion editor Max Ortega and photographer Campbell Addy (seen above) went to Las Vegas, where they shot Usher with model Carolyn Murphy; his dog, Scarlett; a flurry of Ush Bucks; and several adorable members of the local Jr Gaels 6U football team. In short, the session was “a dream,” says Addy.



Journey to Italy

Last fall, as Gucci prepared to move its design office to Milan, Sabato De Sarno, the Italian house’s new creative director, invited Jason Horowitz into his art-filled apartment in Rome’s Renaissance quarter (see “Renaissance Man,” page 70). Meanwhile, photographer Theo Liu and fashion editor Gabriella Karefa-Johnson took a Gucci-clad Lila Moss—who, with her wide-set eyes and short, dark hairdo, looked rather like Monica Vitti in *La Notte*—out into the streets of the Eternal City, where sites like the Giuncart shop on Via del Pellegrino, the Passetto del Biscione, and the Campo de’ Fiori market made for images that felt like a true Roman holiday.



Casting a Spell

As a new production of *The Wiz* wends its way across the country (see “Homeward Bound,” page 80), photographer Norman Jean Roy and fashion editor Edward Bowleg III caught stars Avery Wilson, Nichelle Lewis, Phillip Johnson Richardson, and Kyle Ramar Freeman (all pictured at left) in Washington, DC, last October. Needless to say, it takes a sprawling creative team to get them Oz-ready: While Alan Bennett and Jessica Simons were on hand from the wardrobe team (Sharen Davis designed the elaborate costumes), Kirk Cambridge-Del Pesche and Jaylene Ogle did the makeup, and Marcia Baird, Ashley Wise, and Anita Solomon handled the hair and wigs. For Davis, helping to realize director Schele Williams’s vision for *The Wiz* has been a total joy: “I have watched it about 15 times,” she says. “I never grow tired of the show.”

TOP LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANA BROCKMAN. TOP RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHED BY THEO LIU. FASHION EDITOR: GABRIELLA KAREFA-JOHNSON. PRODUCED BY MAGMA PRODUCTIONS. BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPHED BY NORMAN JEAN ROY. FASHION EDITOR: EDWARD BOWLEG III. PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.



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Good Vibrations

J.J. Martin's feel-good label, La DoubleJ, is just what we all need right now, says Lynn Yaeger.

J.J. Martin is sitting cross-legged on the floor of the Broome Street Ganesh Temple, clad in a La DoubleJ patchwork ensemble that includes a pullover with sleeves that devolve into a welter of yellow feathers. Across from her sits her "sister," a spiritual guide whose own La DoubleJ outfit—in bright orange—is only slightly quieter. "Calling our families of light," Martin intones. "Opening up our channels, beyond the mind, the body, beyond this dimension, clearing our chakras." I am crouched on a chair, my chakras no doubt hopelessly clogged, observing.

Martin is the American founder of La DoubleJ, the exuberant Milan-based line of clothing and home goods. From its inception, her designs have relied on big, bold prints in easy shapes—the silk "swing" dresses boast blown-out blossoms; her ponchos reference abstract tiles. The housewares are likewise not exactly shy: There are palm-printed linen tablecloths, Murano glass goblets, and porcelain plates that sport a plethora of pineapples. Unabashedly cheerful and vintage-inspired, her work is the stylish equivalent, in these fraught times, of laughter in the dark.

If she seems to be as interested in what she calls her spiritual practice as she is in running a fashion company, Martin refuses to acknowledge the contradiction. "The same woman who is attracted to these bright, colorful clothes is also someone who wants to learn about healing modalities, ways of expanding consciousness," she says. "Color, print, and pattern all evoke an energy, a frequency, and when you're wearing them, you can feel different. A lot of people are doing this subconsciously,



MERRY-GO-ROUND

Martin—here with her pug, Pepper—staged her spring 2024 show on a carousel in Milan.

putting on those pink pants! It's one way to raise your vibration."

Before she arrived at her own pink-pants moment, Martin traveled a wildly circuitous path. In 2001 she was working in New York City, at Calvin Klein. In an office that was a notorious black-and-white box, she dressed in the 1960s and '70s printed ensembles she culled from flea markets. Then fate showed its hand: She met an Italian guy at a party and moved to Milan—a culture shock she chronicles in her recently published book, *Mama Milano*, a combination memoir, confessional, design journal, and spiritual compendium.

Martin married that man (he is now her ex-husband, though still

involved in her business), worked as a fashion journalist for 15 years, and embarked on what she describes as a tortuous infertility journey. "One day in 2014, my body had hit a wall. That was the same day someone passed me the name of an energy healer who specialized in fertility." As it turned out, "I never gave birth to a human baby, but I gave birth to a company."

She currently resides in a neo-Gothic 1910 building in the heart of Milan that, no surprise, is a perfect example of her more-is-more aesthetic—the furniture sourced from the city's best vintage dealers, the walls covered in a riot of La DoubleJ motifs, her jewelry collection serving as decoration in the guest bathroom.

Martin is a fourth-generation Californian who grew up in Pacific Palisades attending the same girls high school that her mother and grandmother did. "We were a very >32



skechers
THE UNO

outdoorsy family, but I was always obsessed with color, and pattern, and embellishment.” She went on to Berkeley to study rhetoric, the ancient art of argument—which has helped her in business, she says, laughing.

One day in 2015, her then husband, clocking her overstuffed closet, suggested she start a website and part with some of her treasures. The site, conceived as a jaunty online magazine, was a surprise hit, but sourcing soon became a constant challenge. “I thought I was going to be the Net-a-Porter of vintage, and very quickly realized that was the dumbest thing ever,” she confesses, “so I decided to make a new dress using a vintage pattern.” She found a factory in Italy that could do bold, ’60s-ish prints on silk and soon offered a single style: “480 euros, direct-to-consumer, beautifully made—with pockets, of course.”

When Ruth Chapman, at the time the cofounder and co-CEO of MatchesFashion, saw this dress, she volunteered to help—starting by pointing out that you can’t succeed in business with a single item, and



LIVING COLOR

In Martin’s Milan apartment, vintage midcentury finds harmonize with vibrant tablescapes and prints of her own design.



so Martin added a skirt, and then a top, and then introduced cotton along with the silk. “It came organically from Divine Mother energy,” she says. “You have to go with that flow and follow that heart space—and not use your head too much.”

Then again, sometimes your head does have to be consulted. “Negotiating wholesale terms? I had no

clue. We made so many mistakes—it was a total circus. My husband said, ‘If you’re not profitable by year two, it’s not gonna happen.’ That year we made 300 euros.”

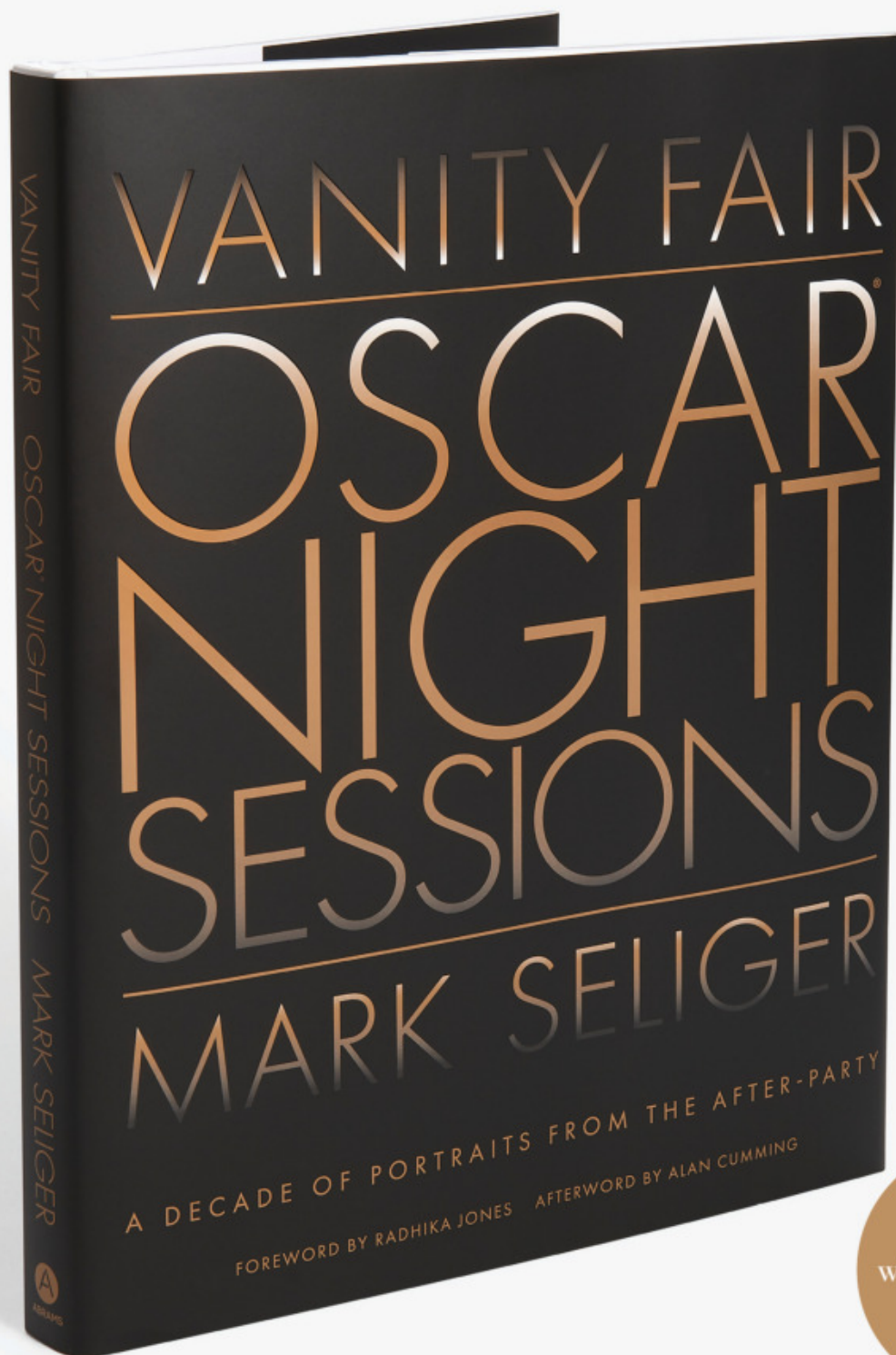
Nevertheless, by 2017 La DoubleJ had become a proper collection, complete with the now extremely popular homeware division. “It’s kind of remarkable to watch what happened,”

Martin says. “Even during that first year of COVID, we grew 20 percent. Now we do swimwear, puffers, evening—and everything is made in Italy.” She describes the brand as “digital first,” but the line is also sold in a host of brick-and-mortar outlets, with a Manhattan shop on the horizon—and the Milan flagship is far from an ordinary venue. “I created a Divine Mother goddess cave downstairs—the walls are plastered with images of gods and goddesses,” Martin says. “It’s really funny—we are across the street from Bottega Veneta, and we have pictures of the goddess Kali all over the place.”

Though Martin loves her adopted home, her plans reach far beyond Italy—in fact, they encompass planet Earth itself. “My goal is to wrap the world in joy!” she declares, the yellow feathers on her sleeves fluttering in agreement. “That’s the mission of DoubleJ: Let’s have some fun!” □

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On the Spot

Once masked or hidden, freckles are emerging anew.
Megan Nolan lets hers shine through.

When I was about seven or so—still barely aware of having an appearance—a friend brought to school a fashion magazine she had stolen from her mother and, pointing to the models, patiently explained that this was the way to look. Later that day, alone in the bathroom, I scrutinized myself. My face was okay, I decided; as soon as the freckles faded away, I could even give this modeling thing a shot. I remain endeared by the thought of that moon-faced, potbellied kid giving herself the once-over and concluding that the smattering of freckles was all that stood between her and a career on the runways.

Ironically, 25 years later, my freckles are about the only physical trait I do share with models. Chloe Oh says that in high school she tried to get rid of

hers but now cherishes them. (Makeup artist Diane Kendal, who did Oh's makeup last September at Rabanne, sometimes adds faux freckles for those not blessed with naturals.) Adwoa Aboah has made hers a calling card, and Kylie Jenner's makeup-free selfies show an enviable array. Olivia Rodrigo says she adds them all the time.

Makeup artists have been employing this trick for years, of course. "I've been doing freckles as early as I can remember—it is a big part of how I bring back a skin-like quality," says Gucci Westman. When executed well, freckles can pleasingly disrupt the uniformity of a face neutralized by foundation, breaking through

FIRST BLUSH

Sarah, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1981.
Photographed by Joel Meyerowitz.

the mask of perfection just enough to feel fresh. Where does Westman think the current appreciation comes from? Blame TikTok, with its endless tutorials on how to achieve subtle—and not-so-subtle—replicas. But she also believes we are "celebrating individuality as a whole." See also: the unkempt hair and bold brows on recent runways.

Freckles have, in fact, been slowly rehabilitated from undesirable blemishes to sweet, aspirational markers of youth since the 1960s. "Darling, I'm obsessed with freckles," says Charlotte Tilbury, who launched her eponymous cosmetics brand a decade ago. "They always remind me of my dear friend Twiggy." ("Mine come out in the sunshine, like flowers," says Twiggy herself.) Tilbury has helped create or emphasize freckles >36

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for Prada and Chloé, on Gisele and Penélope Cruz and iconically on Kate Moss, who describes Tilbury's tool as the "pencil of youth." Tilbury advises using her Lip Cheat Lip Liner in Iconic Nude to "dot freckles across the center of the face where the sun would naturally hit."

What is perhaps new about this moment is not so much the appreciation for freckles as the instruments used to emphasize them, everything from freckle "tattoos" akin to micro-blading to a new generation of freckle pens. I have in the past experimented with a light brown eye pencil, which smudged or faded near immediately. But more recently, I surveyed purpose-built implements, like Freck Beauty's pens, which deploy a fine-tipped brush, or Jason Wu's freckle wand, which looks like an itty-bitty liquid liner. I selected Tarte's Faux Freckle in a light brown, dotting it on either side of my nose to attempt the sculpting that Westman advises. The results were cute, if a bit cartoonish, a little too Annie-in-the-school-play. I smudged them and went about my day, checking again in the late afternoon. They were holding up admirably, and I liked them very much.

As someone who once applied lemon juice to bleach my freckles, that affection is a funny thing to contemplate. There seemed something damningly Irish about them, which is to say parochial and unsophisticated. (There's an Irish legend that the gods, worried the island mist would obscure the heavens for the Gaelic people, gave a fine dust to their faces to remind them of the constellations.) When I hit adolescence, growing up in the

I judged freckles lovely on others before I could find them lovely on myself

small county that I did, American and English people—the glossy, well-to-do ones—seemed like the real people of the world. Freckles, and my easily burnt Irish skin in general, so quick to flush after a drink or a kiss, seemed part of what marked me out as not-quite-finished, as different from the poreless magazine models as could be.

I judged freckles lovely on others before I found them lovely on myself. The first image summoned when I

think of them is that of my mother, along with the smell of cold cream and sunblock. Her were dotted across her face and more spread across her hard-working shoulders as she dug in the garden, face occasionally turning upward to welcome the sun, never able to get enough of it in our over-cast Irish summers. Then came a disorienting crush on Alia Shawkat in *Arrested Development* when I was a teenager, the freckles a feature rather than a flaw in the attraction.

I recall the moment I first luxuriated in my own: I went abroad unaccompanied at 17, with my boyfriend, the first love of my life. We were in that nauseatingly intense period, as infatuated by the abstract idea of love as with each other. Swanning around Berlin in the July heat, we treasured our illegally acquired beers and swam in lakes and stared at each other desperately. It was the most romantic and sensuous week of my life, and when I got back, freckles leapt off my skin. Now they seemed only one more delicious reminder of the minutes I wanted to hold on to, and a promise about the sort of woman I would be, one who lived willfully and romantically and mostly out of doors. □

Stitch in Time

Apple TV+'s *The New Look* examines the rise of Dior after WW II.

