

MAISON ULLENS

Editor's Letter

Intention is at the heart of what we, at Maison Ullens, hold dear. Our goal is to make beautifully handcrafted clothes that stand as works of art. To create with purpose and with honesty.

And so, in this issue of Maison Ullens magazine, we celebrate those values. You will find a story on a small family-run factory in Italy that makes some of our most luxurious knitwear, as well as an essay on the enduring complexities of femininity. We also honor artists whose work we admire and who have made a lasting impression on what we do here at Maison Ullens. From Leo Villareal's monumental light works to Thompson Street Studio's patchwork quilts to Erik Dhont's intimate landscape architecture, we cheer those who explore all the possibilities of beauty.

Fashion is not so different from fine art in that it's a pursuit of creative expression. In these pages, we hope you'll discover refreshing notions of style. This spring, we invite you to wear hues of delicate pinks and buttery yellows on white beaches. essay on the enduring complexities of femininity. And to envision dressing in light knits and flowing layers silhouetted by monolithic architecture under a desert sun.

Enjoy the moment, and happy spring!

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Truth in Beauty

Myriam Ullens reflects on the power of photography, and the man who influenced the way we see women, in an ode to Peter Lindbergh.



TOP IMAGE: COURTESY OF MYRIAM ULLENS; FROM EXHIBIT: PETER LINDBERGH: THE UNKNOWN, 2011 AT THE UCCA. © PETER LINDBERGH | COURTESY PETER LINDBERGH, PARIS |

More than any other photographic genre, fashion photography blurs the border between the fields of art, luxury, and commerce. Historically, it was considered ephemeral and commercial. However, the creativity, dynamism, and originality shown by many fashion photographers have helped renew the canon of modern photography. Since it is inspired by art, popular culture, and societal conceptions of gender, self-image and sexuality, it is also a reflection of an era. As Peter Lindbergh said once: “Fashion photographers are the new painters.”

I first met Peter at the UCCA when Jérôme Sans, who was at the time director of the UCCA in Beijing, organized a big solo exhibition of his work, an exhibition titled *The Unknown*, *The Chinese Episode*, in 2011. It was Peter's first exhibition in China.

But, of course, I was familiar with his work before then. Peter completely transformed the image of women. He revolutionized the traditional way of representing the model, his objective being to expose the personality of the models and celebrities who posed for him. The revolution was to mutate from re-presentation to presentation of the real. Each of Peter's photographs are imbued with interactions between the artist and his subject in everyday environments. Rather than making something idealistic or surreal, he was obsessed with the natural, the uniqueness of each of the individuals he was shooting. He allowed the imperfection to become the perfection, from the pores of the skin to the hairstyle, to the marks of age. It was unprecedented.

In the 1980s, he famously launched the concept of the international supermodel phenomenon. He reinvented the image of fashion photography and, through it, that of women with the British *Vogue* cover in January 1990, featuring Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Tatjana Patitz, and Christy Turlington. He photographed the “spirit” of the new women of the 1990s. He understood that one couldn't capture the spirit of the time and of the women of a specific era with just one model, so he took a group photograph, which was unusual at the time. The beauty of women is captured in its diversity and does not correspond to a single and pre-established canon. He thus proved that a successful portrait had nothing

in common with commercial manipulations consisting in making youth and perfection the only criteria of beauty. In this way, he created a powerful image that became a cultural icon.

One of the decisive aesthetic choices of Peter's career was his choice to shoot in black and white, influenced by street photography and by some of the great American documentary photographers who themselves made the exclusive choice of black and white during the Great Depression, such as Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans. As Lindbergh said, “black and white has always been connected to the image's deeper truth, to its most hidden meaning.” Photography once again becomes this medium linked to authenticity, to veracity. According to Lindbergh, colour never corresponds to the viewer's real perception. Black and white seems to avoid any deception to reach reality.

I was fortunate enough to be photographed by Peter in Paris, a year after we met. Actually, it was the first time that I was photographed by a professional photographer. In the beginning, I felt a little uncomfortable, but he soon set me at ease. Very quickly we spoke about our mutual interests and it became a wonderful moment. We had an intimate lunch together with his whole team. During the day, he photographed my husband and me together, facing each other very closely. We were not aware at the moment, and he caught us by surprise. We very much love that photograph.

Soon after, we spent a fantastic day together, along with his wife and son, on our boat in the Mediterranean Sea along the French Riviera. The weather was beautiful with a lot of wind, so perfect conditions for sailing. We talked to each other as if we had known each other for years. The man was like his photography: smart, natural, passionate, simple, charismatic, fun, generous, fresh, charming, young. Someone rare.

Photography is a mirror held up to show who we are and to document our lives and the world around us. It opens our mind and helps us to see the world differently. But we can't close our eyes on the shifting nature of photography in the era of Instagram, social networks and unprecedented image overload. Photography has become the medium of our time, and so it must remain a reflection of our authenticity.

From top: Guy and Myriam Ullens, photographed by Peter Lindbergh; Milla Jovovich and Karen Elson for *Vogue Italia*, 2000.

A Life In Pictures



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF RITA KONIG; PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIO GALIOTTI

CURATED INSPIRATIONS AND ARTIFACTS FROM THE DESK OF LONDON INTERIOR DESIGNER RITA KONIG.

