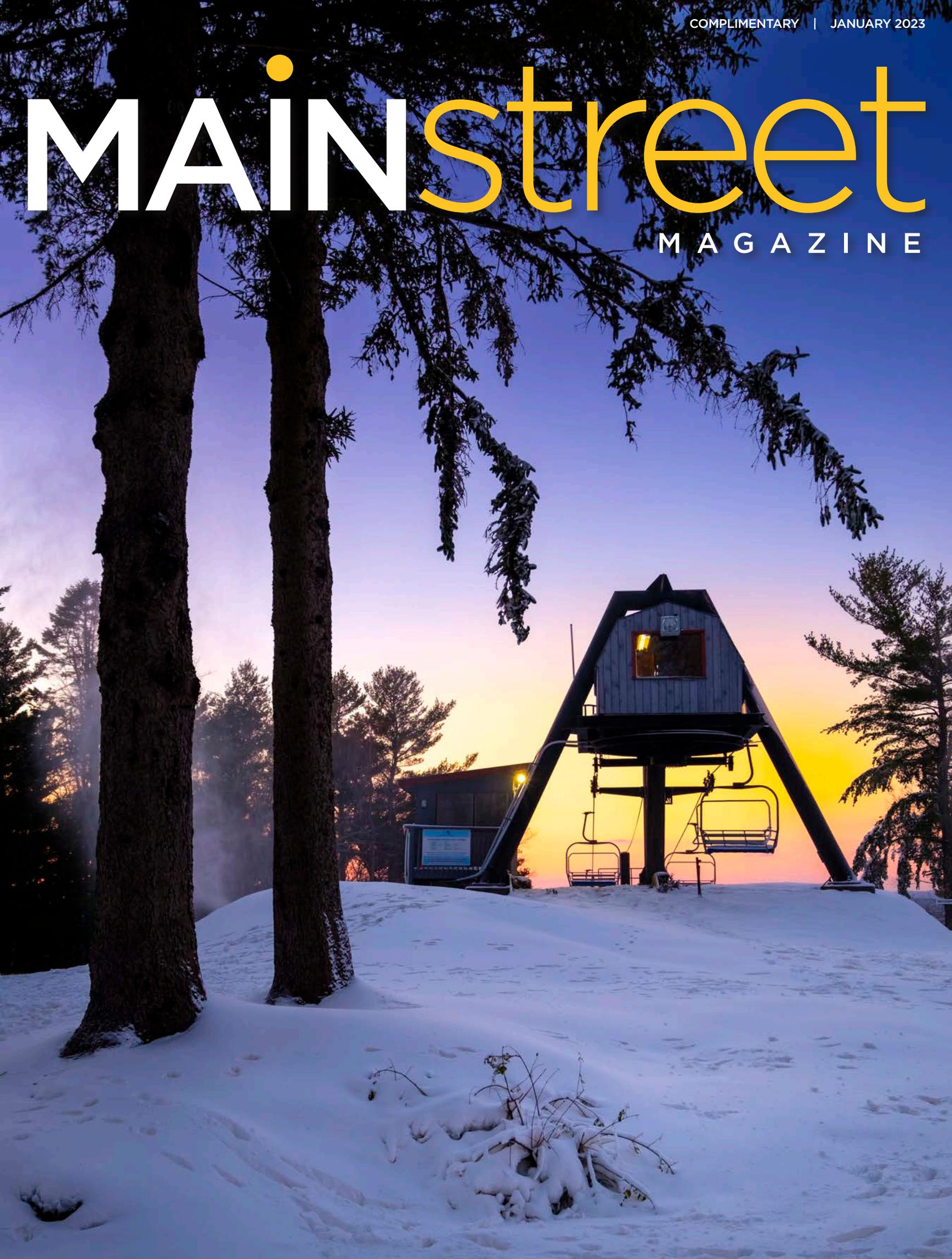


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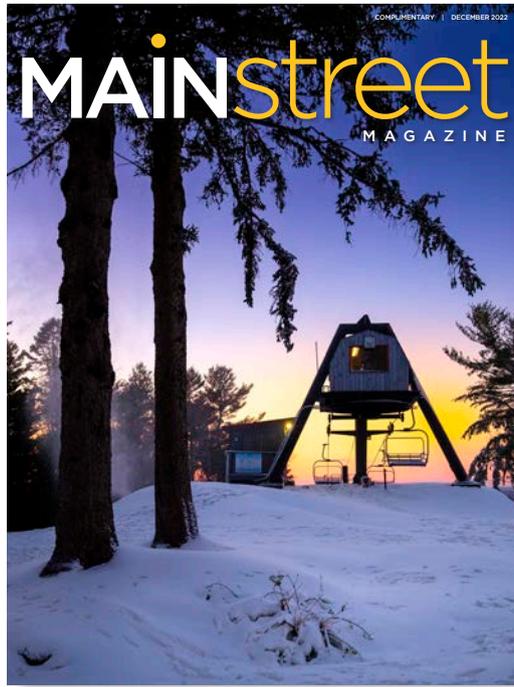
IT'S A BRAND NEW YEAR!

Well, well, well - what do we have here? We've got ourselves a brand new year! Welcome 2023! Now, it'll probably take me at least the first quarter of the new year to write '23 instead of '22 on all of my checks. The struggle is real! Buuuut each of us usually welcomes the new year with open arms because a lot of us view it as a clean slate, a new chapter, a fresh start. And in many ways, it totally is. Just don't hurt yourself and over-do it when you hit the gym in those first few days and weeks of '23... you know what I'm talking about!

Do you believe in New Year's Resolutions? I'm torn about them, not to say that I haven't set one or two of them. I changed my perspective on them about a decade ago, and viewed them more as a commitment than a resolution and it helped me stick with them. Re-framing the approach I took and treating them more as a lifestyle change and commitment to myself, I found to be more effective for me. I made a few of those in late 2021 ahead of 2022 (ever the overachiever, I got a headstart on them!) like getting back to working out and getting healthier. I'm happy to say that starting that early and sticking with it for the entirety of 2022 has resulted in some fantasic results! And now those commitments are a part of my lifestyle. Going into 2023 I've been debating about any commitments that I need to make whether they are personal, professional, or otherwise... and my jury is still out. And now as you read this, it's time I decide before it's too late, right? And how about you, any upcoming changes, resolutions, and or commitments to yourself?