Can fashion history make for compelling drama? *The New Look* (Apple TV+), a series that begins in Paris under Nazi occupation and charts the rise of Christian Dior after

World War II, brings star power and a veteran TV creator to the task. Here is Ben Mendelsohn as an exquisitely dignified Dior, working in obscurity for the couturier Lucien Lelong (and reluctant to design dresses for Nazi wives), and Juliette Binoche as his high-profile rival Coco Chanel, living at the Ritz and consorting with members of the Third Reich. The creator, Todd A. Kessler, is known for pulpy entertainments like *Damages* and *Bloodline*, though with *The New Look* he's aiming for something more high-minded and polite. The series has an escapist sweep and is



IN FOCUS

ABOVE: Juliette Binoche and Claes Bang in *The New Look*. LEFT: A postwar design from Dior pictured in *Vogue*, April 1947.



packed with familiar faces: Emily Mortimer as socialite Elsa Lombardi, John Malkovich as Lelong, Maisie Williams as Dior's sister Catherine (arrested and imprisoned at a concentration camp), and Claes Bang as Chanel's Nazi boyfriend. Mendelsohn is the moral and creative hero, but the striving, anything-to-survive Binoche gives the series a ruthless spark.—TAYLOR ANTRIM

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Tales of Becoming

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Dolly Alderton is something of a modern-day Nora Ephron, bringing a fresh and mordant perspective to the eternal struggle between the sexes. Her last novel, *Ghosts*, had the inscrutable male psyche as its subject; her new novel, *Good Material* (Knopf), tells the story of a breakup from a tortured male perspective. Its narrator, Andy, is a London comic in his mid-30s who, recently abandoned by his more corporate-minded girlfriend, finds himself having to redefine his place in the world among his coupled-up peers. He has the instinct (if not the perspective, in his lovelorn state) that—as Ephron would have put it—everything is copy, and the book finds the amusing angle in even the most poignant moments.

Carrie Sun is the kind of epic overachiever that in a previous era might have been tapped for a prestigious PhD program or funneled into clandestine training for the CIA. The late-stage capitalism equivalent is a position as the personal and professional assistant to the founder of a private-equity fund, which Sun documents in her memoir *Private Equity* (Penguin Press). At 29, she sees the opportunity as an even more promising path than the one she had carved out earlier as a financial analyst. Sun writes clearly about the extreme responsibilities of the position, but this isn't a tell-all about abuses in the industry—rather, it's an inquiry into what we call success and the values underpinning it.

Over the course of a month, Sloane Crosley's apartment was burgled and her best friend died. This coincidence becomes the backbone of a stunning investigation into the nature of loss that is *Grief Is for People* (MCD), an ambitious book lightened by strains of acerbic comedy. Crosley, who is perhaps best known for her effervescent essay collection *I Was Told There'd Be Cake*, hasn't abandoned her sprightly wit, but she is looking more critically at friendship

and devotion. A quixotic hunt to reclaim stolen jewelry is intertwined with the equally insurmountable task of better understanding the friend she has lost—a prominent figure in the publishing industry. The loving and complex tribute Crosley has paid to him will no doubt offer a bittersweet balm to many.

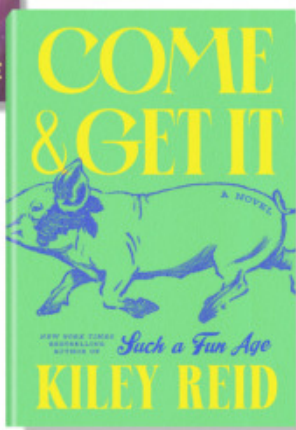
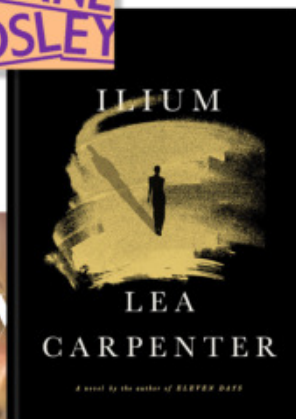
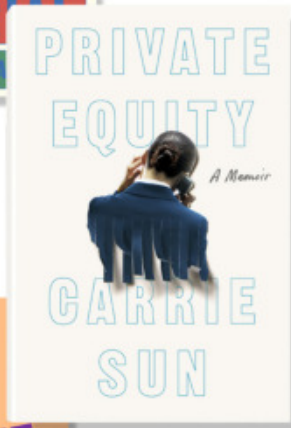
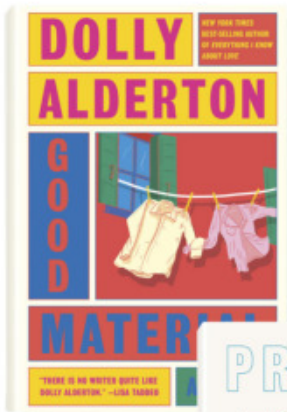
Celine Saintclare's debut novel, *Sugar, Baby* (Bloomsbury), depicts the glittering world of the young women who make a living by showing up at clubs and restaurants to burnish such establishments with their youth and beauty. Are these women being taken advantage of—or on the ride of their lives? To its credit, this personable novel, which charts the somewhat inadvertent trajectory of a girl embedded among a more knowing group, doesn't come down on either side. Instead, it shows the grit alongside the glamour, and crafts a very believable story that feels like a document of the moment, when image is a valuable and fleeting currency.

Another study of class and money arrives in Kiley Reid's *Come and Get It* (G.P. Putnam's Sons). Set on a college campus, it depicts a motley cohort of students, professors, and administrators, showing that campuses are not just centers of academic inquiry and nighttime misadventures, but intersections for people of vastly different resources. Here, as in her first novel, *Such a Fun Age*, which probes a sticky relationship between a nanny and a mother, Reid masterfully captures the quiet misalignments that stem from a varying sense of what's at stake.

—CHLOE SCHAMA

Lea Carpenter's novel *Illum* (Knopf), about a clandestine operation to take out a Russian asset on the French peninsula of Cap Ferret, has the surface tension of an espionage thriller, but it's really a psychological study of a young British woman who is swept into a world of intelligence and finds herself undone by it. Reminiscent of the spare, strobe-lit storytelling of late Joan Didion, Carpenter's novel shows how wealth and sophistication paper over moral rot, and how human attachment is a vulnerability when only posing and posturing keep you alive.

—TAYLOR ANTRIM



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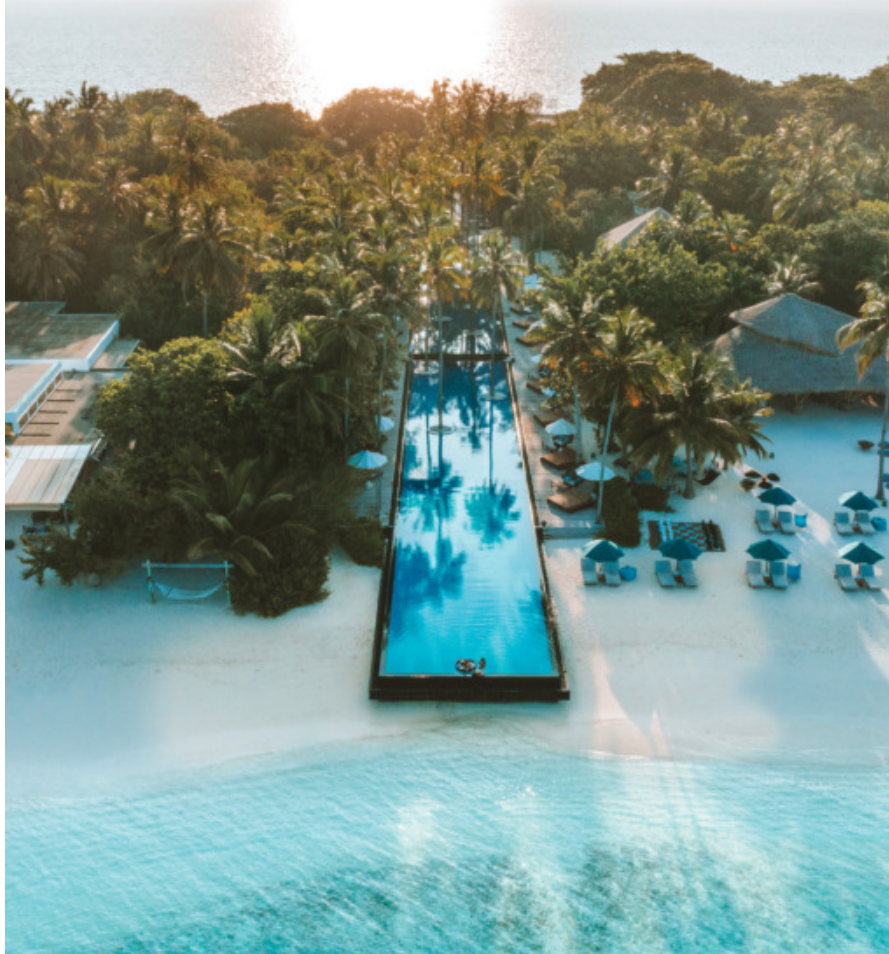


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LEFT: Carton House, A Fairmont Managed Hotel
BOTTOM: Fairmont Century Plaza



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Tulip Fever

New hotels off the beaten path unlock Amsterdam's delights.



For a brief time in the Dutch Golden Age, there was one commodity that induced a kind of mania among the residents of the capital's canals: the humble tulip. (At the height of the bubble, a couple of bulbs could cost as much as some houses in the city.) Sure, today you can nab a few tubers for a handful of euros at the city's floating flower market—but that hasn't stopped green-thumbed travelers from assembling every spring to experience tulip fever anew.

It makes sense, then, that a fresh guard of hotels is branching out—quite literally—into Amsterdam's leafier corners. (Given the city's efficient trams and 250 miles of bicycle paths, being a little removed is hardly a problem.) Take Pillows Maurits at the Park, the latest hotel from a boutique family-owned group, which opened late in 2022 within a stylishly renovated former university building in the idyllic Oosterpark. As well as offering its very own aviary, the hotel is a mere 15-minute walk from the city's Hortus Botanicus, one of the world's oldest botanical gardens. (On a visit last spring, I spent the best part of a morning gazing at the dazzling array of plants that tower under the soaring glass ceilings of its greenhouses.)

If you're willing to venture even further afield, a historic salon boat, which has been retrofitted with an electric engine, can transport you to the recently opened hotel De Durgerdam, situated in a former fishing village, in less than an hour. (It's a 15-minute drive, if you're in a hurry.) There, 14 rooms overlook the dappled gray waters of the IJmeer



COLOR FIELD

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The interior of De Durgerdam; a greenhouse at Hortus Botanicus; a field in Keukenhof, outside Amsterdam; a still life by Abraham Mignon, displayed in the Rijksmuseum.

lake on one side and low-lying farmlands on the other—on a recent winter visit the landscapes revealed themselves through a briny, mirage-like mist. Enter its jewel-box interiors, however, and a different atmosphere is conjured: With its flickering candles and dusky palette, it has all the convivial charm of a picturesque Frans Hals canvas.

Of course, there are plenty of more established Amsterdam stays that will cater to plant-loving pilgrims, such as the sprawling, 93-room Waldorf Astoria, which includes one of the city's largest private *grachtentuinen* (or canal gardens). Later this year, an enormous new Rosewood outpost will open with three verdant inner courtyards. Also upcoming: Amstel 111, a new and more centrally located property from the team behind De Durgerdam, whose interiors are set to be crafted by cult New York design duo Roman and Williams with architecture from rising star Frida Escobedo. Let a thousand tulips bloom.—LIAM HESS

TOP LEFT: CHANTAL ARNTS, TOP RIGHT: MICHELLE WEVER PHOTOGRAPHY, MIDDLE RIGHT: COURTESY OF KEUKENHOF, BOTTOM: STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS AND A WATCH, C.1660-79, OIL ON CANVAS, 75X60 CMS, RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS.

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Sienna

She's living a different kind of whirlwind—new love, new home, new baby on the way (it's a girl!). Ahead of the epic Western *Horizon*, Sienna Miller talks to Chloe Schama about the happy, hectic joys of life now.

Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

in Bloom



ALL AHEAD

Sienna Miller will star in the historical epic *Horizon*, directed by Kevin Costner and planned as a multipart opus.

Valentino gown.
Bulgari ring.

Fashion Editor:
Tabitha Simmons.

On the morning I meet Sienna Miller in London, she has just attended a prenatal yoga class—the first of her pregnancy. She went down the street to the neighborhood place and was reminded of how pleasant it is to be in the presence of other pregnant women. Also, no one blinked. Or if they did, she tells me, they did “a very good job hiding it.”

Miller, 41, is already mother to Marlowe (whom she co-parents with the actor Tom Sturridge), and now is having another girl. She’s 28 weeks into the pregnancy, with boyfriend Oli Green, 27, an actor with whom she has been in a relationship since 2021. Today she’s dressed in a black tank top and roomy, low-hanging Levi’s, held up by what looks like a silk sash; her hair is hanging long and loose in a way that many a stylist would undoubtedly spend hours trying to emulate. Two dogs—Walter, a mini dachshund, and Tennessee, a rescue from the American South—swirl around our ankles as we form a plan. The agenda had been refreshingly vague—though she warns me that she’s starving.

There was a time when Miller’s life was far more prescribed by external pressures, dictated by the punishing rhythms of paparazzi chases and high-profile romances. But if her schedule now allows for morning yoga and improvised lunches, it’s also a different kind of whirlwind. She’s arguably at a creative peak, having delivered a series of complex, nuanced performances in recent years: a mother coming to terms, over the course of decades, with the disappearance of her daughter in 2018’s *American Woman*; the wronged wife of a Tory MP in the delicious 2022 Netflix series *Anatomy of a Scandal*. Last spring, she finished shooting the second installment of Kevin Costner’s *Horizon: An American Saga*, a Civil War-era, multi-film opus that covers a 15-year period during the settlement of the American West.

It’s a project with uncommon ambition, one that has been gestating for 30 years. Costner began the script back in 1988, and as he revised it through many drafts, the story took on the scale of a Western epic,

a return to the wide-screen grandeur of his Oscar-winning directorial debut, *Dances With Wolves*. (Costner put up money for the production; he’s pointed out that no one wanted to finance *Dances* either.) *Horizon* tells the story of a 19th-century frontier settlement, which grows from tent encampment to established town over the course of the films. Miller is to appear in all of them, as an East Coast settler, named Frances Kittredge, with her husband and two children. The first two “chapters” are due to be released by Warner Bros. this summer.

Horizon’s shoot, in Utah last summer, was additionally meaningful for Miller (and not just because she venerated Costner growing up—even naming a pair of pet rabbits after his character’s wolf and horse in *Dances*). She describes the production as feeling more like an independent film than a big-budget studio movie: If the light hit the red rock canyons of Moab in a particularly beautiful way, the crew could get in their vans and quickly move to capture the shot. Costner, Miller says, created an entire universe: “You could ask him anything about this period in time, and he would have an answer.”

Miller filmed her scenes in a corset while enduring the first waves of morning sickness. “There was a lot of being buried under rubble and being shot at,” she says, “and a lot of time in a very dark tunnel. There are scorpions and snakes, and it’s blisteringly hot. But I actually love that kind of work—I like feeling completely battered and bruised and spent by the end of the day.” She wasn’t rolling around in pristine studio dust, manufactured to create an illusion, she points out, but in a real hole in the Utah desert, “spitting out bits of earth for the next week.” Costner filmed Miller’s sequences together, in part to avoid any difficulties that might arise from her pregnancy.