Words BIFEN XU

London-based interior designer Rita König is best known for her quintessential English sensibility. Her comfortable rooms are filled with prints and colors, and invite cozying up with a good friend and a glass of wine. “Soft and gently-worn,” is how she wants her interiors to feel. Not only has her approach won the admiration of clients in Europe and abroad, but recently König has taken on a spate of more public projects, including curating an exhibition for Christie’s auction house, designing her first hotel, the 850 Hotel SVB in Los Angeles, and collaborating with the esteemed bespoke millworkers, Plain English, on a line of paint colors created specifically for kitchens.

König says she begins each project not with images and mood boards but by getting a sense of how her clients want to inhabit their home. “How they want to live, who they are,” she says, “and that’s everything from their taste, to their way of life, to interests, to the things they enjoy and what they find comfortable. There’s all sorts of information that’s quite integral to the house before you even get to the colors of the walls.”

However, no matter the client, she insists lighting is integral to a comfortable home. She prefers to keep it simple, placing lamps on a switch outlet so that when one enters the room and flips the switch, the lamps go on. As for kitchens, König believes there is an easy distinction between the good and the bad. “What makes a good kitchen is having a place for everything,” she says. “Knowing where everything is and having storage for things.

It’s such a pleasure when everything has its place.”

Of her influences, König counts her mother, the legendary interior decorator Nina Campbell, at the top. Not only did she instill her passion for design aesthetics in her daughter — Campbell’s clients have included English royalty from the Duke and Duchess of York to Ringo Starr — but she also taught her an appreciation for the smaller joys in life. Today, the two frequently visit flea markets looking for potential treasures, some of which have ended up in König’s own home. “I’m an intrepid shopper,” König says. “I love shopping for myself, going into junk shops and trying to find layers for my house.” Paula Rubenstein in New York and Conran Shop in London are two favorites. Many of her finds now hang on the walls of her London home, where she has hung 68 pictures, to be exact, in her signature salon style.

Here, König shares some of her personal interests, indulgences, and reflections.

Checking in

Hotel Heritage

This intimate property, just off Brugge's main historic center, was first built in the 12th century as a merchant house and later turned into a bank. In 1992, a Belgian couple realized the potential to turn the handsome building into a stylish 22-room hotel. The architecture has been carefully preserved.

The charming Le Mystique restaurant has remained intact since 1869. And the rooms are a smart mix of 18th and 19th century antiques, with canopied beds, oak paneled walls, and frescoed ceilings. Still, the hotel has many modern conveniences. The original vaulted cellar has been turned into a spa, sauna, and gym. There are bicycles on hand for exploring the town's many canals. For those seeking a quieter solitude, there is a delightful sundeck on the roof. hotel-heritage.com





New Wave

POPS OF PRIMARY COLOR BRIGHTEN THE SHORES OF PALM BEACH

Photography DEVIN DOYLE Styling CHRISTINA HOLEVAS







Digital Art

Miguel Chevalier, Elias Crespín, Yang Yongliang, and Lu Yang are challenging the very nature of art. All are featured in the current exhibition, "Immaterial/Rematerial," at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing.

Words JEROME NEUTRES



miguel chevalier

Miguel Chevalier, born in Mexico in 1959 to a French family, was one of the first artists to declare explicitly in the early Eighties that he wanted to "make paintings with a computer" while studying at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris. A pioneer of "computing art," he has developed an original visual creation based on generative software that he conceives to produce his unlimited and self-transforming artworks.

Nature is the main source of inspiration for the artist, who creates organic works — works always in movement, which never look the same. He likes to say he generates his virtual gardens by sowing digital seeds which will grow and change according to the infinite and unpredictable variations of the algorithm. Ultimately, he also introduced an interactive dimension in his work, putting the viewer as a sort of co-author, and fostering a new participative relationship between art and its audience. His work has been shown in many art centers and biennales, and was a significant part of the acclaimed exhibition "Artists & Robots" presented first at the Astana World Fair in 2017, and then in the national galleries of the Grand Palais in Paris (2018). Recently he had a large exhibition at the Soulages Museum in Rodez (2019) in the framework of the celebration of the centenary of the most famous French painter.

MIGUEL CHEVALIER Extra Natural Installation, 2018



yang yongliang

Born in Shanghai in 1980, Yang Yongliang now shares his life between his native home and New York. This master of classical drawing has developed a body of unique and refined digital work inspired by traditional Chinese painting. Originally, he focused on Chinese ink paintings, which have now evolved into digital video collages.

The artist creates a contemporary interpretation of his traditional roots adapted to our digital world. His videos of futuristic city landscapes give us his vision of today's urban jungle, while maintaining references to North Song Dynasty paintings. His work shows a strong perception of the rampant urban development in China, where the night and the building density totally recover the human presence. The titles of his multi-channel digital videos speak clearly, such as Journey to the Dark, and The Day of Perpetual Night. However, this seemingly pessimistic vision of today's metropolis has a positive aesthetic counterpoint: Modern life can erase the traditional landscape, but not the art history perspective.