I'd like to talk about something super exciting that's coming up in March. This March will mark our TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY! That's right, Main Street Magazine is turning ten years old. In magazine years, that's a pretty big deal! In honor of that, we're going to be making a pretty special issue - that's the plan at least. I'm hoping it'll be a pretty big issue, with everyone looking back over the past ten years, as well as looking forward. Dominique even talked me into letting her interview me... what'll come of that, I'm not so sure, but it should be entertaining nonetheless! For anyone who has suggestions and or would like to help support this exciting and big issue, give us a ring! Talk to me about editorial "stuff" and Ashley can help everyone out with advertising support! Because without the advertising support of all of our amazing advertisers, we certainly would not be celebrating our ten year anniversary! So thank you to each and every one of you, and to eveyone else for their continued loyalty!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



JANUARY 2023

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Cover photo by Lazlo Gyorsok

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Accounting services by UHY LLP, Certified Public Accountants • Insured by Kneller Insurance Agency

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RYAN FRANK LIKES HIS SPACE

By Anna Martucci
info@mainstreetmag.com

I first met the visual artist Ryan Frank last summer during a show titled *Baggage* at the Icehouse Project Space in Sharon, CT. The concept of the show stemmed from the great shift of people from their lives in New York City to the Hudson Valley and elsewhere. *Baggage* featured works by 18 artists who had all uprooted their lives and asked them to examine how that transition of space affected them and their work. Each artist produced a “suitcase” to use as a container to illuminate their experiences.