Meanwhile, Marlowe was finishing up the school year in New York, and Miller, who had lived in the city for a happy seven years, was making preparations to move to London. The pandemic had shifted things for her—New York changed, and so had she. Green played a role in this thinking too. They’d met at a Halloween party thrown by a mutual friend,

With Marlowe, now 11, she wanted every aspect of her pregnancy to be perfect. This time she is approaching the experience with greater generosity: “I just don’t think I’ll put that pressure on myself”

and as their romance blossomed, the idea of relocating to London became increasingly appealing. Green was born and raised there, and Miller’s UK support system, the scaffolding all parents need, was still very much in place. She has her sister (the designer Savannah Miller); her mother; and her oldest, closest friend, Tori Cook (also her publicist; they went to boarding school together). She decided with her ex, Sturridge, whom she counts among her beloved friends, that they would move their co-parenting arrangement across the Atlantic. Miller sold the West Village town house she had bought in 2021 (“I’m the only person I know that could sell a place in the West Village and not make a profit”), and she and Green

PLUS ONE

Miller is expecting in December. Dolce & Gabbana jacket and pants.





LOVE STORY

"I see so much of her in him," says Emily Blunt of Oli Green, 27. "In that free-spirited, curious, guileless thing that he has." Miller wears an A.P.C. JW Anderson sweater. David Yurman hoop earring.



PERFECT PARTNERS

Miller (in Gabriela Hearst) with her daughter Marlowe (in Zara), 11, whom she co-parents with the actor Tom Sturridge.

Miller and Green are recent transplants (back) to London and are looking to settle somewhere permanent. “I like that it’s open,” she says. “I don’t do well when life is prescribed”

entryway, Miller has hung her own curtains, and the primary bathroom has an excellent tub. In February, when they figure out what London school Marlowe will attend more permanently, Miller and Green will look for a place near the school. “I like that it’s open,” she says. “I don’t do well when life is prescribed.”

As we settle at our table at the restaurant she’s chosen—a quiet, brick-walled place off Kensington High Street, where the waiters are so busy chatting in Italian that we have to flag them down to request a Pellegrino—Miller tells me about the expectations she put upon herself when she was pregnant with Marlowe: “I spent so much time preparing for the birth, and absolutely no thought was given to what happens when I’d get home with a baby. At least now I’m aware of what that’s like.”

Back then Miller had her heart set on a “natural” birth, with Savannah (who had delivered several times at home) as her doula. It didn’t work out that way: She was induced at the hospital and 27 hours of grueling labor followed. “It was like a horrible trick of the universe,” she says. “I was like, This can’t be what my sister felt at home in her birthing pool.” She was eventually given an emergency C-section, a destabilizing experience. “It was so essential in my mind that I got it ‘right.’ And so emblematic of the kind of mother I would be that I didn’t. But I know in retrospect that was just the demons of new motherhood.” This time, she says, “I just don’t think I’ll put that pressure on myself.” She still wants to try for a natural birth, and she’s recently switched to a doctor who is aligned with that goal.

There’s an unguardedness to Miller that, even minutes after meeting her, wins you over to her side. (She and I are almost immediately exchanging not only delivery stories, but also book and theater recommendations: She has just finished Madeline Miller’s *Circe* and has been on a Haruki Murakami bent, and insists that I see the mind-bending one-man *Vanya* on the West End starring Andrew

Scott—she even offers to help me get tickets.) If she wants a natural birth, then I am rooting for that for her, too. But I also have a sense of the looming archetypes behind our conversation—those that have dogged our gender for...ever? All of us are subject to these kinds of impossible measurements (the “natural” mother, for one), and all women, to some extent, apply them to themselves. But for someone like Miller who has experienced public attention and scrutiny for half her life, they must be particularly tenacious.

Then there is age, another trap: In 2023 women are *still*, it seems, meant to act “their age,” whatever that means. Stray from it (by, say, falling in love with a 27-year-old), and there will be headlines. (Fewer, needless to say, for famous men, who rarely elicit the kind of scorn Miller has endured, especially from the British tabloids.) Several times, Miller jokes about the fact that our conversation has turned to midlife subjects: her fondness for the interior design of Rose Uniacke or elderly parents—a gentle way of disarming the sharp edges of societal prescriptions.

It’s easy to ascribe a kind of implicit politics to Miller’s choices, to think that by baring her pregnant stomach on the red carpet or dating whomever she pleases, she’s making life just a bit easier for all women. But she insists she is simply driven by instinct and not immune to insecurities. “I’d love to get to a point where I didn’t feel the need to make a joke of my being older and having a baby,” she tells me, “to show I’m in on the joke.” As for the stunning two-piece Schiaparelli ensemble she wore at Vogue World in September in London, “I was nervous about the idea of it,” she says, “but once I had it on, everything else felt boring. I was like, I’ll have that photo for the rest of my baby’s life. It’s kind of fascinating to fight your own prejudice against yourself. I’m constantly doing that.”

After lunch, we head to pick up Marlowe, who is waiting at the entrance when we pull up. “She’s going to scowl at me because I’m late,” Miller says. “I mean, she has all the power in our dynamic.” Miller wanted more children for a long time, she tells me. “I felt so bad that Marlowe didn’t have a little partner in crime,” she says,

settled, temporarily, into his parents’ West London home. “They were very tolerant of the circus,” she deadpans.

Miller and Green now have a rented house of their own—the place where I pick her up. Several works of art are still leaning against the wall, waiting to be hung, and some pieces of furniture feel a bit ill-sized for the rooms in which they have landed. (“We’re obviously going to get a bigger table,” she says sheepishly of a four-seater floating in a room that could host a banquet.) But there is warmth and charm, as well; there’s a large black-and-white photo of Marlowe that Sturridge took hanging in the

TWO OF HEARTS

Green, who appears in the latest season of *The Crown*, met Miller at a Halloween party. “He worked hard to persuade me to go out for a drink with him,” she says. Miller wears Stella McCartney. Green in an Armi coat.



“I was nervous about the idea of it,” Miller says of the two-piece Schiaparelli she wore to *Vogue World* London, “but once I had it on, everything else felt boring”

“so I became that for her. I think I tried to compensate for every bit that she was lacking.”

When we arrive back at the house, Green is sitting on the sofa, working on his laptop, a rangy, comfortable figure. Tall and dark-haired, he will soon appear in the final season of *The Crown* as Rupert Finch, a classmate of Prince William’s, and has just finished filming a Civil War drama for Paramount, *The Gray House* (another Costner-connected production). Today he’s waiting to meet a window-box lady; his parents have given her services to the couple as a housewarming gift.

Miller and I descend to the lower-level kitchen so she can prepare dinner. She quickly dices onion, carrots, and celery for a chicken to rest on as it roasts, while I am put to work peeling potatoes. Cauliflower is blanched on the stove, while she grates a thick block of cheddar. As she moves swiftly round the kitchen, she tells me about the start of their relationship. There was a kiss right when they met, and then she retreated. “I

was like, This is absurd. This will not go anywhere,” she says. “And then he worked hard to persuade me to go out for a drink with him.” She asked her good friend Emily Blunt to tag along on one of their early dates in New York—an unnecessary wing-woman, as Blunt now tells it: “When I got there, it was so beautiful between them. I just gave her a hug and went, ‘I’m going to slip away.’” Miller and Green both came down with COVID at the same time, so they sent Marlowe to live with Sturridge and moved in together for the week, an experience that “sort of fast-tracked intimacy.”

“I see so much of her in him,” says Blunt of Green, “in that free-spirited, curious, guileless thing that he has. He’s the kind of guy you could just bring anywhere, and everyone would love him.” Her friend also notes that Sienna always wanted another child. “We’ve talked about it for years,” says Blunt. “She just needed the right person, and I really see that in him.”

Green comes downstairs to report on the window-box lady’s assessment, and though I am meant to be interviewing his girlfriend, we fall into an easy conversation that swings between the NBA (he and Miller were semi-regular Knicks fans at Madison Square Garden), directors he might like to work with (he was watching clips on his laptop), the Premier League (he and Miller support Chelsea), and US politics (his cousin is Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin, who represents the 7th District of Michigan). He was raised by parents who made their careers in the art world; his grandfather started London’s Richard Green gallery. The oldest of three boys, he rebuffed the pressure put on him by his parents to lead by example. “I was like, I don’t *want* to do the right thing,” he says. Green attended Tisch at New York University for a year before dropping out and enrolling in the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute in New York. Green and Miller together are, in fact, such engaging conversationalists that I feel I could linger for hours. But the chicken is now in the oven, and Marlowe, having finished her homework with Sturridge, who had stopped by to help her, has descended in a fluffy pink terrycloth robe and would appreciate her mother’s attention. It’s time to head out.

A few days later, before Miller meets with her new ob-gyn, we sit down for lunch at St. John in Marylebone. Miller shows me a picture of a crib she had screen-shotted and sent to Green’s mother; it’s a beautiful wicker structure with a floaty muslin canopy, exactly what you might imagine boho queen Sienna Miller would pick for her newborn daughter. As Green’s mother had duly reminded her, though, this is not a crib for an infant. Such is the rhythm of parenting young children: a quixotic vision, and then a reality check.

Green’s family has been warm and welcoming, Miller says: “I would imagine it would be complicated for anyone to get their head around, but there’s been nothing but love and joy.” There is no stickiness in the way she speaks about the age difference—but it is clearly something she’s considered. “I don’t think you can legislate on matters of the heart. I certainly have never been able to,” she tells me. To whatever extent she humors the idea that perhaps someday Green might want to be with someone younger, she also thinks it cuts both ways: “For Oli, it is real that I might want to be with someone older.” Miller sees, furthermore, a wisdom in Green that exceeds the capacities of older people she has previously been with. Part of this is how he was raised. But it also is the result of growing up steeped in a different era, she suggests, and several of her friends agree. “Female friends of mine in their 40s—they’re meeting younger people who are seeing women as three-dimensional figures,” says Jeremy O. Harris, a friend who once, somewhat inadvertently, moved in with Miller for several weeks during the pandemic. “I do want to credit that to some level of the feminist movement working.”

“I see it with Oli’s friends,” Miller says as we order our lunch. “There’s awareness of the dynamics that enter relationships between men and women now that we just didn’t have 20 or 25 years ago. I feel like my whole adolescence was dodging bullets and advances in a really delicate way, to not offend somebody. Whereas the girls that he grew up with, they’re probably like, *No—no, thank you. Moving on.*”

Though she seems to see herself as having come of age in a more deferential era, everyone I speak to about Miller emphasizes that her breezy sunniness actually radiates from a fierce and solid core. “I haven’t had the horrible experiences that she had to go through as a younger woman. But we both know about the scorn, the false friendships,” says Kristin Scott Thomas, who cast Miller in her 2023 directorial debut, *North Star*, as a famous actor returning home to her mother’s ramshackle-chic country cottage for a wedding. “We know you have to be quite sturdy. It’s not a word you would associate with Sienna Miller, but she is quite sturdy.”

This is particularly true, it seems, when it comes to her devotion to her closest friends. “She’s so effervescent and wonderful, but she’s not to be fucked with,” Blunt says. The actor describes to me a night in New York in which Miller coaxed the newly postpartum Blunt out to a bar and then on to Alan Cumming’s nightclub, Club Cumming. “It was a sort of reclamation of my identity,” Blunt says. “I had been feeling that animalistic sense of just being someone’s mother for weeks on end. And I remember having to pump and dump because it was just so much fun. I’ll just say, I do not go out like that. But when you are out with her, it’s sort of intoxicating.”

“We both went through periods in our life when so much of what was happening around us was out of our control,” says her friend Huma Abedin. “We were kind of floating through all that was incoming from the outside, and she’s always handled herself with grace. I have had a couple of experiences walking down the street with her and paparazzi calling out really unkind things. And she’ll just block them. There’s a couple of photos of her grabbing my hand, saying, ‘I’m going to stop this.’” Harris recalls dance-offs in which he and Miller would judge Marlowe’s performances as though she were on *The X Factor* and then curl up in bed together and watch *The Crown*. When both he and Sturridge were nominated but didn’t take home a Tony one year, Miller hosted their very-late-night “losers party” at her house. “Tom and I both gave

the speeches we would’ve given had we won,” he says, “and then Sienna made us drinks and rubbed our backs all night.”

“Once you’ve entered Sienna’s life,” Harris adds, “it’s hard to want to leave.”

When I meet up with Miller in New York, a few weeks later, she has been staying at her friend Cara Delevingne’s Gramercy apartment, and the place is a tableau of happy chaos. There’s a large Louis Vuitton suitcase spilling its contents in the foyer. In the TV room, there are the remains of a sleepover Marlowe has just hosted for a handful of her old friends: open

canisters of Pringles, scattered soda cans, a large tangle of duvets. Miller’s friend Cook and Green are chatting in the kitchen. Miller has just made a big batch of pancakes for everyone.

She tells me she is suddenly feeling especially pregnant; between fittings for her *Vogue* shoot, she went shopping with Marlowe, and it became clear that she was no longer comfortable walking for long periods of time. The only clothes she’s interested in at the moment are things with a lot of stretch; she’s just bought a bunch of dresses from Urban Outfitters. The pregnancy has also meant that at least two theater projects that had



SELFIE TIME

Miller with Marlowe (then 6) in Manhattan.



“There was a lot of
being buried
under rubble and
being shot at,”
she says of filming
Horizon in Utah
last summer.
“But I actually love
that kind of work”

been scheduled for 2024 have had to move forward without her—though she is laying the groundwork to join a stage adaptation of the 1940s Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell vehicle *His Girl Friday* that will likely open in London in 2025. And she is brimming with delight about the episodes of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* in which she will appear this February, playing an actor named “Sienna,” a (very) heightened version of herself. This will be a new mode for her, as she points out, since she’s never really done comedy. “For the longest time, I felt the need to really prove something, and I can see that reflected in the choices that I made. I pursued roles that were very

SHEER BLISS

Miller will appear in the new season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* this winter as an actor named “Sienna”—a comically heightened version of herself. Miu Miu dress. Ferragamo shoes.

heavy and very dramatic and challenging emotionally because I felt that I was probably seen as frivolous,” she says. “I’m now completely over that.”

I’ve asked Miller to make the 15-minute walk from Gramercy to a café inside The Well spa in Union Square that serves smoothies with abstract names like “rise” and coconut yogurt with gluten-free granola. Amid the onslaught of New York, I’d envisioned it as offering a little insulated calm. But New York, with all its excitement and anxieties, has found her, even in just the few days she’s been back. She celebrated Green’s 27th birthday with his friends the night they flew in. (She jokes about the relief she feels in no longer dating a 26-year-old.) They went to Holiday Bar (owned by their friend, who got them a table); Harris and his fiancé stopped by. And then the couple went out to a raucous dinner with friends at Via Carota the following night, during which Abedin and another friend, Justin Theroux, ordered just about every dish on the menu for them. (She pauses to note that her baby is doing gymnastics in her belly, perhaps remembering the feast.) And at this very moment, she is experiencing the acute concern that comes from unleashing her preteen on to the streets of Manhattan and the aisles of Sephora. “As soon as we landed back in New York, she was a precocious little New Yorker,” she says. “Walking around, they’re just exposed to it all here.”

We had talked broadly about the pressures children and young women face (phones, social media, the ever-expanding range of reality-distorting filters), but I had been hesitant to talk too much about the scrutiny she, specifically, endured in her past: the regular, constant tailing by cameramen, the phone hacking by the British tabloid press, the relentless dissection of her relationships. (At one point, the paparazzi’s pursuit was so intense that Miller began to use a secret camera to gather evidence of their attempts to corner her at night.) The future is bright! A baby!