His work has been already exhibited in many museums, with solo exhibitions in the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and the Nevada Museum of Art, including a work presented in 2014 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

YANG YONGLIANG Journey to the Dark II, Video Installation, 2019

Digital Art



elias crespin

Elias Crespin was born in Venezuela in 1965, a country marked by the influence of legendary Kinetic artists Jesus Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz Diez. Crespin first studied computer engineering before moving into art, bringing technics from his unusual background to invent a new form of creation. He invented what we could name the “coded suspension,” a form of mobile sculpture driven by generative programs which make the artwork move in an infinity of variations. Crespin’s mobiles are suspended in the air by invisible threads and self-generate a poetic choreography. In this way, Crespin can be seen as the Calder of the digital age. His style also makes the viewer consider the kinetic art of our robotic world. Already shown in many art centers around the world, including the national galleries of the Grand Palais, in early 2020 Crespin will unveil a special commission for the Louvre Museum – becoming the first digital artist to join the collections of the largest and most visited museum in the world.



lu yang

Lu Yang is a Shanghai-based multimedia artist, born in 1984, who creates digital works that explore themes ranging from neuroscience and metaphysics, to mortality and religion. Her incredibly animated and colorful videos look like Japanese manga comics or video games with a touch of Buddhist references and a strong art history background. (She proposes, for instance, a very contemporary interpretation of classical self-portrait.) Through software manipulation, she has created a new visual world, which both celebrates new technologies and criticizes China’s kitsch online culture – a growing daily practice of some 800 millions internet users. In a storm of animated images, her videos bring together biology, neuroscience, and religion to provide a mirror that reflects the visual streams of our time. While studying at the China Academy of Art, she became interested in emotional brain pathways. Lu introduced the concept of a “brain stereotactic machine to perform deep brain stimulation and transcranial magnetic stimulation on a digital human simulator in my own shape,” she explains, “in order to explore a wide range of subject matter, such as the physiology of the human brain and the origin of consciousness and god-consciousness.” All her work can be defined as “Electromagnetic Brainology,” to quote from the title of one of her works. This year, she was the BMW Art Journey winner at Art Basel in Hong Kong. Her latest work, Material World Knight, will be presented at an upcoming show at the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing.



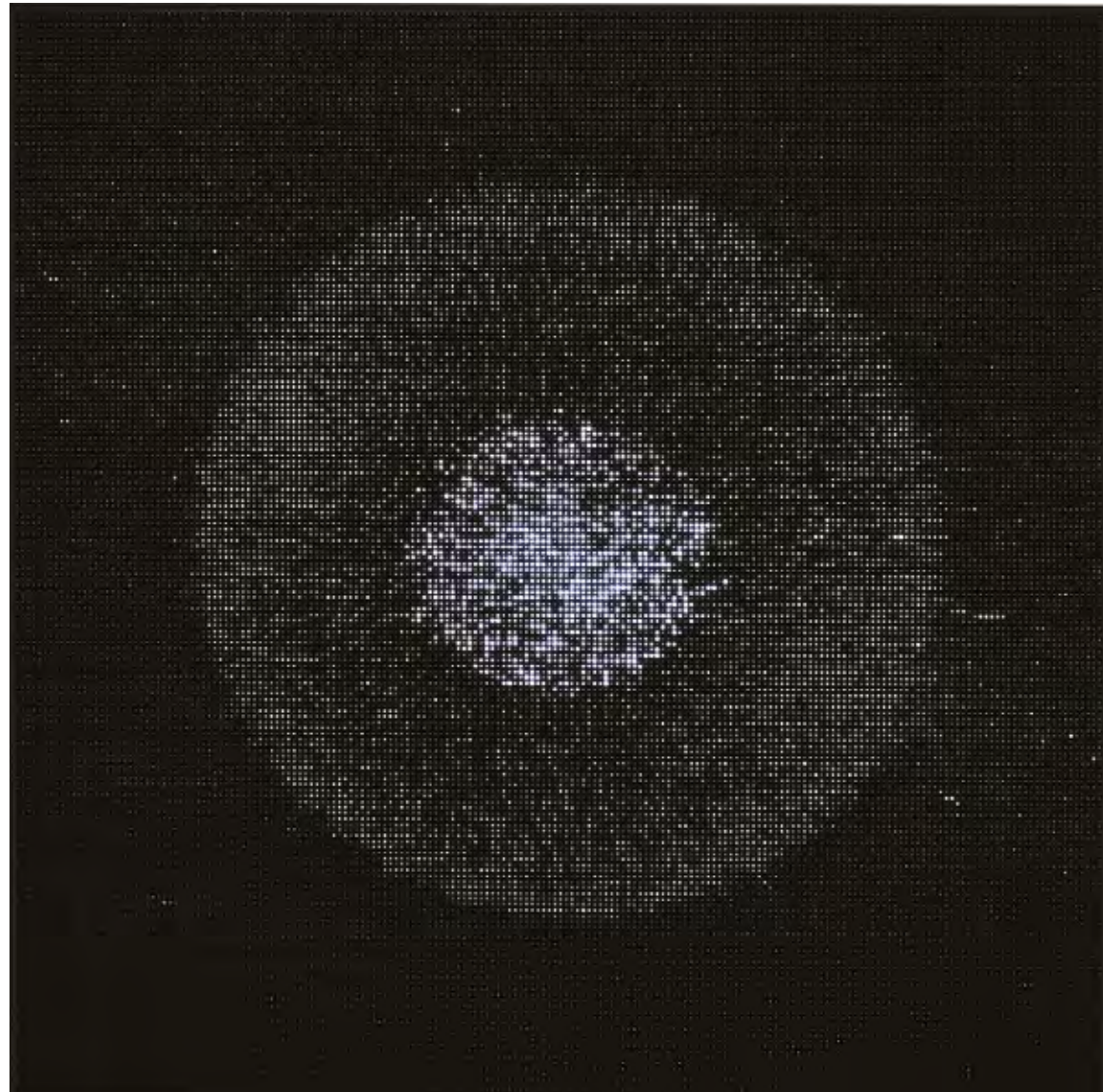
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Let There Be Light

LEO VILLAREAL MARRIES ART WITH TECHNOLOGY TO BRIGHTEN UP THE WORLD — ONE BRIDGE AT A TIME.