Frank’s suitcase was made with ash from trees infested with emerald ash borer and cedar from the closet of his old apartment in New York City. The work juxtaposed his two living spaces, the cedar from the interior enclosed urban space of the city and the trees from around Sharon. The sculptural beauty of Frank’s piece was self-evident. What interested me, however, was that the materials were either from something invasive (the emerald ash borer is an invasive Connecticut beetle that kills trees) or from something used to prevent invasion (cedar for a closet to prevent moths). Both spaces, urban and rural, have beauty and challenges.

The idea of space

Frank, who currently resides in Brooklyn, spent seven years living in Sharon where he was the director of The Granary, an art exhibition and storage space for a private collection of contemporary art. He is also a former artist-in-residence at the Wassaic Project. Most recently Frank was the artist-in-residence at The Hotchkiss School where he exhibited an installation titled *Cross Cut* at the Tremaine Art Gallery.

As a photographer, sculptor, and woodworker, Frank’s work consistently comes back to the idea of space. He states, “Living in New York City, I am invested in the political exigency of space – one of our most valuable resources. Skyrocketing housing prices, international migrant crises, and the advent of climate change have thrust space into a state of uncertain transition, as it is constantly being monetized and weaponized to the detriment of the disenfranchised. My work resists these patterns by considering space’s transformation into place, a specific site that is mapped, felt, moved through and lived by the body.”

The artist’s medium

Frank often combines mediums as an avenue to explore space. He wants to push his photography beyond the traditional confines of two-dimensional

prints and give his images “greater space and light and perspective.” To this end, Frank uses vessels such as boxes, cinder blocks and windows, both handmade and found, to frame his photographs for a uniquely shifted viewing experience. The vessels provide the viewer an opportunity to reflect on the ways space and imagery “collide and speak to one another.”

Space and the body

Frank also connects the idea of space to the human body, in particular through his passion for running. His ongoing project *Running Dialogue* is a time where Frank and other artists meet and run. During their run the artists talk to Frank about their lives, who they are, the work they do and why they do it. “The project explores how engaging in thought and conversation while in movement allows dialogue to happen more freely, outside the normal constraints of social space.”

At Hotchkiss

During his residency at The Hotchkiss School, Frank encouraged architecture students to interact more deeply with the ecological space of their campus. They each found a wooden object that spoke to them and used it to collaboratively construct an armchair for the installation. Through this interaction between the outdoor space of the campus and the interior space of the

gallery, students gained stronger awareness of the interconnection between human beings and their environments.

Frank’s own sculptures for the installation were made from a variety of found and discarded wooden objects from the campus. Each work is distinctive, yet all invite the viewer to contemplate their own relationship to space and how time, erosion and human progress can change and challenge our perception of ourselves and our world.

Talking with the artist

I recently had the chance to speak with Frank about his work and how, despite relocating full time back to Brooklyn, he is continually drawn to the Hudson Valley and its environs.

How did art initially become a part of your life?

I grew up doing theater in Sacramento and then studied it in college. One summer during undergrad I was an apprentice at Williamstown Theatre Festival, which was the first time I

worked in a wood shop and also created my own original performance work, both of which made a lasting impact. Around the same time I took an art history course at NYU which was eye opening and changed my life forever. Living in New York I started going to museums and galleries regularly, and learned first hand in art spaces in addition to what I learned in the classroom.

Describe how you use art as a way to create awareness.

Some of my earliest works depicted workers and functioned as a kind of monument to labor. My current body of work on view in *Cross Cut* is the first series I made using wood alone and it speaks to the indirect and environmental impact of human inflicted climate change. Art is a way of saying something that can’t be said with words, through material, object, their placement and context. I think that often art that creates the most cultural and political awareness does so indirectly, prioritizing the exploration of ideas instead of a desired result.

Continued on next page ...



Above: *Wood Box* (TX 17, Fort Davis), plywood, photo transparency, plexi-glass, and fluorescent light, 5x45x6”, 2013. Below, left: Ryan Frank and fellow artists preparing to run

Opposite page, L-R: *Emerald Ash Borer Cedar Closet*, ash, cedar, cardboard and hardware, 30x15x10”, 2022. Ryan Frank and an architecture student at The Hotchkiss School with the collaborative work, *Beeslick Woods Lost and Found*.