But as I’ve learned, no topic is really taboo for Miller, and when I ask her how she came out the other side of all that harsh attention with such an open heart and profoundly

generous spirit, it becomes clear that wherever she’s going in life, she’s carrying her past with her. “I’ve really thought about the rubbernecking part of human beings,” she says. “What makes us slow down to look at something we know will make us feel dreadful? Is it because we’re happy that it’s not us? The tabloid media really exploited that weak chink in our psychology.”

But she doesn’t look back at the past only as a scorched earth that she had to traverse. There was heartbreak and pain, yes, but there was also a lot of fun too. And it occurs to me that this insight and self-awareness may be what has kept her open. She describes a 2007 *Guardian* interview that became somewhat infamous for some throwaway, careless comments: “I was talking about taking mushrooms and being laddie. And I remember being so terrified when it came out. Everyone was so upset. Everyone was like, Why can’t you just shut up for a minute?” She called up the journalist, asking him how he could publish something that was so obviously damaging, and he talked her through his reasoning. “He said, ‘I’m sorry that you’re upset, but I think when you are older, you are going to look back on this and love this article. It’ll be a real capsule of who you were at that moment.’ And actually I did many years later go back and read it, and I was like, *She’s great.*”

We walk back to the apartment, eyes peeled for a roving Marlowe and her gaggle of friends, and I remember something Miller had told me earlier in reference to her relationship with Green: There are fundamentally two kinds of people in the world, those who carefully govern their lives and those who are guided by their instincts. “I think you either live your life with caution or you take risks,” she’d said. It was clear in which camp she was placing herself, though she wasn’t necessarily endorsing her approach. “That sounds like I’m sort of saying: That’s brave and that’s great,” she’d said, “but I don’t mean it that way at all.” Rather, she meant that following her heart had led her on some great adventures. She regretted none of them—and there were many more to come. □





FIELD TRIP

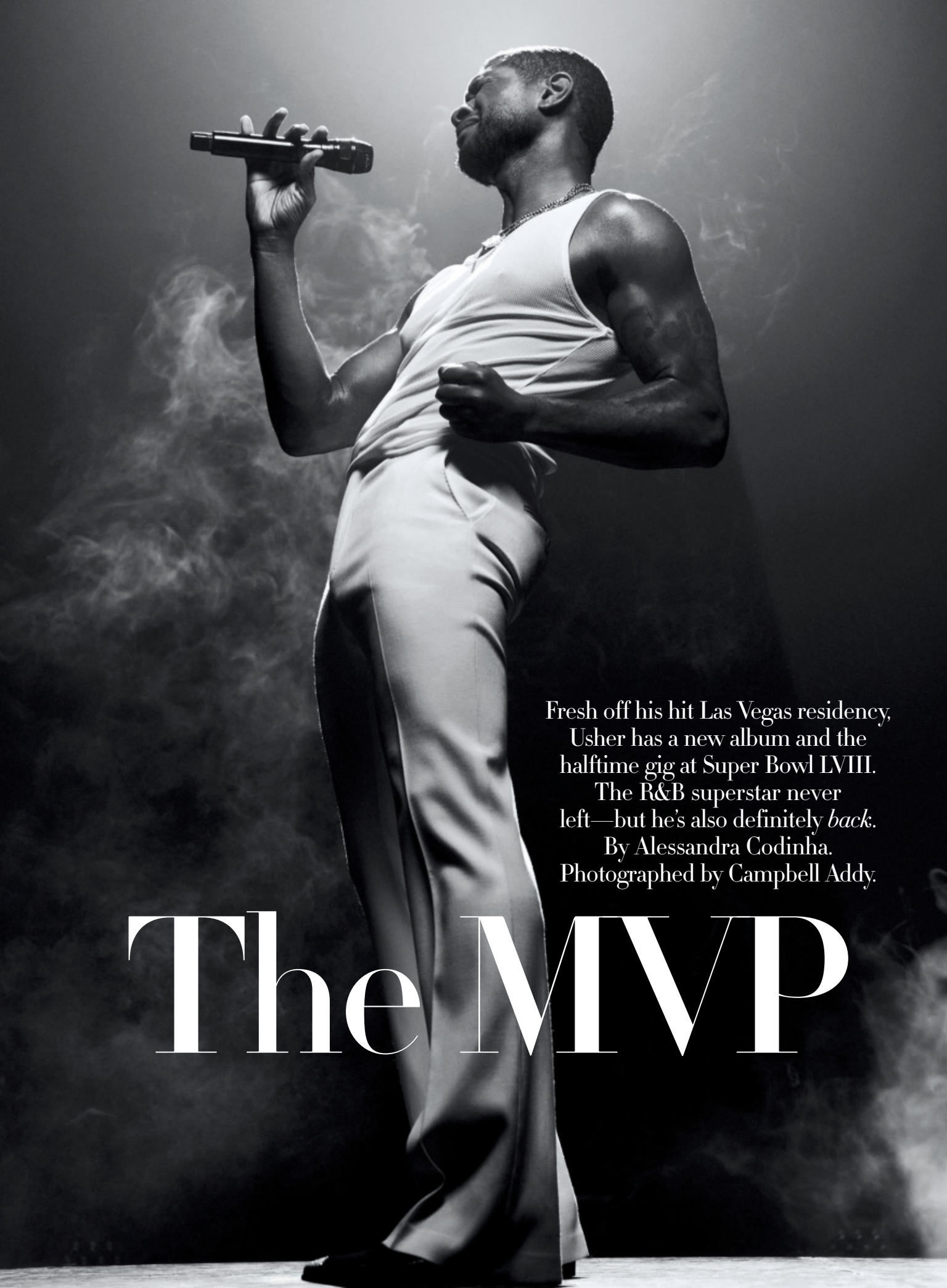
Miller wears a Proenza Schouler dress. Green in Burberry. In this story: hair, Evanie Frausto using Bumble and Bumble; makeup, Diane Kendal. Details, see In This Issue.



BEWITCHED

Usher wears an
Ami tank top.
Alexander McQueen
pants. Model
Carolyn Murphy
wears a Gucci dress.

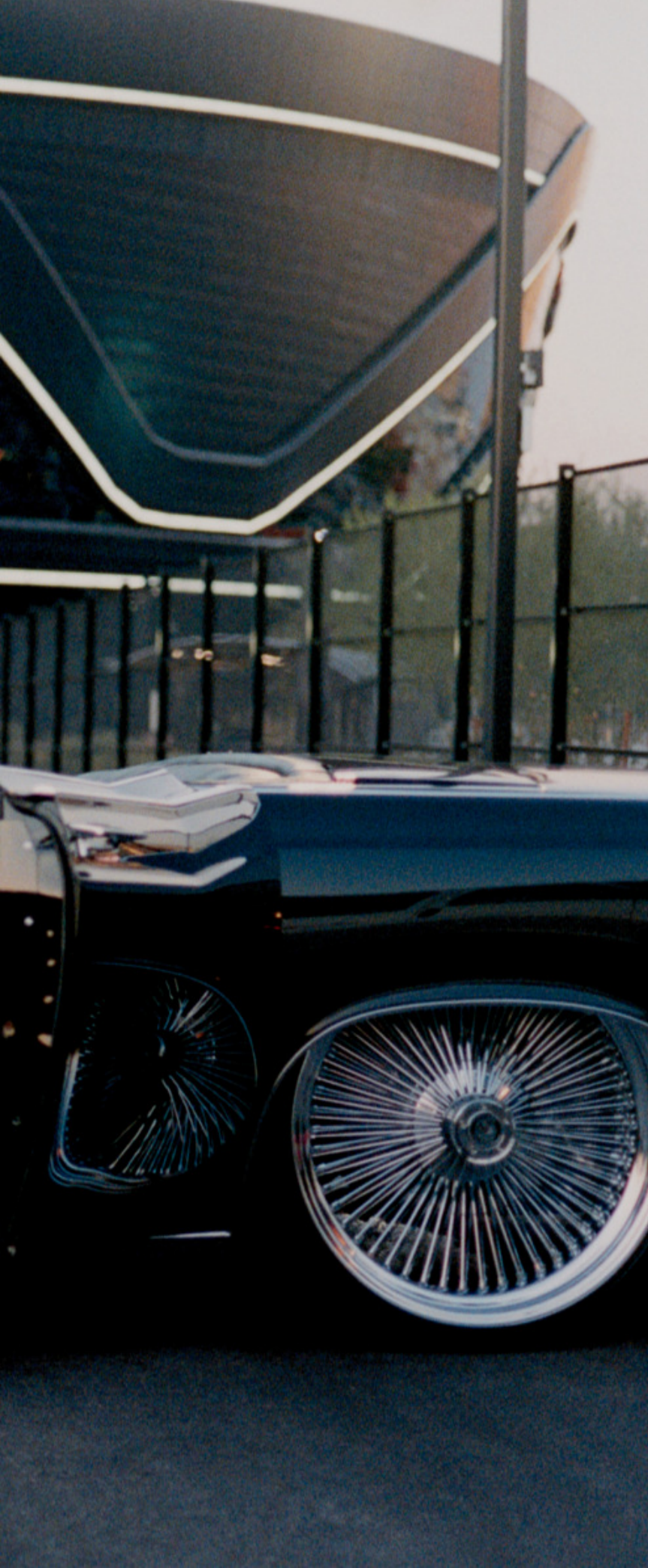
Fashion Editor:
Max Ortega.



Fresh off his hit Las Vegas residency, Usher has a new album and the halftime gig at Super Bowl LVIII. The R&B superstar never left—but he's also definitely *back*.
By Alessandra Codinha.
Photographed by Campbell Addy.

The MVP





From certain high perches in Henderson, Nevada, where made-to-order modernist mansions bloom across the terraced mountain ranges, the city of Las Vegas unfurls below you like a magic carpet. On a recent fall afternoon, Usher Raymond IV, the 45-year-old artist known the world over simply as Usher, took in the view from the head of his outdoor dining table, his goldendoodle, Scarlett, asleep at his feet. “When is the last time you looked in a mirror and really looked at yourself?” he asks. That morning, I say. “When you looked in that mirror, did you tell yourself you loved yourself? Did you tell yourself that you forgive yourself?” Reader, I had. But only because when we spoke the prior afternoon Usher had suggested it. “I did, too, this morning,” he says, with a flash of his famous megawatt grin. “It’s a little psyched-out to say this, but it made me feel good. I was like: *You need to look at yourself and say: Hey, whatever you’re dealing with, I love you.*”

Here’s what Usher is dealing with: the physical demands of a so-sold-out-they-extended-it-*twice* Las Vegas residency (Usher: My Way, The Vegas Residency) for which, three nights a week, he is almost constantly singing, dancing, and occasionally roller-skating, all through an R&B fantasia, replete with exotic dancers, a peach-shaped disco ball, and several costume changes and elaborate set pieces. (Not unrelatedly, he has a bunion that requires surgery.) He’s also recording a new album, *Coming Home*, his ninth, all while planning the 2024 Super Bowl halftime show, the biggest single televised moment of his career. He’ll be maintaining this momentum past the show, he tells me, and seeing his therapist and doing his daily meditation practice and working out and eating right and being a good partner and raising two children under the age of four here at this sleek five-bedroom home his family found for the Vegas run.

DRIVE MY CAR

“Truly a rarity,” Murphy says of Usher, in front of Allegiant Stadium, the site of Super Bowl LVIII. Usher wears a Dolce & Gabbana jacket and pants, and Bally boots. Murphy wears an Altuzarra jacket, top, and skirt, and Schiaparelli shoes.





ROLL CALL

Usher, with members of his creative and grooming teams (and his dog Scarlett), backstage at Park MGM. Usher wears a Louis Vuitton Men's tank top and pants. Murphy, AT LEFT, in Ralph Lauren Collection. On the floor: Louis Vuitton Men's bags.

BEAUTY NOTE

On Murphy, Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Highlighting Powder Gelée illuminates for a sunlit sheen in every setting.



**MADE IN THE
SHADE**

Usher wears an
Alexander McQueen
shirt, pants, and
belt. Tom Ford boots.
Murphy wears a
Louis Vuitton dress.



Usher doesn't sleep much. The day before, as we drove together between *Vogue* shoot locations, he got quiet thinking of the pressure. "I know that it's going to be the hardest time of my life," he said of this period of performing, planning, singing, skating, training, promoting, parenting, being present. But one thing about Usher is that he knows about the power of love.

You have never met someone so loved as Usher. And I don't just mean in his music, though love is more often than not its subject. I don't even mean just at home, though his partner of four years, Jenn Goicoechea, and their two children, Sire and Sovereign, as well as his Atlanta-based teenage sons from a prior marriage, Usher "Cinco" V and Naviyd Ely, certainly have that covered. I mean in the larger sense—the global sense. At his Vegas shows, the energy inside the (typically 85

"I always present myself as a gentleman," Usher says. "It doesn't have to be super dressed up, but you know, tailored, and making sure there's some thought"

percent female) audience is probably best described as affectionately feral. Everyone wants to love him down, but they also want to love him *up*. When I attended the show in March, during one of Usher's crowd-work sections, a demure-looking audience member attached herself to Usher's chest, seat-belt-style, from behind, locking her hands across his sternum until her eyeglasses got misty. (He allowed it for a few bars with a kind "okaaay," before gently removing himself.) Seven months later, at a show in October, a few songs after one audience member leapt into the aisle in an attempt to grind (another kind "okaaay"), a woman in the front row alerted him, nursery-school-teacher-style, that one of his shoes had come untied. He knelt and fixed it, crooning with the same grin as before. Not a soul alive wants to see Usher fall.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 102



STARTING SQUAD

Usher and Murphy fire up young members of the Jr Gaels 6U team. Usher wears a Willy Chavarria jacket and pants. Murphy wears a Miu Miu jacket, skirt, and sandal. In this story: For Usher: hair, Shawn "Shizz" Porter; makeup, Lola Okanlawon. For Carolyn Murphy: hair, Evanie Frausto using Bumble and Bumble; makeup, Raisa Flowers. Details, see In This Issue.



A still life composition featuring a vase of red flowers and a red candle holder against a red background. The vase is on the left, and the candle holder is in the center. The background is a solid red color with a vertical crease or shadow on the right side.

Renaissance Man

Sabato De Sarno has emerged from behind the scenes to take Gucci into a whole new era.

Jason Horowitz meets the designer in the spotlight. Portrait by Anton Corbijn.

PROFONDO ROSSO

De Sarno in his Rome apartment, which showcases his signature color, Ancora (also the name of his debut runway collection).



S abato De Sarno does not love having people over to his home. “I never host anyone,” De Sarno, the creative director of Gucci, tells me as we are seated on his living room couch across from his snoozing dapple dachshund, Luce. Colleagues aren’t invited for dinner; his husband lives in Brussels—even his parents don’t get to spend the night. “It’s my place, where I relax,” says De Sarno, a baby-faced 40 with closely cropped hair and beard, as he fidgets with the strings of his vintage *Jurassic Park* sweatshirt. “Where I disconnect from work.”

The walls of the apartment, on a winding street in the Renaissance quarter of Rome, are decorated with contemporary works by Jannis Kounellis, a Greek artist who scrawled words over his lithographs, and Sidival Fila, a Franciscan friar who paints canvases of sewn fabrics. There are prints of Italian icons, including one of the writer and director Pier Paolo Pasolini. (De Sarno proudly tells me the value of the latter has skyrocketed since his predecessor at Gucci, Alessandro Michele, staged a show of the print’s photographer, Paolo Di Paolo, at a Rome museum.) Beneath coffered ceilings and atop the room’s minimalist deco furniture rest fertility sculptures from Sardinia, one of which has the deep bordeaux color with which De Sarno is repainting Gucci’s bags and shoes and skirts and jackets. He gave the color, and his first runway collection last September, the name *Ancora*, which means “again”—in the insatiable sense, he tells me—“of when you kiss someone that you like and you don’t want to stop doing it.” That is his ambition for Gucci, too, he tells me: to imbue it with passion. “I want Gucci to touch people’s hearts,” he says.