Words ADAM FISHER

Star Ceiling, 2018-19



Instance 3, 2018

© LEO VILLAREAL

Leo Villareal is easily the most significant artist ever to emerge from the techno-industrial complex known as Silicon Valley. He honed his technology chops at Interval Research Corporation, a legendary research and development laboratory established by Paul Allen. He found his artistic medium while building infrastructure at Burning Man, the annual art and music festival in Nevada's Black Rock Desert. And he's now creating some of the most celebrated public art installations in the world. His breakthrough was "Bay Lights," which turned the western span of the San Francisco Bay Bridge — all two miles of it — into a single scintillating light sculpture. Villareal's current project is "Illuminated River," which, when completed, will light up the River Thames all the way from the Tower Bridge to the Albert Bridge. At four-and-a-half nautical miles, Illuminated River will be the longest public art commission in the world. In the future, the 52-year-old artist hopes to return to the deserts of the American West where he grew up to create works on the monumental scale of some of his art world heroes: Donald Judd, James Turrell, Robert Smithson, and Michael Heizer. Maison Ullens chatted with the artist on the eve of his first solo show at Pace Gallery in London.

Maison Ullens: Tell me about the project "Illuminated River."

Leo Villareal: Three years ago, I won an international competition to illuminate up to 15 bridges in central London: Tower Bridge to Albert Bridge. There were over a hundred entries and we got shortlisted and ended up winning it. So, this summer in July we launched the first four Bridges: London Bridge, Cannon Street Railway Bridge, Southwark, and Millennium. We're trying next year to launch the next five, and it'll roll out over the next three years and be up for 10 years.

MU: But this is not your first public art project featuring a bridge. You did "Bay Lights" in San Francisco.

LV: That's a whole different scale. I mean 1.8 miles long, 525 feet tall. That was a different thing but it was one very large bridge, and in London the challenge is different because we have 15 separate structures from all different time periods, functionalities, architectural styles. Some are very humble — rail bridges — others are iconic like the UNESCO World Heritage sites like the Westminster Bridge so it's a lot of responsibility. But somehow, I presented my ideas and had literally hundreds of people helping me to realize it. It's kind of unheard of that we have gotten this far, but that's the exciting part of these monumental public art projects, to really inspire people to want to participate and enable these things to happen. So, it's nice to see that happening, particularly in London where things are so polarized — I guess everywhere is polarized. Bridges are kind

of amazing structures, and it's nice to bring attention to them.

MU: There's a real metaphorical aspect here: connection, illumination...

LV: Yeah it sounds a bit clichéd but it really is that. People love infrastructure and it's nice because these things are important. And at night they really do disappear. So, it's been interesting to bring people's attention to them and highlight the beauty that's there. I just got to see them so I'm pretty energized about it.

MU: Speaking of infrastructure, I understand that you got your start working with illumination by building a piece of infrastructure at Burning Man back in the 90s.

LV: I started going to Burning Man in 1994. And one of my very first experiences at Burning Man was getting profoundly lost, which I found fascinating. To be twenty-something years old and to be that lost, and this idea of having to relearn to navigate a new space. I thought that was quite powerful. But by my third year, I was like, "You know what I really need to do is to figure out how to get home at night." So, I took 16 strobe lights in a simple BASIC Stamp micro controller and started sequencing it — you know: zero's off, one is on — so at the lowest level of code. And I took it out to Burning Man and put it on top of my mobile home, not really thinking it was an artwork. But it was just kind of an epiphany of the combination of software light, and space. It really changed the direction of my work and got me into light sculpture.

MU: You are really involved in Burning Man, and I've heard you say that it's really misunderstood.

LV: I think there are a lot of preconceived notions. A lot of people see things, and they see it out of context. I think Burning Man is one giant thing that needs to be appreciated in its full expression, and taking artwork out of context, it just doesn't cut it because it's such an intense and immersive experience. So, I'm always sort of evangelizing and encouraging people to go to Burning Man and now people say, "It was better in the good old days," which I don't think. It's different than it was but it's still really transformational and I see it as a laboratory, a place to try things. It's a big petri dish with a group of people who are really ready for the next level of everything. So, it's incredibly fun and energizes me.

MU: What's the disconnect between Burning Man artists and New York artists? Do they just have different ideas of what art is? Or is there really a value judgment to be made about Burning Man art versus Art World art?

LV: Well, I think there's a lot of snark on both sides. I mean, you



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know, burners can be very burnier than thou, and certainly the New York art world has very strong opinions. I think all forms of expression should be embraced, and it may not be your cup of tea, but making things is better than not making things. And I think that needs to be encouraged across the board. So, I think people should kind of hold their tongues and not judge things that they don't really know about quite so quickly. But it works in all different ways, and there's the tech art world and so many different worlds, and I think the key is to not get pigeonholed, and to just express yourself.

MU: Eric Davis, the Burning Man intellectual and writer, famously talks about the evolution of the Burning Man and in particular the light quality at Burning Man. He talks about it going from the fire to the photon and he's really disturbed by that evolution and identifies with the fire. Are you concerned with the increasing use of technology at the festival and in the world in general?