What first brought you to Sharon, Connecticut?

I first came to Sharon for a job managing a private art storage and exhibition space run by a couple of collectors of contemporary art. I was in my late 20s and remember thinking there was no one my age and very little happening in the area, culturally. Shortly after I moved to Sharon I became acquainted with Wassaic Project and was in their first residency cohort in the summer of 2010. Working at Wassaic Project expanded my creative and professional community and over time I got to know many fellow artists based in the area. Sharon now is a lot different from when I first landed there fifteen years ago.



How did your experience living in this area inform your work?

My first summer at Wassaic Project I worked on a series of photo-based animal portraits using barn fencing, milk crates and other rural and industrial materials. After this I created my first extensive body of work which was a series of light boxes made out of plywood that used photographs I shot standing in the middle of rural roads,

facing opposite directions. The light boxes were very much influenced by my time living in the area, commuting back and forth from the city, taking in the same expansive views of two lane country roads on a weekly basis. Living up here provided me with the time and space to develop my work in

a way I wouldn't have living back in the city. I've always been interested in how place informs what we make and how we make it.

Despite now living in Brooklyn, you often return to this area, what keeps drawing you back?

It's always nice to get out of the city for fresh air and a change of scenery, but the biggest draw are the fellow artists based here who I consider some of my closest friends. When I moved back to the city full time at the end of 2015, I didn't expect to return as much as I have, but I've continued to exhibit up here with artists I know and admire. I value being a part of the thriving and growing creative community based in the area. •

To learn more about Ryan Frank and his work, you can visit his website at www.ryanmfrank.com.

Above: Ryan Frank's installation *Cross Cut* at The Tremaine Art Gallery at The Hotchkiss School. Below, left: *These Woods Were Trees II*, birch, sande plywood, pine, oak, poplar, mahogany, cedar, sapele and douglas fir, 41x29x2", 2022.



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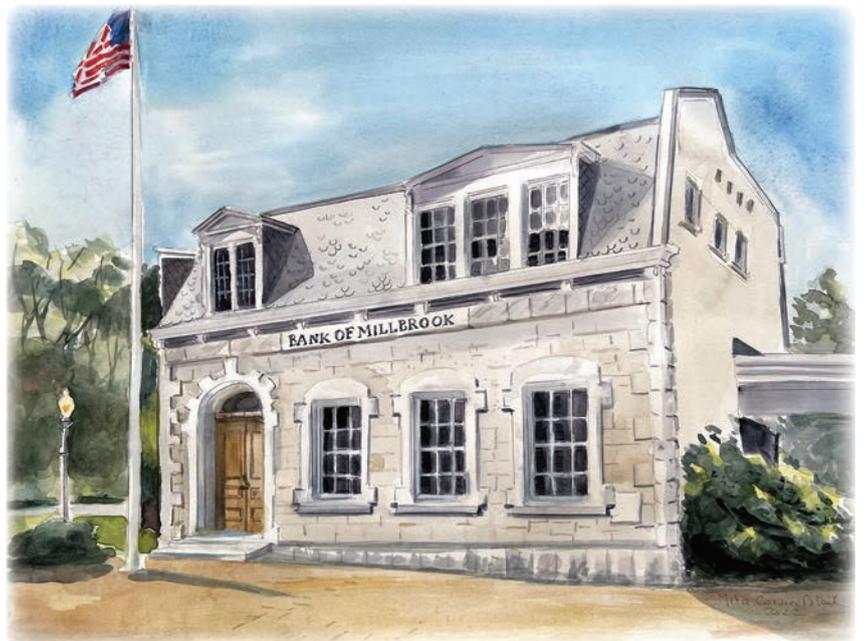
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Katherine Martucci wears many hats, her favorite being the “proud grandmother” hat. She has five amazing grandkids that she loves to spend time with along with her kids, husband, and daughters-in-law. Katherine is a retired elementary education teacher, “I volunteer with a Headstart program in Sarasota, FL, where we spend some time throughout the year, with an organization called Children First. I have been volunteering in the classroom for approximately eight years and I absolutely love working with the children and seeing firsthand the amazing strides they make throughout the year.” When Katherine isn’t busy working with kids, she enjoys playing tennis, golf, bridge, and reading. “My husband and I have a farm in Ancramdale, NY, where we have lived for almost 40 years. We love the people and being surrounded by nature. I feel like such a lucky person!”