Behind him, as he tosses a chew toy to Luce, is a monograph on Valentino, the Roman fashion house that was his home for the last 14 years and from which the fashion giant Kering plucked him to lead Gucci, its flagship brand, in January 2023. Beyond the closed doors behind us on the sofa, meanwhile, is an off-limits studio bursting with ideas for the February runway show—closets filled with works in progress and boxes he is packing as Gucci moves the company’s design operation to Milan.

Resting among the fashion and art books, including the works of Tom Ford, lining the hallway are two ceramic hands from his native Naples that one of his brothers gave him, one hand making the sign of a cuckold, the other with a middle finger in the air. “He says I don’t work,” De Sarno says with a half smile. “Maybe he’s right.”

Family is central to De Sarno. Two days earlier, he joined his mother and father and brother in the northern city of Como, where they all moved decades ago. They ate tuna pesto and squid as his mother interrogated him about Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck and all the other celebrities he dressed, and met, at Gucci’s Los Angeles County Museum of Art gala in November; he told her how he hit it off with Kirsten Dunst, and how strange it was to be treated as famous by the famous. “This is the first time that I was a celebrity too,” De Sarno tells me, talking with some awe about Kim Kardashian coming over because she



Photographs by Theo Liu.



VIVA ITALIA

"For me," De Sarno says, "Italian-ness means bringing our qualities into the world." Model Lila Moss, on Rome's Ponte Sant'Angelo, wears Gucci throughout story. Here a top, jeans, sunglasses, and bag; [gucci.com](https://www.gucci.com).

Fashion Editor: Gabriella Karefa-Johnson.



wanted to meet him, or being introduced to Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio. “I’ve seen *Titanic* 15 times.”

He was joined at LACMA by his husband of four years, Daniele Calisti, a lawyer with the European Commission in Brussels whom he met in 2012 on the black sands of the Sicilian island Stromboli. Their first kiss, on a dance floor, is recorded on De Sarno’s art-heavy Instagram account, but in the apartment there are no pictures of his husband or his family. The only family photo is a childhood image of De Sarno himself. “This is me,” he says in the foyer, pointing at the toddler with curly blond locks seated on a mini Vespa with training wheels and wearing red pants and a mock turtleneck sweater. There are even more embarrassing ones, he says, but when I ask to see them, he declines. “Let’s not overdo it,” he says with a laugh.

For nearly the last decade, Gucci turned overdoing it into both an ethos and a business plan. Under the maximalist, envelope-pushing vision of Michele, whose Last Supper look and bejeweled fingers made him a prophet of the fashion-celebrity industrial complex, sales multiplied to nearly 10 billion euros a year. But Michele, who widened the runway to make room for all walks of fashion life, was not on board with Kering’s strategy to grow that number to as high as 15 billion by shifting his design and expanding its audience beyond the young and diverse crowd of fashion fanatics to target deeper pockets and a broader constituency. When Michele left in November 2022, Kering sought a designer who, like Michele and Ford before him, could once again—*ancora*—transform

the brand by connecting it more directly to its heritage and selling more to the kind of people who could afford to buy and wear it.

“I didn’t want a rupture—I wanted an evolution,” Kering’s chairman and CEO, François-Henri Pinault, tells me. To achieve the brand’s potential, he says, it needed to avoid overexposure, maintain its joyfulness, enhance its sexiness, and appeal to a “broader audience of luxury consumers” who, he says, “we’ve never tried before.”

To reach them, he turned to De Sarno, then Valentino’s fashion director of men’s and women’s ready-to-wear. De Sarno’s mission at Gucci is, in a way, to make the storied house a little bit more like his own: urbane, contemporary, and chic, with sensual hints of intrigue behind the doors.

De Sarno’s first runway show in Milan in September began with a long gray wool overcoat opened over short shorts cinched by a GG-branded belt and a tight white tank top. A taste of color came from the classic Gucci red

and green in the coat’s vent and the gold from a chunky necklace, but the real flavor was supplied by the crimson—or ancora red—of the Jackie bag over the shoulder and the platform horsebit loafers that hearkened back to the early aughts, when De Sarno, then a student in Milan, first became immersed in high fashion. (If De Sarno’s Gucci takes off, people are going to look a lot taller this year.)

The colors were mostly muted—blacks and blues and whites, a lacy pink lingerie dress under a beige overcoat. Crystal embroidery on shirts and bras and tinsel fringes on almost shaggy-looking heels made appearances, but always as refined accents, not blurted-out declarations of self-expression.

“People have written of my fashion as minimal, quiet luxury, but to me it’s really the opposite,” De Sarno says. “My overcoat has a shape that is the

result of a curating process. We tested it, we chose for wearability.” To get a more rounded effect in the silhouette, he studied the weave and warp, even the width of the thread, with fabric suppliers. “At the end, you see a gray coat, but it’s a little more than a gray coat.”

Instead of making costumes for an alternate universe, De Sarno tells me, in what seems to be a reference to his predecessor, he wants to dress people who go to work and go on dates—and he wants them to wear the smartest, sexiest, most Italian Gucci outfits he can imagine.

“I don’t want the invitees to my runways to say, *Wow, wow*, and then forget about it the next day,” he says. He wants people to appreciate the quality and the hidden detail of his designs; he wants them to dream about it—and then to go into the stores in four months “and buy it and wear it.”



HOUSE AND HOME

De Sarno and husband Daniele Calisti. TOP LEFT: De Sarno (seated) overseeing a fitting in Gucci’s Rome headquarters before the move to Milan.

TOWER OF
POWER

Moss has her
hands ecstatically
full in a Gucci
trench coat, dress,
bags, shoes,
and necklace.







“I don’t want the invitees to my runways to say, *Wow, wow*, and then forget about it,” he says. He wants people to dream about it—“and buy it and wear it”

It’s nearly noon and De Sarno, usually at the office by 9, has to get to work. On the street, he is clad in a black Gucci overcoat and carries a black leather Gucci bag with a metallic tag reading *My 1st LACMA*. The green and red stripes on the tongues of his white Gucci sneakers match Luce’s leash, a gift from his team for the Ancora runway show. “She loves Gucci more than I do,” he says, revealing that Luce is the inspiration for the new “bassotto,” an elongated, wiener dog version of a clutch.

De Sarno points out the places where he goes (the Felliniesque haunt on the Piazza Farnese, where there are “different people, not just one type”) and the places he doesn’t (a wine bar where “everyone goes, and so—no”). Avoiding the Pantheon and streets clogged with tourists, he mourns the loss, in central Rome, of artisans and, with them, certain Italian traditions of craftsmanship, good taste, and quality that he wants to reinject into Gucci. “Italian-ness is know-how,” he explains. “All of the French brands—they do production in Italy. Already this is an explanation: There’s Dior, Chanel—but it’s we Italians who make this stuff, we who touch these products and make them become something. It’s our grandparents, our aunts and uncles and relatives.”

But he also wants to bring a sense of “an Italian who lives in the world. I’m an Italian, but I don’t live the dolce vita. I go to Brussels, to New York—but I go as an Italian. For me, Italian-ness means bringing our qualities into the world.” In De Sarno’s Gucci, he envisions the clothes—and the stores—as envoys for his culture and heritage.

As we walk, De Sarno sidesteps the garbage and broken glass of Rome—a city, he says, “I’ve never fallen in love with.” (Compared to Milan, he says, Rome is “not at all a free city.”) He crosses the Via del Corso, says “Andiamo, Luce” with a gentle yank of the leash, and enters Gucci headquarters—where, for now at least, he is free to do whatever he likes.

Until January 2023, few people outside fashion’s tightest circles had heard of De Sarno. When Michele split with Gucci, the lists circulating of potential successors

HEARTS AND FLOWERS

“People have written of my fashion as minimal, quiet luxury, but to me it’s really the opposite,” De Sarno says. Gucci jacket, shorts, sunglasses, shoe, and earring.



“The new Gucci I want,”
De Sarno said, is about
“freedom and exhilaration—
I just want to have fun”

forward in 2014 for the top job, Pinault didn't even know who he was, though his maiden—and, for many, mad—show ended up being the first unorthodox step in a wildly successful, and lucrative, journey. De Sarno might be hitting all of Kering's buttons—luxury, sophistication, sexiness, and wearability—yet hitting the zeitgeist is another matter.

Pinault, for his part, remains confident.

“We are taking our time to make sure that everything goes perfectly at the right moment, because it's always dangerous,” Pinault tells me. “But so far, so good.”

The eldest of three children, De Sarno grew up in a three-floor house with his parents, his uncle's family, and his grandparents in Cicciano, a small town northeast of Naples. His mother, who learned how to embroider with her six sisters, had him at age 17.

His father had followed his own father, whom Sabato is named after, into the construction business. De Sarno endured taunting over his name, which means Saturday (“Is your brother named Wednesday, Thursday?”), and, as he got older, more vicious teasing about his emerging sexuality. Instead of talking with the people around him, he sometimes drew faces on paper, “emojis before emojis,” he says—including a mouth zipped closed when he didn't want to talk.

“As a child, it was the most beautiful place in the world; as an adolescent, the ugliest,” he says of Cicciano. Around the age of 13, he began to see Gianni Versace as a role model. “He represented what I wanted to be when I grew up: He was gay, very attached to the family, from Southern Italy, and lived in Milan.”

As De Sarno became more comfortable in his own skin in high school, he led protests to (successfully) demand the return of a civics teacher who dared talk to students about sexuality. He also organized parties and nights out on the town and at 15 began hitting the local main street dressed to the nines—and studying what everyone wore (or, as he puts it, “the choices they made”). He made some interesting choices of his own: During a goth phase, he wore tight pants and flesh-colored silk shirts, painted his fingernails black, and listened to Evanescence. When that passed, he ran with a crowd he describes as “beautiful people who liked fashion.” During a high school trip to Rome, he scored a red velvet Tom Ford

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

included the house's studio design director, Remo Macco, or longtime Gucci designer Davide Renne.

As Pinault tells it, though, the internal candidates were not quite seasoned enough, and so, in a rigorous recruitment process, he looked outside—breaking with a long Gucci tradition of promoting from within but keeping with the Kering practice of finding top talent from behind the scenes. That's where De Sarno came in.

“The giant is Gucci—I am Sabato,” De Sarno tells me over a lunch of risotto under frescoes in his august office. “I'm not a singer who became a creative director or an actor who became a creative director,” he says. “I was a designer for 20 years. I have touched the clothes, I changed and modified them, I invented them. They have chosen someone who knows how to do this job—if you like it or not, that's another story—but I surely know how to do this.”

Pinault tells me he is bowled over by De Sarno's energy, which he saw firsthand at LACMA, but also with his maturity and patience: Rather than trying to do everything at once, De Sarno seems to be slowly but surely building on his work in successive collections.

Still, despite all the market research and advertising budgets of a major brand like Gucci, fashion success remains an alchemy, not a science. When Michele asked to be put

WRITTEN IN STONE

(And leather, and skin.)
Moss—at Rome's Fontana della Dea Giunone—wears a Gucci jacket, shorts, sunglasses, belt, shoes, and earring. OPPOSITE: Gucci jacket. In this story: hair, Benjamin Muller; makeup, Kalli Kennedy. Details, see In This Issue.





HOMeward

A BRAND-NEW DAY

FROM LEFT: Kyle Ramar Freeman (as the Lion), Nichelle Lewis (as Dorothy), Avery Wilson (as the Scarecrow), and Phillip Johnson Richardson (as the Tinman) in Sharen Davis's costumes for *The Wiz*.

Sittings Editor: Edward Bowleg III.

BOUND

As a new revival of *The Wiz* eases its way back to New York, the enchanting cast and sprawling creative team has history—and legacy—on their minds.
By Marley Marius. Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

COMPANY MEN

The Wiz's leading actors have grown close offstage. Richardson wears a Hiro Clark T-shirt. A.P.C. jeans. Wilson wears an A.P.C. sweater. Todd Snyder pants. Freeman wears his own denim jacket from Duke.





On a Thursday evening in early November, a pack of Steelers fans poured out from a bar in downtown Pittsburgh and trooped past the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, a stately old movie palace turned theater and concert hall. As black-and-gold jerseys mixed in with the overflow from the venue's box office, one of the football guys asked what the line was for, and a patron told him.

"Oh, *The Wiz*?" a friend of his cried, eyes suddenly shining with delight. "That's a great show!"

The Wiz tends to have that effect on people. Between its original Broadway run, starring a young Stephanie Mills, from 1975 to 1979; Sidney Lumet's 1978 movie adaptation with Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, and Richard Pryor; and countless stagings in school auditoriums everywhere, to know its inspired, all-Black retelling of L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, it seems, is to cherish it.

That's certainly true for the people behind its new revival, now on a much-celebrated national tour. (After engagements in San Francisco and Los Angeles this winter, *The Wiz* begins previews at the Marquis Theatre in New York in late March.) All four wonderful principal actors, Nichelle Lewis (Dorothy), Avery Wilson (the Scarecrow), Kyle Ramar Freeman (the Lion), and Phillip Johnson Richardson (the Tinman)—not one of them older than 30—grew up watching the movie; and in the late 1970s, director Schele Williams (*Motown: The Musical*) saw the show in Dayton, Ohio, during its second national tour. "I have never lived in a world without *The Wiz*," says comedian Amber Ruffin, brought on to refresh William F. Brown's original book. "It's like asking, *When did you first become aware of the news?*"

The musical's Tony-winning score—principally composed by Charlie Smalls, and layered with the sounds of soul, jazz, and gospel music—has a lot to do with its staying power. There are at least four perfect performances of "Home," the soaring finale, rattling around the internet, including versions by a 19-year-old Whitney Houston, on *The Merv Griffin Show*,

Dorothy was the hardest part to get right, but
when director Schele Williams saw
Nichelle Lewis less than a month before rehearsals
began, “I was like, Oh, *that’s* it,” she says

and an 11-year-old Jazmine Sullivan, at her Philadelphia elementary school. Rest assured that this revival sounds very, very good; I found that even the rather staid crowd in Pittsburgh couldn’t help but bob their heads to act two’s “Don’t Nobody Bring Me No Bad News,” led by a marvelous, tambourine-wielding Melody Betts as Evillene. (Moreover, in the 24-year-old Lewis, who will be making her Broadway debut, we now have a Dorothy with a thrilling whistle register; and it’s not for nothing that Deborah Cox, who plays Glinda the Good Witch, is also a beloved recording artist with a TikTok riff challenge named in her honor.) But the question remains: Nearly 50 years after its world premiere in Baltimore, in the fall of 1974, can *The Wiz* enchant an entirely new generation in New York?

To those who encountered it early on, *The Wiz* offered something almost unheard of: An insistently Black, mainstream musical fantasia that, instead of rehashing generational traumas or centering the scourge of modern racism, was just heartfelt and fun. “No one was on a slave ship, no one was being whipped, no one was being oppressed,” recalls Wayne Brady, who took over from Alan Mingo Jr. as the Wizard in January. “It was utter joy, and I think that’s why it stuck out so much.”

Directed and costumed by Geoffrey Holder, with choreography by former Alvin Ailey dancer George Faison and scenic design by Tom H. John, *The Wiz* announced itself to Williams as something special—to say nothing of seeing Mills, “a young Black girl onstage that looked like me,” as Dorothy. So she recognized both the tremendous opportunity and the towering stakes when, in 2021, she was approached about directing a revival. For *The Wiz* to capture an audience’s imagination all over again—and at a time

when theater created by and for Black people is much less rare (and *Wicked*, a reworking of similar material, has been running for 20 years already)—it would have to feel exciting, *big*, and certainly not a half-century old.