LV: I think it's all about how you use it. When I look at fire I think, "How does the fire work?" And then I'm trying to recreate that using software. There's a real deep connection between the essence of these things however it is made manifest. I think there are ways of accessing all these universal things that we all respond to as humans that are elemental, but through other means — in my case using code and light.

MU: Where do you see technology taking us?

LV: I'm interested in kind of dragging digital things out of the screen and into the world: blurring these lines, which is what's happening with AR and VR and all these things, but I'm not quite so interested in being isolated with these devices. I like the communal aspects of this. And I think that's what we're saying in these kind of monumental public art projects. They are these incredible focal points that people can really enjoy.

MU: Art changes every generation. What do you see ahead in terms of big trends for the art world?

LV: There's a very small group of people that are acquiring the work. It's pretty rarefied, and I participate in that. But there's also a whole world of the experiential. People who are kind of post-ownership don't care about buying things, and they want to have experiences. I find that to be very exciting: to see where that goes and finding whole new formats. So, I think we're in a time of major disruption and I think that's also occurring in the art world.

MU: Do you feel that our culture in general, or the world in general, is moving towards some kind of convergence between technology and art?

LV: I do! We've never had more powerful and amazing tools to manipulate light and sound. It's at our fingertips, and it's very accessible to everyone in a way that it wasn't 20 years ago. We also have this unbelievable network connecting people so you don't have to be in a particular place. I do think that we're going to see some astounding things that no one ever thought of — so in a way I do feel great. It's going to be a very interesting few years as we define these things as they become more real.

MU: You mention these new digital tools and technologies like VR, but you started your career building out and playing with these tools at a research and development lab in Silicon Valley. Can you tell us about what that time was like?

LV: I studied sculpture at Yale, graduated in 1990, and ended up at NYU in the Interactive Telecommunications Program. I was in grad school for two years, and these were really early days. I wanted to do VR, but you needed a half-million-dollar Silicon Graphics machine and the only way you could get your hands on that was in an academic environment. So, I was drawn to that, and wanting to immerse myself in all these tools. There was no job you could get at that point. There was no industry. It was a very different time. I ended up getting an internship in the summer of 1994, and went out to work at Interval Research, which is a lab that Paul Allen had started. It was yet another layer of learning and exposure to an amazing group of programmers and engineers but mixed in with musicians and designers and artists. It was a real heady mix but great for me. It took me a while to find my medium. I ended up moving back to New York in 1997 and sort of teaching at NYU and establishing my studio. So, I've been at it a while. I feel like I got there ahead of a bunch of other people but I also feel like, certainly, the world is catching up. And it's exciting for these digital tools just to become like paint and canvas and whatever.

MU: What's in the future for you?

LV: I work a lot in the urban landscape, but I've been thinking about working in the desert. It's where my mother's family is from — Marfa, Texas, and my dad's from Chihuahua, and that's the place where I grew up. So, I'd like to go and connect more with Marfa and see what working in the landscape would be like. I'm also working on a group show "Immaterial/Material," at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art Foundation in Beijing with the curator Jerome Neutres. I've done a show in Hong Kong, and I visited Shanghai, and I am very interested in China as a place of new things, and I mean new everything, and a place where, again, a lot of these things are being defined. So, it's exciting to participate in that.



A Rose in Bloom

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT ERIK DHONT EXPLORES THE PROFOUND BEAUTY OF ENHANCED NATURE.

Words WHITNEY VARGAS Photography JEAN-PIERRE GABRIËL

The Ullens's garden outside of Brussels



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEAN-PIERRE GABRIEL

Erik Dhont, one of the world's leading landscape architects, believes a project is successful when clients cannot recognize his work: "We can work on a place for five years, and the owner will say, 'What have you done?' And I'll say, 'But, ah, everything. We moved soil, planted.' The goal is to be invisible but to give solutions to a place."

The Belgian-based designer thinks in terms of enhancing nature, rather than imposing his will. His word for it is dialogue. This collaborative, communal spirit — as well as a deep understanding of traditional European garden design — has made Dhont very much in demand with the most rarefied of clients, those who appreciate understated luxury, and who can discern beauty in the detail of a stitch or a particular mutation of color.

One such client is Dries Van Noten, the Belgian fashion designer known for his expressive botanical textiles. The two men worked together over years to create a 55-acre fairytale woodland in Lier, a municipality of Antwerp, that now includes flowering walking paths, a Victorian rose garden, and the restoration of the property's ancient follies. Throughout, Dhont added personal elements that nod to Van Noten, such as a chocolate-colored rose. "There is a privacy to what I do," Dhont says. "There are nuances in colors, texture, or scents that you can only express to a certain person."

Before opening his landscape practice in 1989, Dhont worked as a graphic designer. He remains interested in the tension between spaces, proportions, and the value of clean lines. He likens his role to that of a composer: "We talk about the written,

tension, silence — this is our vocabulary." In order to achieve harmony, Dhont typically sets aside fifty percent of a property for architectural landscape, and leaves fifty percent wild, "where children can discover butterflies."

Nearly fifteen years ago, he began working with Guy and Myriam Ullens, the founder of Maison Ullens, on their estate south of Brussels. At the time, the Ullens property had a lovely garden with a variety of trees, but not many flowers. They hoped to plant an abundance of flowers that would blossom throughout the seasons, and provide bouquets that could be delivered to the house. The result is a tranquil fantasy of color and form. There are ambling grass walks among roses. A large vegetable garden framed by a tall wisteria pergola. Geometric hedgings that give way to verdant fields. It is the Ullens's hope that a century from now, children will scamper along the footpaths, picking blossoms, similar to how their grandchildren do now.