Some of you might recognize this bright smiling face. **Skylar Pulver** works as a dental hygienist at Rhinebeck Dental Care in Rhinebeck, NY, where she’s been working for two-and-a-half years. “I love meeting new people, and hearing their stories and what makes them happy. I love the fast-paced environment and seeing new friendly faces!” Outside of work, Skylar keeps pretty busy, too. She enjoys the outdoors, working out, hanging out with her dogs, family and her boyfriend. Skylar hails from Hollowville, NY, which is sandwiched between Churchtown and Claverack. “I loved growing up on a quiet back road where everybody knows everybody, and is willing to lend a helping hand when needed.” Hey, neighbor! As for the new year, Skylar wanted to leave us with this, “Be kind, work hard, and smile!” And if you need any help making that smile brighter, you can see Skylar!



Lawrence Watson is the owner of Watsons Forestry where he manages woodlands for land owners for purposes of logging, land clearing, property management and/or removal of invasive and undesirable trees. “I have been doing this professionally for over seven years and I love being able to meet clients’ expectations and ensure a healthy forest for future generations.” Outside of work Lawrence likes to spend time with his family, as well as fishing, hunting, and shooting clay pigeons. “I am from Millerton, NY, born and raised, and I love the small town feeling and the relationships that I have built between private landowners and local farmers. I have a young family that include my wife Kristie, and our two children, Chloe and LJ. I would like to pass my knowledge and passion for foresting and logging onto my kids and the next generation.”



You may recognize this name: **Regina Molaro Fish**. Not only is she a freelance writer, but she’s been one of the contributing writers for *Main Street* for years! “I have been writing for 20 years. I love learning about the different topics that I write about and as a result of my writing assignments, I’ve had interesting experiences from attending NY Fashion Week to going on set at *Sesame Street*,” Regina shared. Outside of work Regina keeps super busy. “I love to travel, surf, hike, practice yoga, visit museums, and explore!” Regina explored the area extensively some years ago when her husband worked at a local hospital and they lived in Rhinebeck, NY. “I love staying connected to the Hudson Valley community through my job at *Main Street Magazine*.”



Jeremy Boviard is the general manager of The Moviehouse in Millerton, NY. “Some of my earliest, and fondest, childhood memories are being delighted by *The Wizard of Oz*, terrified by *E.T.*, and thrilled by *Star Wars*; I think it’s safe to say I have been a lifelong film fan!” Growing up in the Boston area, Jeremy was involved in the performing arts and has always had a strong affinity for artistic expressions of all varieties, but film has long been his biggest love. “For as long as I can remember, it was always one of my dreams to be involved with operating a movie theater. When the opportunity presented itself to be the GM of The Moviehouse, I jumped at the chance to fulfill this dream, and have been living it ever since!”



Whitney Joseph is a name that avid *Millerton News* readers will recognize. Whitney is a journalist, editor, and a writer, although her career began as a television reporter, switching to print later. “I was then editor of *The Millerton News* for 20 years. I love helping the community function at its best.” Whitney shared that she enjoys spending time with her family, which has become increasingly valuable to her, especially since I’ve left New York and moved south. “I also love art, books, dance, music and great food. I’m from Florida originally, but my family is from New York. I love the Harlem Valley – it’s incredibly beautiful, of course – but the people up here are its best resource.” She also shared, “Millerton is an amazing gem of a village, as are the surrounding communities. As I am no longer living locally I appreciate even more so its uniqueness and loveliness.”