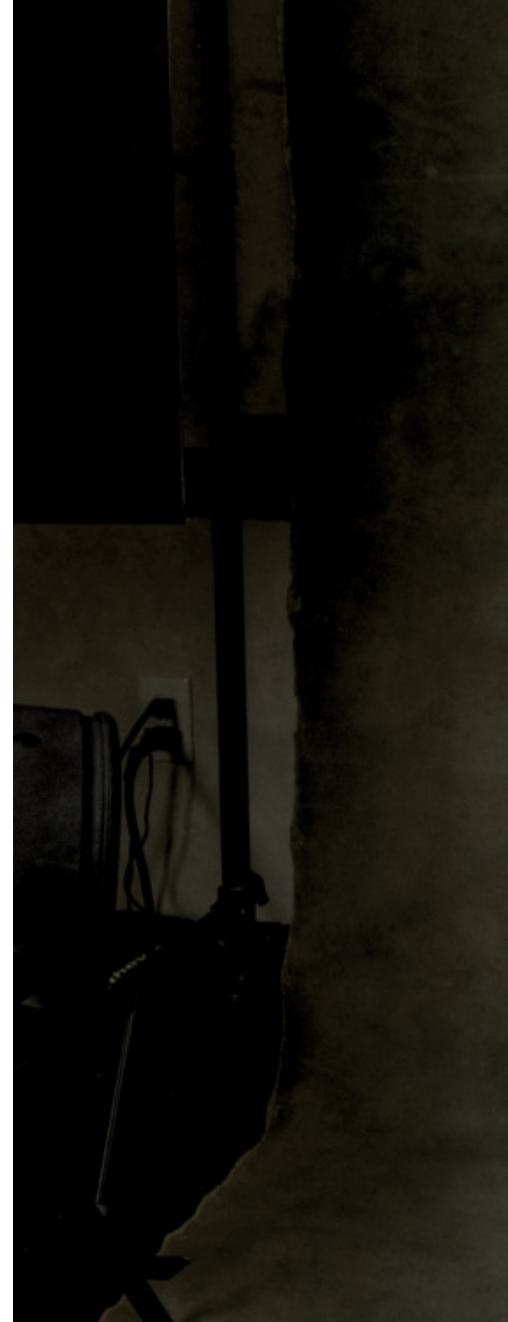
That meant, for one thing, encouraging the show’s young cast to bring as much of themselves to those oft-iterated characters as they could. “It’s work, but it doesn’t feel like work,” says Wilson, a popular R&B singer making his stage debut with *The Wiz*. I meet him, and the production’s other stars, in a sunlit rehearsal room at the Benedum Center, an upright piano tucked discreetly into one corner. “Schele was very adamant about telling me—and I’m sure she’s told everyone—‘I don’t want to see what I already saw. Whatever Michael Jackson did, I don’t want to see that. I want to see *you*.’” (It was a worthy reminder: Wilson rolls up a sleeve to show me the tattoo of Thriller-era Jackson on his left forearm.) For Freeman, who led the London premiere of *A Strange Loop* last summer before tackling *The Wiz*, that meant building his Lion, played both onstage and in the film by Ted Ross, from the ground up. The result is “Little Richard meets Jennifer Lewis meets Beyoncé,” he says with a laugh. “All of that is me.”

Engaging a creative team for whom the conventions of musical theater were hardly a thought was another important step. It’s where Ruffin came in (her work with Matthew López on the book for *Some Like It Hot*, which earned them both Tony nominations last year, came later), as well as choreographer JaQuel Knight, known for Beyoncé’s “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)” visual; Hannah Beachler, the Oscar-winning scenic designer behind both *Black Panther* films; and costume designer Sharen Davis, a two-time Oscar nominee for 2004’s *Ray* and 2006’s *Dreamgirls*. (She calls *The Wiz*’s Emerald City sequence—which, here as in the film, functions as something

of a fashion show—unequivocally “the biggest challenge in my career.”)

The effect of all that creative cross-pollination is awesome; every moment bursts with color, texture, humor, movement. “All of the things that make Black culture very distinct are in the show, whether it’s in the set, in our costumes, in the orchestrations,” says Cox. “I think it turned out so great because Schele was just like, ‘Do your worst—knock yourself out,’” adds Ruffin. “We got the best of everyone’s crazy ideas.”

So too did they get a very fine set of actors to mold the piece around. Dorothy was the hardest part to get right, but when Williams saw Lewis—a



STAR QUALITY

Lewis wears a Tory Burch shirt. Banana Republic jeans. G.H. Bass shoe. In this story: hair, Miwako Urasugi; makeup, Francelle Daly. Details, see In This Issue.



native of Chesterfield, Virginia, whose TikTok account endeared her to *The Wiz*'s casting agents—less than a month before rehearsals began, “I was like, Oh, *that’s* it,” she says. “There is a youthfulness about her that made me want to fight for her.”

Although Lewis is no stranger to a national tour—she spent half of 2022 traveling with *Hairspray* as one of the Dynamites—*The Wiz* has been a singular experience, and not only because she sings most of the score. “I don’t even know how to describe this cast,” she says, beaming. Clio, her new mini Bernedoodle puppy, and the company’s de facto mascot, is curled up at her feet. “Just being with a group of people

that are all kind of from the same background, all trying to do something with their talent—I think we all relate, and we all inspire one another.”

“The core of the show is the four of us,” adds Richardson, who began his professional theater career doing *Hamilton* in Chicago. “So if we don’t have our dynamics, the whole show doesn’t really work.” (They are also on a very long ride together: Of the decision to tour *The Wiz* through 13 cities before it opens on Broadway, where most other productions do things the other way around, Williams says: “I’m a director that really believes in process. I relish the opportunity for a show to grow, and for me to learn from the audience.”)

On the first day of rehearsals, Williams spoke to her cast and crew about creating “radical joy” in the theater, and having the chance to uplift the next generation of Black artists. But what’s clear is that they are all, in one way or another, doing *The Wiz* for themselves, too. “I’m literally in my dressing room getting ready for my scenes, just glowing with pride because this show means so much to us,” Cox says. To put it on again is both an act of faith and a gesture of gratitude. “I bet all of our lives would be different if *The Wiz* didn’t exist,” Ruffin reflects. “So we’re taking care of it the way it has taken care of us.” □

Winding Road

At just 30, Sahara Longe seems to have arrived on the international art scene like a bolt from the blue. But her path, as she tells Dodie Kazanjian, was far more meandering.

SAHARA LONGE'S DREAM OF BECOMING an artist only came true when she gave up on the whole idea. In the last year, her bold, figurative paintings have seduced the art world on multiple continents. But the backstory of how she got there is a map of the strange and complex journey to being an artist.

Longe started out by drawing on the walls of her bedroom in a 550-year-old crumbling wattle and daub farmhouse in rural Suffolk. Her English dad, Marc, and her Sierra Leone-born mother, Didi, had moved the family there from London when Longe was six. Farming their 300 acres and restoring the house left little time for active parenting, and Longe and her three younger sisters grew up doing more or less whatever they wanted. For Longe, a shy, quiet child who was something of a loner, this included reading Agatha Christie and *Private Eye*, whose cartoons and caricatures she copied on the walls, floor to ceiling, of her bedroom and other spaces throughout the house.

"I was a complete weirdo as a child," Longe tells me. "My sisters and I had a piano teacher named Mary who was about 80 years old and lived next door. She wore tights tied around her head and she ate only fish and chips that were wrapped in loads of greasy paper, and after the lesson, she'd give us pens to draw on them." Sahara, a dark-haired beauty with an infectious smile, is at the farmhouse in Suffolk. She has a studio in the big, old threshing barn, with a stone floor and arching beams. It's much larger than her London studio in Brixton, and she's using it to make the paintings for her New York debut, at Timothy Taylor gallery in May.

She shows me some of the paintings in progress. The figures are semiabstract—facial features are not detailed but subtly suggested, when the head is not turned away. Their flat, blocky simplicity reminds me of paintings by John Wesley, whom she's never heard of. There's a reclining nude in the position of Manet's *Olympia*, with a cat, and a



painting of nine nudes, all female, and one shadowy man. "I love painting the female nude far more than the male," she says. (The men in her paintings are clothed.) "It's the most satisfying thing you can paint. There's a painting in our house that someone gave my dad of a woman with her boobs out and a fish trying to nibble her nipple. I was just obsessed with it as a child." Longe has done a version of her own for the New York show—the fish is huge and just approaching the breast.

When Longe was 12 years old, she went with a friend to the National Portrait Gallery and saw the Tudor portraits: Queen Elizabeth I, Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, and other Tudor worthies. "I thought they were the coolest things," she says, "and I was like, Oh, my God, that's what I want to do." Her passion for portraiture took hold in those galleries, which she visited over and over again.

Her all-girls school in Berkshire had an excellent art department. She discovered Willem de Kooning there, and



painted “humongous, sort of grotesque portraits” of her friends sitting in chairs. She did well in school and got high grades. This made her think that she should pursue the academic route, rather than going to art school. After graduating, she took a year off, though, spending five months in Sierra Leone. She had gone there often with her mother while growing up, and she particularly loved seeing her aunt, a voracious reader whose library was one of Longe’s favorite places. She also hung out at the family farm in Sussex. When the year was up, she enrolled at Bristol University to study art history. “The instant I got there, I realized my mistake, and started going to life-drawing classes,” she explains. She dropped out after the first term, and worked in an East London pub for a year, while continuing to take life-drawing classes and making her own paintings. “I didn’t know what I was doing,” she tells me. “I was very lost.” Seeing Alessandro Raho’s full-length portrait of Judi Dench, dressed in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 105

FIGURE IT OUT

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Bad Dreams*, 2023; Sahara Longe in her studio in Suffolk, England, November 2023; *Under the Sea*, 2023.

TOP RIGHT: OLLO WEGUELIN © SAHARA LONGE. BOTTOM RIGHT: UNDER THE SEA, 2023. OIL ON LINEN, 60 X 65 CM. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND TIMOTHY TAYLOR © SAHARA LONGE.

Stand Tall

Modern life doesn't exactly encourage an upright perspective. Good posture, however, has the ability to change not just our stance but our entire outlook.

Thessaly La Force takes note. Photographed by Jack Davison.

IF YOUTH IS WASTED ON the young, then height is wasted on the young and tall. I can recall with total clarity my disappointment in my sixth-grade class portrait. I had experienced a growth spurt that summer. I had always been tall, but now the fact of my height was unavoidable—a topic among relatives, teachers, even strangers at the grocery store. I had picked out my outfit that day with care. But the school's photographer assigned me to the back row, next to the tallest boy in the class—such cruel fate! From then on, I had only contempt for my height.

My solution was to hunch. To shave even just a few inches from my stature, I'd slink to my classes with my shoulders rounded forward and my head down. Later, I spoke to boys with my body awkwardly tilted against a wall or, preferably, sitting down. This was the late '90s in Northern California. There were no department classes, no one telling me to stand, as my mother's generation did, with my shoulders back and chest out. If anything, the pervasive look and feel of grunge and



BALANCING ACT

FROM LEFT: Angelina Kendall wears Alaïa, Clyde and Bagtazo hats. Chu Wong wears Dior, J.R. Malpere and Gigi Burris Millinery hats. Fashion Editor: Alex Harrington.







PRODUCED BY FARRAGO PRODUCTIONS.
LOCAL PRODUCTION BY TERUTERU PRODUCTION.
SET DESIGN: RACHEL FORD THOMAS.

FOUR TOP

FROM LEFT: Jill Kortleve wears an H&M top and Marc Jacobs pants. Awar Odhiang in Loewe. Kendall wears Alaïa. Wong in Dior. In this story: hair, Shingo Shibata; makeup, Kanako Takase using Addiction Tokyo. Details, see In This Issue.

“Imagine you’re wearing a beautiful necklace. Wouldn’t you want it to glitter in the light?” asked one of my oldest friends

the laid-back cool of California’s surf and skate culture only further reinforced my decision to slouch. There was a rebellion to slouching, an insouciance to bad posture that felt in tune with the bleached-out, tomboyish femininity of the world around me.

Eventually, I grew out of it. I discovered that my height was something of an asset. I started a career, got married, had kids. Motherhood finally allowed me to feel a purpose with my physical self that wasn’t tied to vanity. The only problem was that I had completely obliterated my posture. Years of rounded shoulders had taken its toll. Two pregnancies had stretched out my core. The decades spent working in front of a computer hadn’t helped either.

I wanted to investigate what it would take to course-correct. After all, there are benefits to standing straighter. Studies point out that people with clinical depression tend to hunch more than those who don’t. Another shows that those who slouched walking down a hallway had less energy throughout the day than those who skipped (presumably with a straighter spine). Besides, I had reason to be optimistic. “Even the most dramatic habits can be broken with a reasonable plan of action,” says Amir Vokshoor, a Los Angeles-based neurosurgeon who specializes in spine surgery.

“Imagine you’re wearing a beautiful necklace. Wouldn’t you want it to glitter in the light?” asks one of my oldest friends, Adrian Danchig-Waring, who is a principal dancer at the New York City Ballet. We are standing on the top floor of the Whitney Museum, meaning to look at art but instead attempting a small lesson in the art of standing well. He turns his perfectly straight spine to the left and to the right, CONTINUED ON PAGE 106

A photograph of a window looking out onto a vast, blue-green ocean with white-capped waves. The window has a dark frame and a ledge made of light-colored, veined marble. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

The Tide Is High

Cropped knits, midskirts, and other low-key, high-reward pieces make waves on Portugal's breathtaking Estoril Coast. Photographed by Lachlan Bailey.



MAKING WAVES

Model Karolina Spakowski is the picture of unfussy elegance in a Prada bodysuit and skirt; prada.com. On top, an oversized Carven coat imparts both ease and warmth; carven.com. Axel Arigato shoes. Fashion Editor: Kate Phelan.



CATCHING A BREAK

Spakowski moves with ease between water and rocks in a **Valentino** turtleneck sweater; **Valentino** boutiques. **Decathlon** wetsuit; decathlon.co.uk.



SEA CHANGE

Burberry parka; us
.burberry.com.
Birkenstock 1774
Tekla shoe. BELOW:
Chanel top and
shorts; Chanel
boutiques. MM6 x
Salomon shoes.



AIR APPARENT

Spakowski's head of perfectly dreamy waves makes a canny counterpoint to the graphic geometries of her **Louis Vuitton** bodysuit; select Louis Vuitton boutiques.

BEAUTY NOTE

Good hair days are guaranteed, no matter where the wind blows. Achieve an effortless beach finish with Kérastase's Soleil Huile Sirène.



CALLED YOUR BLUFF

Spakowski wears a **Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello** top and skirt; ysl.com. In this story: hair, Shiori Takahashi; makeup, Petros Petrosilos. Details, see In This Issue.



The Get



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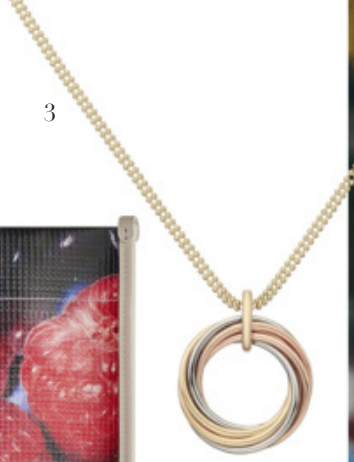
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Flow State

Dressed up or chilled out, wide-leg trousers are the easy, breezy statement silhouette of the season.



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FLIGHT PATTERNS

Model Liu Wen wears a Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello jumpsuit, belt, and shoes; ysl.com.