After all, Dhont says, gardens are not mere forms of art. They are living, breathing, growing, dying wonders, teeming with restorative energy. He reflects on a moment in his own life when nature provided a healing balm: "There was a time when I was stressed, and I went to the woods. I put myself between ferns. You just need to be closer to plants, to have a connection to the soil, to the humidity, to the real things of life. When you have a garden, you don't need to see the work, and look for this or that." He pauses, before explaining his place in this eternally evolving ecosystem: "It's like the Japanese way, you give a little extra push to the season and then you have a kind of awareness to nature. Three cherry trees are simply three trees. But when they blossom, they insist that you look."

Checking in

Cal-A-Vie

Tucked in the hills just north of San Diego, this storied spa takes a holistic approach to wellness, focusing equally on mind, body, and spirit. For guests who want to get in shape they can hike the property's idyllic trails, take a tai chi class, or try an aqua yoga session in the resort's new 17,000 square foot state-of-the-art fitness center.

After a rigorous morning workout, most guests head to the Provence-style spa to indulge in peptide and collagen facials or a lavender and honey body wrap. There's also new age offerings to round out the day, with guided visualizations and sumi, an artful meditation using a brush, ink, and your own imagination.

While there is an enforced daily calorie restriction, most of the food is made from ingredients sourced from the property's organic garden. Cal-a-Vie has been called a luxury sleepaway camp for adults and with a 5-to-1 ratio of staff to guest, the pampering is world class. cal-a-vie.com





CLEAN LINES

A streamlined silhouette, whether in crisp cotton, sumptuous leather, or a floor-grazing dress, is a strong statement for spring.

Photography JON ERVIN Styling JENNIFER HARTMAN







PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATE SEARS AND THOMPSON STREET STUDIO

In Good Hands

WITH HER COVETED QUILTS AND WEAVINGS, KIVA MOTNYK ELEVATES DOMESTIC CRAFTS TO AN ART FORM.

Words MAURA EGAN

A quilt made from antique linens by the artist Kiva Motnyk



Motnyk makes an art work with various fabrics from Maison Ullens

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROY BEESON

The first thing I notice when I enter Kiva Motnyk's airy studio in New York's SoHo neighborhood is an Anni Albers book. It makes sense that the iconic Bauhaus artist would serve as an inspiration for Motnyk, who creates elegant, handcrafted textiles. Like Albers before her, Motnyk has elevated textile crafts such as quilting and weaving—long associated with domestic crafts or women's work—into a rarified art form. Her studio is filled with neat stacks of folded quilts, baskets piled high with naturally dyed swatches and art pieces in various stages of completion. A simple loom that she found in Guatemala hangs on the wall like a favorite piece of art.

"I had a Waldorf education here in New York City. So I learned how to sew in kindergarten. It was as important a skill as math," says Motnyk, of the education philosophy that values practical and artistic skills as much intellectual ones. She had a very creative childhood, which was spent in the very space we are chatting now. Her father, a painter, and her mother, a dancer, bought the third floor of a SoHo building in the Seventies, long before the neighborhood was filled with high-end boutiques and trendy cafes. Her building, located on a quiet street, still exudes a bohemian charm. There is a clothes line on the fire escape where she dries fabric after dyeing them.

Motnyk attended the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design where she studied textile design. After graduating, she returned to the city to work in fashion. After working with the indie designer Susan Cianciolo, she took a job with Isaac Mizrahi. It was the Nineties and Mizrahi was at the height of his career. "I was his right-hand man and he was an amazing teacher," she says, recalling how he taught her everything about tailoring and fabric construction. Next up was a stint at Calvin Klein as a creative director where she worked on story boarding, textile research and bigger concepts. She also discovered the nuance of color. Klein, a master of minimalism, was still at the helm of the company. "There would be like 50 shades of grey and beige to work with," she says.

In 2014, she opened Thompson Street Studio, because she wanted to get back to making things with her hands. The timing was right, as over the last few years the design and fashion worlds have embraced and helped revive the lost art of traditional crafts, from basket weaving to Japanese shibori dyeing. Taking cues from her years at Calvin Klein, Motnyk works with subtle

gradations of color in her pieces. One quilt moves from olive greens to mustardy yellows to brighter oranges. A set of pillows features an abstract geometric pattern that suggests the color palette of a Paul Klee painting or even a Picasso (both artist have served as inspirations). Another table runner resembles an Art Deco motif. The precision of her stitching, which she does mostly by hand, is evidence of someone versed in tailoring.

Thompson Street Studio also serves as a lab of sorts, where Motnyk can work with other artists and makers. In fact, Maison Ullens gave her a box of fabrics from the spring collection to create an art piece for this issue. "Maison Ullens provided an incredible palette of texture and colors to weave together," Motnyk says. "It's motivating to use remainders of fabrics you might otherwise have no use for and figure out how they can be transformed. Cianciolo, a longtime friend, is a frequent collaborator. The two helped found a textile shop and school in Mississippi a few years ago, and in the fall of 2018 they put on a group show at the Bridget Donahue Gallery in New York which featured ceramics, furniture and tapestries. As much as Motnyk is firmly part of a downtown art scene, she also finds inspiration abroad in places like Peru, Mexico and India, where she interacts with more traditional artisans.

And then there is her studio in upstate New York, where she and her husband, an industrial designer, spend a lot of time making art. Motnyk recently showed at Object and Design, an influential new design show launched by a former Frieze director. She also recently led a quilting workshop to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus at Deitch Projects in SoHo during Performa last November, and has several furniture collaborations in the works. The peace and tranquility she finds upstate is a welcome respite from her increasingly busy schedule. At her 25-acre property, Motnyk grows flowers and plants, such as Goldenrod, Rose hip and Marigold, as well as searches for mosses and woods to use as natural dyes for her fabrics. "I love being outside and foraging for things," she says. "I love creating colors because it's so instantaneous. The rest of the process is pretty slow."

Kiva Motnyk crafted a quilt, pictured here, using fabrics from the Maison Ullens spring collection.

Checking in

Tikchik Lodge

Located on the tip of the peninsula on Bristol Bay in southern Alaska, this classic sportsmen lodge, built in 1969, is one of the most remote resorts in the world.

The property has seven timber cabins, fitted with large picture windows that look out onto the water, and can only be accessed by seaplane. But it's worth the trip as the region offers world-class fishing, excellent hiking, and wildlife viewing (expect to see plenty of bears and walruses). The lodge owns four seaplanes and over forty boats in order to take guests to the most hard to reach shores.

If you don't have any luck catching a whopping Chinook salmon, you can still dine on the best of Pacific Northwest cuisine — Alaska king crab, gravlax, and reindeer sausage— at Tikchik's restaurant, which has 360-degree views of the bay.

There's also a on-site greenhouse for fresh vegetables, a rarity in this region of the world.
tikchiklodge.com





INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN

This season, step into unexpectedly lean knits,
as light as a desert breeze.

Photography JULIETTE CASSIDY
Styling MELISSA VENTOSA MARTIN























A Maison Ullens sweater, from the spring collection, knit by Al-An Tricot.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEVIN DOYLE

The Gentle Craft

MAISON ULLENS WORKS WITH ONE FAMILY-RUN FACTORY IN ITALY TO CREATE SOME OF THEIR MOST LUXURIOUS KNITS.

Words LIVIA HENGEL

A short drive from the waterside villas and pristine shores of Lake Como lies Al-An Tricot, a small knitwear factory. There, some of the highest quality threads are deftly woven to create Maison Ullens most coveted pieces each season. Established nearly 40 years ago, the family-owned factory is now in its second generation and overseen by Giovanna and Angelo Palladino, siblings with a shared passion for knitwear and its longstanding heritage in Italy.

"Italy is renowned for its artisanship, and North Italy particularly for its knits, so we're proud to innovate on these historic traditions," says Giovanna. The "Made in Italy" label is a font of inspiration for Al-An Tricot, as it is for Maison Ullens, and a strong collaborative partnership has developed between the two businesses over the years. "The designers at Maison Ullens travel around the world to find inspiration before they meet us at the factory to present their proposal for the next season," Giovanna says. "We begin to exchange ideas to see what is technically possible so it's a very creative process."

This season, there are "summer travel" reversible pieces made with organic yarns, timeless basics with ultra-thin "second skin"

knitting, and textured "fluffy knit" pieces that are extremely wearable and soft to the touch. In keeping with Maison Ullens's core philosophy, each item is expertly crafted and elegant while also being effortlessly practical. A travel kit, for instance, includes a long-fitted dress, knitted jogging pants, and a long-sleeved shirt that can be reversed to reveal two color patterns. These pieces illustrate the brand's focus on sustainability as well as its belief in building a wardrobe made up of versatile investment pieces.

"Maison Ullens considers the dynamics of the contemporary woman: it's a brand that understands all 360 degrees of her life. It's a true pleasure for us to design items that accompany this woman throughout her day, wherever she goes," says Giovanna.

Like all masters of their craft, Al-An Tricot oversees all aspects of knitwear, with all production performed in-house to guarantee a perfect final product. From design and modeling to dyeing, laundering and ironing, ultrafine fabrics are woven together to create pieces that are more than the sum of their parts. "We follow the life of each item from A to Z," says Giovanna.



Natasha Pickowicz wearing Maison Ullens, at Flora Bar

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROY BEESON

Portrait of an Artist

The New York pastry chef Natasha Pickowicz on the politicization of food, women in the kitchen, and, of course, the best dessert.

Words WHITNEY VARGAS

Like all good tales, Natasha Pickowicz's begins with a love story. After studying Scottish literature at Cornell University, she decided to follow her partner north, to Montreal. Unable to find work as a writer, and because she didn't yet have her work papers, she took a job baking "nostalgic American desserts," like lemon bars and brownies in a small local cafe. Raised by her Chinese mother who had emigrated to the United States, Pickowicz learned on the job — sugary sweets and buttery rolls hadn't exactly been childhood staples.

Nine years later, and Pickowicz is now one of the most in-demand pastry chefs in New York. A James Beard-nominated chef, she oversees pastry at the elegantly appointed Flora Bar, in The Met Breuer, as well as its hip downtown sister restaurant, Café Altro Paradiso. To bite into one of her signature sticky buns is to taste joy. Her savory breads could be a meal unto themselves.