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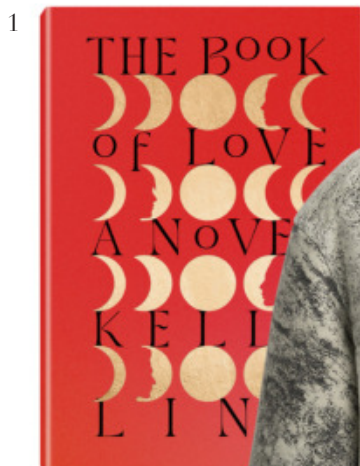
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13

1. MARNI SCARF, \$435; MARNI.COM. 2. BALenciAGA TOTE BAG; BALenciAGA.COM.
3. CARTIER NECKLACE; CARTIER BOUTIQUES. 4. TOTEME TANK TOP, \$105; TOTEME-STUDIO.COM. 5. LONGINES WATCH, \$1,600; LONGINES.COM.
6. NILI LOTAN SHIRT, \$350; NILILOTAN.COM. 7. BALenciAGA TRENCH COAT, \$1,485; MATCHESFASHION.COM. 8. MICHAEL KORS COLLECTION PANTS, \$1,290; MICHAELKORS.COM. 9. ALAÍA SHOE, \$1,250; MAISON-ALAIA.COM.
10. PROENZA SCHOULER JACKET, \$1,990; MODAOPERANDI.COM. 11. PROENZA SCHOULER PANTS, \$1,690; PROENZASCHOULER.COM. 12. LOEWE BAG; LOEWE.COM. 13. ADIDAS ORIGINALS BY WALES BONNER SHOE, \$180; ADIDAS.COM.

The Get



NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Wen wears a Burberry jacket, shirt, pants, and bag; us .burberry.com.

- 1.** THE BOOK OF LOVE BY KELLY LINK, \$31; PENGUINRANDOMHOUSE.COM.
2. COACH COAT, \$2,200; COACH.COM. **3.** BRANDON MAXWELL PANTS, \$1,095; BRANDONMAXWELLONLINE.COM. **4.** SCOSHA EARRINGS (SOLD AS A SINGLE), \$900; SCOSHA.COM. **5.** GUCCI SHOE, \$920; GUCCI.COM. **6.** MAX MARA COAT; MAXMARA.COM. **7.** GUEST IN RESIDENCE SWEATER, \$495; GUESTINRESIDENCE.COM. **8.** OMEGA WATCH; OMEGAWATCHES.COM. **9.** MAX MARA PANTS, \$965; MAXMARA.COM. **10.** HERMÈS AIRPODS CASE, \$930; HERMÈS BOUTIQUES. **11.** BURBERRY HAT, \$560; US.BURBERRY.COM. **12.** FERRAGAMO BAG; FERRAGAMO.COM. **13.** KHAITE SHOE, \$1,380; KHAITE.COM. SHOP THE ISSUE ONLINE AT [VOGUE.COM/SHOPPING](https://www.vogue.com/shopping)





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THE MVP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

Sure, you're probably thinking, lots of big stars are loved. That's why they're big stars. And plenty of them behave badly and retain deep banks of parasocial fan armies to rise to their defense. This is not like that. Usher has dedicated, dyed-in-the-wool fans—though not quite enough of them to save him from a mid-career dip in the late aughts, around the time his fifth album underperformed and it felt like music en masse was moving away from his brand of R&B. (That dip, by the way, has ultimately made people love him *more*: how did we forget about *Usher*?!) It's the people who work with him every day who make you feel how much he is loved—his manager and bodyguard and assistants who sit you down and tell you what a *good guy* he is; the Dolby theater ushers who work the show three nights a week, joyfully singing along to all of the songs; the other R&B superstars who turned up as surprise acts (Nas, Jermaine Dupri, Teyana Taylor, Keyshia Cole, Anita Baker); the boldface names who turned up just to turn up (LeBron James, Zendaya and Tom Holland, various Kardashians, Jennifer Lopez, Doja Cat, Issa Rae, Keke Palmer). There are designers, too, like Bianca Saunders, who attended the 2023 Met Gala with him, driving through the streets of New York in the matte-black 1960s Cadillac convertible he imported to the city for this purpose. (He was a perfect date, she tells me on a call from London, and let her control the radio.) Or Balmain's Olivier Rousteing, who designed Usher's wardrobe for the first stretch of his Vegas residency. "Usher is just so humble and so kind and so generous," Rousteing tells me. "I've been really lucky in my life to have met incredible artists, but Usher is definitely one of my favorites to work with, because he's *so nice*."

Usher's longtime barber Shawn "Shizz" Porter refers to Usher's stage presence with words like *ordained*. "You should have a spotlight every day of your life!" he shouts as Usher serenades model Carolyn Murphy for *Vogue*. Murphy, aglow, fans herself after the shoot: "I have the best job *in the world*." (Later, Murphy

carried the fire-hydrant-size arrangement of hydrangeas Usher had delivered to her dressing room with her to dinner. "What a gentleman, truly a rarity," she said. She saved the accompanying note for her scrapbook and planned to show it to her daughter, Dylan, back home in LA. "So she'll think I'm cool.") *Vogue's* photographer Campbell Addy says he knows every Usher song: "I used to buy the CDs and just study the lyrics in the liner notes. Come on: It's *Usher*." Sure, there was that late-aughts ebb, but now there's just *so much flow*. "Every night I walk out and I'm present before I walk on the stage," Usher says the next day at his house. "Maybe no one else knows that I'm doing this, but I'll walk over to the edge of the stage and I look up there." He angles his head up at the invisible fans in the invisible rafters, a blur of happy screams and sparkly outfits who dance and selfie and party the night away as if life begins and ends at the Dolby theater at the Park MGM, "and I can remember when nobody was in here, and it was hard, and it felt like nobody was going to come. But I see them having a great time and I'm like, *Here it is*—" There's that million-dollar smile. "*Honor that moment. Now go have a good time.*"

When we meet, Usher has just been handed the key to the city (October 17 is now officially Usher Raymond Day in Las Vegas), though by the looks of his social media tags that month, he seems like the prince of Paris. He'd put on a 12-day residency at La Seine Musicale—a Paris version of the Vegas performance (attended by Pharrell, Christian Louboutin, and Gabrielle Union and Dwyane Wade, among others) that synced up in time with the shows, and so he'd gone to some (Valentino, Chanel, Marni, Balenciaga), as well as various dinners and galas, all dressed in the season's best. He sort of stole the show, I tell him. He shrugs, faux-demure. (Usher doesn't brag.) "You know you were a hit," I nudge. "It worked," he grins. It sure did: Rousteing compares his talents and cultural weight to that of Michael Jackson or Prince. "I think he's one of the few artists that knows how to play with a wardrobe and feel

confident enough to push boundaries and have his own style and his own identity without trying to be someone else," the designer says. "When he came to my show for the first time in 2020, I was crying. It reminded me of when I was younger and unknown and dancing to his songs, and I was just like, *Wow*, this is such a big thing to have Usher here in this room."

Fashion has always been important to him, Usher says. He grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with a mother and grandmother who took great pride in the way he and his brother dressed for church. "I think my mom, she really strived to make certain that we always looked well put together," Usher says, "and that we understood the importance of Sunday, but more than anything we understood the idea of putting something on that made you feel better, that made you feel good, feel *special*." He's drawn on those early style codes—the perfectly tailored suits, the ultra-shined shoes, the posture, the *effort*—his entire life, along with some glamour and glitz from the music world: Berry Gordy, Teddy Pendergrass, the Commodores, Lionel Richie. "He's *suave*," says Saunders, and it's worth noting Usher also cites a dash of debonair Paul Newman, Burt Reynolds with his exposed chest and Porsche sunglasses, and Gene Kelly's grace and athleticism as part of his style ethos. "I always present myself as a gentleman," he says. "It doesn't have to be super dressed up, but you know, tailored, and making sure there's some thought." Usher never wants you to think that he doesn't care about the way you see him, or the way that he sees himself.

These days he finds himself using the rare quiet moment to think about what he might do next. His own clothing line could be in the cards. It's on a list of possible post-residency endeavors whose common theme is that they don't require him to sweat it out on stage for three-plus hours, three nights a week: "I love it, don't get me wrong," he says. "But man. Shit. I'm not looking to be 60 years old up there." That list of possible next projects? It's not short. He's a collaborative guy who doesn't much like to sit still. "I was the kid who

never wanted to stop,” he says. “I still am.” Las Vegas isn’t exactly home—that’s Atlanta, where he’ll likely return after this stretch is over—but he’s not done with it. The city did more than throw open its doors and provide a stage for him; it became a kind of incubator. He arrived in 2021, and they showed him the Colosseum at Caesars and just said *dream*, he tells me. And he did, through the end of that first sold-out residency and over to a new one at Park MGM, and suddenly more was happening, like his NPR Tiny Desk Concert, of all things, where his charm nearly broke the internet, and more of those sold-out shows and the adoration poured in, because maybe we’d forgotten just how *good* those songs were, and how *many* of them there are, and how *great* he was at performing them. And then Jay-Z called up to tell Usher he wanted him to do the Super Bowl, and he decided to whip up a new album, his first in eight years, set to debut the same day. It’s no wonder we’re wondering what he might be dreaming next.

First, he’s got to clear the Super Bowl-size hurdle of the next few months. “Every day I’m kind of sitting here and I take a moment to just look at where we’re going to be, which is right there,” Usher says, pointing out the shining black glass oval of Allegiant Stadium from his seat at the table. The halftime show is famously just 13 minutes long, with eight minutes only to set up the stage, and zero room for error. “It has to be *perfect*,” Usher says. Thirteen minutes is not a very long time for someone who likes to dazzle with interactive experiences and elaborate set design, for someone with several decades of hits and a deep bench of collaborators. “I’ve been doing this for 30 years,” Usher says. “I want people who have been a part of that journey to feel like it’s a celebration for everybody, for all of us, from the beginning up until this point.” The specifics are still coming together in his mind, but he knows it’ll be a celebration of everything he’s done, everywhere he’s been, that it will sit comfortably with the iconic performances of Super Bowls past, that it will remind you that no matter what you’ve been through, he’s got a song for it.

From where he sits, he can see the city, the Strip, the surrounding Mojave Desert. He sees the blank spots, the places that might benefit from a little of Usher’s investment, his strategy, his way of approaching life. The view puts him in the mood to think about *building*. Is it about investing in the underserved local communities, giving them places to go, and learn, and be healthy, be creative? He could build a restaurant or a boutique hotel, or do something with the style of immersive theater that he loves, experiences that require people to get off their phones and be present, to lead them back to that mirror, back to themselves. It’s all still on the table, once he gets the next few months off his plate. It’s a bit like he’s Superman in his Fortress of Solitude, strategizing how to save Las Vegas, I say. He slides down in his seat and taps his fingers together in front of his nose, mastermind-style. “I’m a dreamer, man,” he says. “I am about the fan experience, trying to figure out how to give them something that’s going to make them feel something, make them feel like they had a piece of it, you know?”

He straightens up and looks at the city skyline again, hanging like a mirage over his swimming pool. Scarlett has wandered over to nap in the sun. Sire and Sovereign are inside trying on their Halloween costumes (Mario and Princess Peach). His chef wants to know if we’re hungry. Jenn apologizes but reminds us that he’s running behind, he’s got a day full of meetings and another show to prepare for tonight. The Usher universe whirls onward and upward. “You know, everybody’s always talking about my being the king of something,” he says, and they are, traditionally of R&B, more recently of Las Vegas. “I’m not invested in that. I *thank* you, I thank you very much. That means I work really hard to be the king of something,” he says, turning back to look at me, making sure I really see. “But a *kingdom*. That is going to last longer.” □

RENAISSANCE MAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 78

jacket. While no one around him knew it was Gucci, “I did,” he says.

He chose Milan’s Carlo Secoli Institute as a fashion school because it taught more “concrete” things—and because it cost less than others. Over summers, he worked odd jobs—waiter, data entry at a provincial office, salesman at Diesel.

In the back of design classes, he made fast friends with Nel Ratnayake, a fashion student from Milan. The two cracked each other up imitating the teacher constantly telling them what they *couldn’t* do—but De Sarno could do lots of things: For a final exam in 2002, he designed a skirt cut in stripes that seemed black when immobile but flashed seven colors—including fabrics he incorporated from his classmates—when it moved. The piece won the school’s Golden Needle prize.

In that moment, “my dream wasn’t only a dream,” he says. “It was starting to become real.”

The skirt caught the attention of a scout for Prada, where he soon found himself working on patterns under the mentorship of Delia Coccia, the house’s master coatmaker. When Ratnayake followed him there, the two had a ball, waiting together for hours outside Gucci shows, drinking aperitivi at the ATM Bar, and partying at Club Plastic. They broke hearts—and consoled one another when their own hearts were broken—by singing Italian love songs at the top of their lungs as they pedaled bicycles home in the Milan night.

“Milan was like Disneyland,” he says. After living in a small town where his passions made him unusual—and where many looked at him askance for what he wore—he found a city where “I could love who I wanted to love; I could wear what I wanted to wear.”

But, at Prada, De Sarno wasn’t allowed to design, and so he left, and soon after jumped at an opportunity to join Dolce & Gabbana, where he worked on knitwear. A bad breakup prompted him to leave Milan at around the same time as he was approached about joining the design team at Valentino. He left the Golden Needle award in his ex’s place and, at age 26, moved to Rome.

Pierpaolo Piccioli, then one of the two creative directors at Valentino,

saw in him a sharp intelligence softened by a lightness of being. He laughed as De Sarno broke the ice at meetings and appreciated the way he refused to wallow after a setback. Piccioli soon became the sole creative director of Valentino, as well as De Sarno's mentor and friend, recognizing in his protégé the hunger of an outsider who, like him, grew up far from the fashion capitals.

"He slowly became my right-hand man," Piccioli says in his spectacular office off the Spanish Steps—decorated, like De Sarno's home, with a Sidival Fila canvas—only minutes after lunching with De Sarno at the nearby Gucci offices. Piccioli adds that he was delighted to see De Sarno realizing his own vision at the Ancora show, which made a crisp break with the ornate and over-the-top style of Michele's Gucci. This new Gucci, he says, was "without tricks," but also not banal, with a "minimalism that was, for me, a disruptive element."

De Sarno's rise to the throne was both sudden and unexpected. One Friday night in late 2022, he was venting to his husband about work as they drove to their vacation home a few hours east of Rome in Amandola when a message appeared on his phone from an official at Kering. He soon began the interview process—for just what job he wasn't sure. At the end of November, when news broke of Michele's departure, he overslept and woke to nearly a dozen missed calls and messages asking if he was interested in Gucci.

Both De Sarno and Pinault described a grueling gauntlet of tests, including producing a large-scale project involving sketches of silhouettes to convey a new vision for the brand, over what the CEO said was only eight days. ("Four days," De Sarno clarified, holding his finger in the air. "Between Christmas and New Year's.") The final two candidates met with Pinault in Paris. "I was shaking," De Sarno recalled, adding that even talking about it hiked his blood pressure. They spoke for hours, with Pinault wanting to know about De Sarno's favorite books and movies, the Lucio Fontana paintings that he loved, the decoration of his home.

When he got the job, De Sarno broke the news to his boss and mentor in his Valentino office. The meeting—between two friends who had worked side by side and gotten to know each other's families—was emotional. "We're not at Miss Universe with the sashes," Piccioli says, smiling, but they were both moved by De Sarno's big break. "It was two people who have shared a journey and who will continue to share it in another way." De Sarno also wrote a message to Michele, whom he knew professionally in the small world of Rome fashion, thanking him for leaving behind a company with values that he shared. When he returned to Cicciano for his 40th birthday, banners proclaimed him the pride of the town.