And, yet, as her status as a baker has increased, Pickowicz continues to break the mold. In 2016, disillusioned by the presidential election, she decided to host a charity bake sale for Planned Parenthood. She's hosted an annual bake sale ever since, and it's now grown to include chefs, writers, artists from around the country, all the while raising thousands with \$5 treats. "I personally think food is more important than ever," she says. "Food is about creating community. In a big city like New York, you want to find your people. People develop relationships with places and the people within them. It's nourishing to be fed by people that you love."

Here, Pickowicz shares her thoughts on the importance of breaking bread.

You fell into baking as a professional career. Did you grow up making desserts?

No! It certainly was a very unexpected happening in my life. My mother is Chinese. I grew up in a Chinese food culture. Sweets and desserts weren't a strong part of her culinary world. In fact, I was just home for Thanksgiving, and my parents were really excited about making a big Thanksgiving dinner. I said, 'Great, what can I make?' Their only request was that I make the cornbread from the Jiffy box. I said I could make it from scratch, but they really wanted the Jiffy cornbread. I think it's surprised them that I've fallen hard for something that's so foreign to them: pastry, fine dining, New York restaurants. But I'm a big believer in breaking the rules...

Now you oversee pastries at Flora Bar and Café Altro Paradiso, two very different but equally impressive restaurants. What's that like?

On the creative and conceptual side, the restaurants where I work, and my relationship with Ignacio [Mattos, the chef], are incredibly fulfilling. He's really exacting and thorough. There's an incredible discipline around how we create, tweak, and test dishes. Getting to play around with beautiful ingredients, in beautiful settings like The Met Breuer, is a true privilege.

What is your work ethos?

Being able to work with the right ingredients and make the food I believe in. I don't want to speak too broadly, but in my experience, I've worked really hard to cultivate a pastry team

filled with people with similar values. I think a lot about, 'Are you respectful? Organized? Detail-oriented? But also do you treat people with empathy?' I work with incredible teams of women, who share all those values. Making food with them is a total joy. They want to blow people's minds, subvert expectations. It's not like that everywhere.

That sounds more like a culinary movement than a restaurant kitchen.

I think what we're trying to do is something bigger than baking. We're creating opportunities for people, to keep educating, feeding that curiosity. It might not necessarily be pastry oriented – like programming a behind-the-scenes tour of the Met Opera. But I think we can do that, and all learn something about how large groups put on a production. Whether it's getting my teams involved with wine classes, or touring a cheese cave in Brooklyn. I think it's really important to create experiences that they're interested in. My role has expanded beyond pastry.

Do you only work with women? Do you prefer that?

I've only ever worked with women in pastry! I wish men reached out more. I've had three male stages, over the last two years. Truth is, when I put out a call, I've never had any male applicants. I think we're part of cultivating a new world order – to not have restaurants be so dominated by men at the chef level.

What are you most interested in baking right now?

We just purchased a sheeter, a laminator. I am dying with excitement to play around with it. I can now do croissants and danishes, which I've always felt was the missing piece in our dessert case. I love savory, so I'm also really interested in playing around with dried nori, beautiful spring onions that I can char and then fold into bread.

Your annual charity bake sale has become quite the event. How and why did you team with Planned Parenthood?

I came up with the bake sale in response to our last super disastrous election. It felt really important to disrupt the status quo. It's typically held in the spring. The next one will definitely happen before the primaries. Us supporting Planned Parenthood was very much a politicized directive. A lot of times with restaurants, people will say, 'I just want to come to eat your food. I don't need to know what you believe in.' But I strongly disagree with that. We kind of knew that allying with Planned Parenthood would be something that not everyone would agree with. I want eating in restaurants to be an intimate experience. Not intrusive. But I want to be seen a little bit. To know that I'm

eating in a place that agrees with me on every level. One of the most pleasurable things about these restaurants are the people who come to them. The people are the other piece of this puzzle. They're not here to just eat food. They're here to see an art show upstairs, or chat with the bartender. I don't make pastries for myself. I don't do it. I don't have that relationship with sugar. I make those things because I like to give pleasure to the people who I love. I'm not making myself a pie at home.

What is your day like?

My days vary. I try to split my time between Altro and Flora. I feel like people are often surprised by how much hands on, production I still do. Especially at Altro. We're going through our stuff really fast, which is fantastic, and lively and zippy. My work is a balance of work and prep and production: desserts, bread, and recipe development. Any given week, I'm working on three new dishes, whether it's a bread for a new sandwich, a pastry for the case, I'm always experimenting and playing around with stuff. I'll try to get to one restaurant by 9am, and stay for five or six hours. Then, I'll head to the other one, usually I'll go down to Altro, and be there until 9. It's definitely a juggling act. Both kitchens are so different, and I love them both. I think it would be hard for me to go back to one restaurant. I've adjusted to it.

How do you dress for work?

I'm from Southern California, so I'm a big believer in comfort. I normally wear boots. I'm casual. But I love patterns, florals. I love really structured things, like the beautiful Maison Ullens button-down, in a black suede leather. But I'm usually wearing Dickies or Carhartt. A lot of denim. I'm in a uniform all day long, a white dishwasher shirt. Something about a uniform lets me focus on my work. It's one less decision I have to make.

Lastly, what's your favorite dessert?

Coffee ice cream. A great coffee ice cream is super hard to find. I've had mixed results making it myself. I grew up eating Haagen-Dazs coffee, so I'm nostalgic for those flavors.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GENTIL & HYERS



Pickowicz's pastries at Flora Bar NYC

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MAISON ULLENS

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THANK YOU.