After a career spent behind the scenes, though, De Sarno learned quickly how lonely it can be out in front. At Gucci, no one dropped by his office—or even came to his floor. To break the ice, he organized a bash on the Tiber River, inviting everyone in the company, including the security guards. Far from being a recluse in the VIP section, he was found mostly out on the dance floor. "I was sweatier than them, drunker than them," he tells me, adding that the staff seemed pleasantly surprised.

"He has the same energy now as he did 20 years ago," says Ratnayake, who went on to work at Burberry and Victoria Beckham and Pangaia, and who has remained one of De Sarno's best friends. "It's fresh, it's pure—it's an inextinguishable fire for life."

He soon started building his own team. In New York, he hit it off with the photographer Tyrell Hampton, who says De Sarno told him how he loved the intimate, stripped-down way he shot friends and celebrities. "The new Gucci I want," De Sarno told him, is about "freedom and exhilaration—I just want to have fun." At the after-party of the September Ancora show, De Sarno sang along to Rihanna and danced with Gucci ambassadors Paul Mescal and Julia Garner.

Crucially, though, he also stays grounded. During the same show, Hanni, a member of the K-pop girl-group NewJeans and a Gucci global ambassador who grew up drawn

to the youthfulness of the brand, admired the new direction. "I loved the way he toned it down," she says. "It makes the brand look even more sophisticated than it already is—it's so simple."

Backstage, Hanni watched as De Sarno excused himself from taking pictures with celebrities to embrace his family. "They were all hugging him and congratulating him—it made me feel very, very happy that he has that kind of comfort around him." (Soon after taking charge of Gucci, De Sarno learned that his taciturn father, who rarely asked about his work and was uneasy about attending his wedding celebration in Rome, boasted about his son's exploits at the local café. "Your father," the barista there confided to him, "only talks about you.")

The company's impending move, De Sarno says, seems even more important after Renne, the longtime Gucci designer, died at age 46 only days into his new job as the creative director of Moschino. (When I saw De Sarno walking with Luce at the airport in Brussels in November, rushing back for Renne's funeral, his eyes were reddened. "Brutal," he said. "I didn't know him as Gucci—I knew him as Davide.") Renne's death, he says, put things in perspective, and the move to Milan, an hour-and-a-half flight from Brussels and half an hour away from his family in Como, would provide "a reset." As it is now, he sees his husband on weekends in Brussels, in Milan, or at their home in Amandola. But he wanted to be closer to him, and to his family, he says, adding that he has started thinking of building a family of his own—even if it meant moving to another country to avoid strong opposition to surrogacy by Italy's hard-right government. "I would like children."

For now, he is the paterfamilias of an Italian empire. In the airy rotunda of the Gucci palace at the beginning of November, De Sarno sits next to Macco, the studio design director, in a chair set before the mosaic of a Roman god, and tilts his head at the models walking toward him in platform loafers, red micro miniskirts, black skorts, and trim jackets as he puts together the pre-fall collection.

“Super nice,” he says, in English, when he likes something a lot. “Molto Sabato,” he says with a self-deprecating chuckle when one of the crystal fringes he sewed on to a faux-fur coat fell onto the black carpet. It shimmered next to tables of Gucci purses, necklaces, belts, sunglasses, and a row of pink, yellow, green, and orange shoes lined up like Starbursts. The handle of one of the new alligator bags, he says, grabbing it, “will be gold, and cost as much as my house in Milan.”

On the other side of the room, a selection of sparkling embroidery drips from ski sweaters, as if they had been hit by a blingy hailstorm, as De Sarno stitches blue patches of interlocking GG monogram fabrics on to the black collar of a jacket (“Picture,” he says, by way of approval), draping another in a brocaded lime-green print and reaching for matching shoes that glisten with tassels. “Stupenda.” Another outfit is amended to make it “a little more bourgeois,” another more “lady.” He kneels on the mosaic face of Mercury to tie a strap to another model’s brown sandal. “I find it a little more sexy like this,” he says, spinning back to his seat and interlacing his hands behind his head. “I want,” he says, “to do only this.” □

WINDING ROAD

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white, at the National Portrait Gallery made her feel that she had to go to art school.

One day, sitting alone in a London café, she overheard people at the next table talking about the Charles H. Cecil Studios—one of the small, private ateliers in Florence that taught classical technique and painting and drawing from live models. A highly structured program for a small number of students, it is a place to study classical portrait painting under a master. Cecil, 78, is world-renowned in the classical Renaissance tradition and still runs the school. She thought, “That sounds like a great idea, like life-drawing on steroids. I really don’t know what I would have been doing if I hadn’t listened to those people in the café.”

“Do you usually eavesdrop on people in cafés?” I ask.

“All the time,” she says, laughing.

Longe spent four years at the atelier, which encouraged students to stay as long as they wanted. She spent the first year just using charcoal, doing cast drawings, and the next year painting. “I wasn’t very good at it. I really struggled and it was a lot of hard work, but great academic training. It felt like I’d traveled back in time.” She learned virtually no Italian. One of her classmates there, who was from California, became her boyfriend. She worked very diligently and learned how to paint like John Singer Sargent, “but it was not a natural thing for me to be that good at technique,” she confesses. After Florence, she went to Sierra Leone with Gina, the Jack Russell–Pomeranian mix she had picked up in Italy, “probably the worst dog combination there is,” she says, laughing. “I was painting lots of people in Sierra Leone, and enjoying it.” But when the pandemic hit, she came back to the farm in Suffolk and started making copies of classical paintings. “And I was like, Oh, God, this is really hard. I don’t know if I want to paint any more.” She stopped for six or seven months. “I sort of lost my mojo. I realized I couldn’t be a classical portrait painter, because I wasn’t good enough. My dad is always saying, ‘Can you stop telling everyone you’re so bad at painting?’”

She started breeding “exotic” chickens on the farm, and brewing kombucha in huge vats “because we have all these apple trees.” She also took up painting again, but “as a hobby,” just for fun. “I started doing what I wanted to do,” she says. “I realized I could paint whatever I liked and not just do portrait commissions. I had blinders on for about five years, where I thought that’s all I would be doing for the rest of my life.” This was the turning point—when Longe became an artist.

She added more colors to her rather limited palette—Gauguin’s emerald green, for instance—and loosened everything up by looking at Rubens “because I think he’s the best at softening and blurring, with no angles. It became really exciting and I loved it.” She posted one of her new, more colorful paintings on Instagram. A small London gallery

asked to put it in a show, and to her great surprise, someone bought it. “That’s where it started,” she says. Timothy Taylor’s London gallery included one of her nude paintings in a group show, and then asked her to join the gallery. She now has an international reputation, and there’s a waiting list for her new paintings, which sell for six figures. “Sahara gets better with every show,” says the collector Glenn Fuhrman, whose FLAG Art Foundation in New York City included her in a recent group show. “Her work has an immediate appeal, and I love her use of color and the way she deftly uses scale.”

Longe has a serious boyfriend, Bert Hamilton Stubber, the co-founder of the posh Speciale haberdashery, whom she had known while they both were in Florence. (Bert had been studying Florentine tailoring.) When she’s in London, they often go for an evening drive, looking at historical sites. (“We saw Vivienne Westwood’s house the other night.”) Back at the farm, she’s trying to teach herself how to bake doughnuts. Late at night, when she’s finished painting, she gets into bed and listens to “any bland audiobook you don’t have to concentrate much on” in the dark, or watches something on Netflix—but definitely not *The Crown*. “I find it so difficult to watch,” she says. “I feel so sorry for them because they’re still alive.”

The work in her New York show is “more brushstroke-y and impressionistic” than in her last. “It’s so interesting—painting. There’s always something new, and I love that about it. I don’t know what I’m going to do next year, or the year after.” Her confidence is so high that she even accepted a portrait commission. She was one of 10 artists invited by King Charles to paint notable West Indians who immigrated to Great Britain after 1948, for the Royal Collection Trust. Longe painted Jessie Stephens, a stenographer, who arrived in 1955 from St. Lucia and worked to improve the relationship between police officers and the community. “It was the first time I had done a commissioned portrait in years, so I was terrified,” Longe tells me. “We all got to go to Buckingham Palace, and we had to do a photo with

Charles and Camilla. My model sat next to Charles in the photo, and he said to her, “I hope this doesn’t hurt your street cred.” Since October, the paintings have all been hanging at the National Portrait Gallery, not far from the Tudors. □

STAND TALL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91

and I attempt to mimic him—though on Adrian, I can envision stunning jewels on his décolletage, while I move more like the inflatable man at a car dealership sale.

“It’s old-fashioned advice, but picture a string lifting you up from the ceiling,” says Randi Jaffe, a New York City–based chiropractor. She explains to me that so much of modern life contributes to poor posture: sitting for long periods; carrying heavy backpacks or handbags. It’s even worse for mothers like myself who are breastfeeding, picking up small children, and pushing a stroller. “Now, of course, the phone is the

worst culprit,” she adds. I stare guiltily at mine. The human head weighs, on average, about 10 to 12 pounds. When we bend our necks forward just 60 degrees, the stress on our neck increases by some 60 pounds. Many of us are increasingly working from home, which is also having a devastating effect on posture. Even the way we sleep, she tells me, can make a difference (on your belly is the worst). She recommends the Dosaze pillow, made of memory foam, that slopes down on one side and encourages correct alignment as you slumber.

Jaffe stretches my back on her table, a process that involves pulling my legs down and away from my shoulders, and makes a few slight adjustments to my sacrum. Afterward, I ask Jaffe to assess my posture. “Not too bad,” she says politely, gently pulling my shoulders back. Then she assigns me homework: to look at the posture of other New Yorkers around me. Seeing bad posture might make me correct mine.

After all, awareness is key to fixing a nasty slouch. Clothing or accessories “that make the shoulders and the scapula, our wings, closer to each other are very helpful,” advises Vokshoor. Which is how I find myself wearing a posture corrector called the BackEmbrace, a vaguely bondage-looking elastic strap thing that you hook around your shoulders and velcro across your torso. “That’s weirdly kinky?” offers a friend when I reveal it to her. Still, I find it remarkably effective. It is actually quite easy to wear underneath a shirt or a dress, and it helps to pull my shoulders back, its presence reminding me to do so whenever they round down again. A number of posture correctors exist on the market these days, from little widgets like the Upright Go 2, which you can discreetly affix between shoulder blades (and which comes with an app) to more rigorous athleisure items like the Forme Power Bra, whose patented fabric,

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designed by an orthopedic surgeon, helps pull your body into its correct alignment. “Wearing posture supporters is a good way to help the body hold itself into the desired position,” says Dani Olson, a Los Angeles–based chiropractor.

But my real problem, as Lia Bartha, the creator of B the Method knows, starts deeper, with both my core and my pelvic floor. Bartha is a classically trained Pilates instructor who launched her own methodology five years ago, focusing on using a small balance ball and mat instead of your traditional reformer. A former dancer with scoliosis, Bartha turned to Pilates after she found herself unhappy—and uncomfortable—in her corporate desk job. She thinks it’s helpful to remember that good posture comes from more than just the shoulders. “Don’t feel yourself just lifting from your ribs,” she tells me. “Think of it as though you’re lifting from the pelvic floor, which is this hammock

of muscles around your hips. When you feel a little bit supported in the hips, it’s much more powerful.” I confessed to her that after two kids my core felt like a wet noodle, but Bartha was encouraging, suggesting that with consistency I’d eventually see results. Indeed, after a few weeks of doing her workouts—some of which are specifically designed for posture, others for what she calls “length and reach”—I feel less sore pulling back my shoulders, and more inclined to use my lower abdominal muscles to hold my whole body upright instead.

Flexibility is important too. I also meet up with New York City–based yoga instructor Ashley Dorr at Souk, a yoga studio in Chelsea. Dorr guides me through a flow designed to open the chest, gently twist my spine, and relax my glutes. Poses like baby cobra, upward dog, fish pose, tree pose, and triangle pose are all great, she says. She gently massages my neck as I release my head in a

forward fold, and I feel the weight of my head momentarily vanish. But the real benefit of yoga is the way it “connects the mind with the body,” Dorr explains. “We may enter a room standing as straight as possible, but in an instant we can forget and revert back to what feels most comfortable—or most ingrained.” We end in a savasana where Dorr tucks my shoulder blades under me and tells me to simply experience the sensation of my spine lying flat against the ground.

Most everyone I speak to is keen to remind me that no two spines are alike. Some simply curve more than others. At the museum, I watched my friend Adrian, the ballet dancer, move across the gallery floor, his head so perfectly upright that it could have carried a book across the room. In the window, I caught my reflection and paused. I took a breath, pulled back my shoulders, tilted up my chin, and pulled myself up from the pelvic floor. It was a start. □

toddsnyder.com.
On Freeman: jacket;
amazon.com.
84–85: Shirt; tory
burch.com. Jeans;
bananarepublic.com.
Shoe; ghbass.com.

STAND TALL

88–89: On Kendall:
corset pants, bodysuit,
and hat; maison-alalaia
.com. Hats from
Clyde (clyde.world)
and Bagtazo (bagtazo
collection.com). On
Wong: dress and shirt;
Dior boutiques. Hats
from J.R. Malpere
(jrmalpere.com), Gigi
Burriss Millinery
(gigiburris.com), and
Alaia (maison-alalaia

.com). **90–91:** On
Kortleve: hats from
Clyde (clyde.world)
and Bagtazo (bagtazo
collection.com).
On Odhiang: shirt
and pants; loewe
.com. Hats from Gigi
Burriss Millinery
(gigiburris.com) and
Binata Millinery
(binatamillinery.com).
On Kendall: corset
pants, bodysuit, and
hat; maison-alalaia
.com. Hats from Clyde
(clyde.world) and
Bagtazo (bagtazo
collection.com). On
Wong: dress and shirt;
Dior boutiques. Hats
from J.R. Malpere
(jrmalpere.com), Gigi

Burriss Millinery
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Vanessa Juez. Tailor:
Hailey Desjardins.

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93: Shoes; axel
arigato.com. Tilly
Sveaas chain
necklaces; tillysveaas
.co.uk. **94:** Mejuri
bangle; mejuri.com.
95: Top photo: Shoe;
birkenstock.com.
Bottom photo: Shoes;
maisonmargiela
.com. Tilly Sveaas
chain necklaces and
bracelets; tilly
sveaas.co.uk. Mejuri
bangle; mejuri.com.

97: Tilly Sveaas chain
necklace; tillysveaas
.co.uk. Mejuri bangle;
mejuri.com.

THE GET

98–99: **2.** Bag, \$2,790.
3. Necklace, \$4,750.
12. Bag, \$4,450. On
Wen: jumpsuit
(\$5,300), belt (\$540),
and shoes (\$1,090).
Purdey turtleneck
sweater, \$816; purdey
.com. **100–101:**
6. Coat, \$4,190.
8. Watch, \$6,600.
12. Bag, \$2,900. On
Wen: jacket (\$2,990),
shirt (\$1,650),
pants (\$1,290), bag
(\$3,090). Fashion
Editor: Kate Phelan.

Hair, David Harborow;
makeup, Petros
Petrohilos. Produced
by Fuse Production.
Manicurist: Trish Lomax.

LAST LOOK

108: Bag;
bottegaveneta.com.

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Last Look



Bottega Veneta bag

Extra, extra! Bottega Veneta's latest bag in the maison's signature intrecciato is not *quite* what it seems: Bits of newspaper clippings feature in the handbag's woven construction, but of course it's actually not newspaper at all. Creative director Matthieu Blazy et al. have printed bits and bobs of Italian press on to strips of leather and added a little rectangular pouchette splashed with headlines. (The rolled paper here, meanwhile, is just for show.) It's quite literally news you can use.

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THE WONDER OF LOVE

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