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By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

The backbone of our communities is that of small businesses: the often more visible brick-and-mortar as well as the service sector and specialty businesses, and everything in between. These businesses are run- and staffed by hardworking people who are devoted to their respective communities and the people who live and work in them. This month we are honored to feature one such local businesses, one which certainly has their finger on the pulse of all of the happenings in the greater Millerton area. The Hair Lounge has been “doing dos” for a number of years now, but there’s so much more to the business: the people behind it and the people who they help look their best. We were able to catch up with owner Loren Whiteley and learn more about more than just hair!

What is your business, when did you start it, and where can people find you?

We here at The Hair Lounge are a full-service hair salon specializing in hair color, cutting, and extensions. We opened in our current location at 143 Route 44 in Millerton, NY, in September of 2018.

How did this business come about and who are the people behind it?

Everyone at The Hair Lounge previously worked at Chad’s Hair Studio. After Chad’s sudden passing in January of 2018, I wanted a way to keep us all together and also to make Chad proud. The building that is now our home is across the street from where Chad’s was and it felt like a perfect new start.

There are six of us who work here at The Hair Lounge and we all have many years of experience. I’m Loren Whiteley, the owner, and I have over 20 years of experience. Tarah Kennedy is a color specialist who also has over 20 years of experience. Amy Carol and Kelly Kilmer each have over 20 years of experience doing color and cuts. Hailey Cookingham focuses on color and extensions and has been doing that for over five years, while Joe Musso has the most experience with over 30 years.

How has this business evolved over the years? Did covid have an impact?

We have continued to grow our clientele over the years. Our clientele has especially grown due to covid, because we’ve seen such an influx

of people moving to the area and so our list has grown. Covid definitely gave us our challenges as we were forced to close for three months and I had to set the salon up entirely differently upon reopening to adhere to all new state guidelines. Salons are a pretty clean/sterile place to begin with and we all took a Barbicide-certified safety course to go over all the proper ways to sanitize our equipment. My staff all did a fabulous job with keeping our clients and each other safe when we reopened, and have continued to do so to this day.

What types of services do you offer?

We offer color, highlighting, cutting, facial waxing, extensions, Brazilian Blowouts, conditioning treatments and more. We are a Redken focused salon.

Continued on next page ...



There are lots of hair salons around, so what sets you apart from your competition?

I don't think of other local salons as competition, I think we are all fabulous in our own unique ways and I think that there's a right hairdresser out there for everyone. I don't like to think of my clients as "my own," if someone else in the salon has a better way of doing something I'd rather them go to that person and for the client to get what they want.

What can people expect when they come to The Hair Lounge?

They can expect a clean and friendly place while getting their services done. We are a fun group of girls and Joe that love what we do and have a great time doing it. There's usually always a group conversation going on and often people say it feels like *Cheers!* We all take pride in our work and love making people feel their best.

Who are your customers and how do they find you?

We have customers from near and far, some that even travel from Florida! Word-of-mouth seems to be the best advertisement for us. Often times someone will say, "I saw someone with a great haircut and they recommended you." We have the best clients that are willing to share us!

What kinds of certifications does one need for the services that you offer?

We are all New York State-licensed cosmetologists. We are also all certified in Brazilian Blowout and are a Redken exclusive salon.

What have been some of the challenges the business has faced?

Covid has for sure been the most challenging as we had to cut a full staff. When we were allowed to re-open we had to work alternate days to avoid overcrowding inside and to follow state guidelines. People are still uneasy being close to one another, which makes me sad, but I understand it. It really has changed the way we think and act.

What's on the horizon going forward?

I hope that we are able to thrive and continue to grow our client base as well as continue making our clients happy as well. We have such a great community and I feel really lucky that we are where we are.

What advice would you have for someone starting their own business?

It's not easy, but it's so rewarding to be able to help out the community and impact people's lives with what you have to offer! ●

To learn more about The Hair Lounge, you can reach them by visiting their salon located at 143 Route 44 in Millerton, NY. Call them at (518) 592-1167, or check them out on Instagram @hairloungebyloren.



All photos with this article showcase The Hair Lounge and their work. Photos courtesy of The Hair Lounge.



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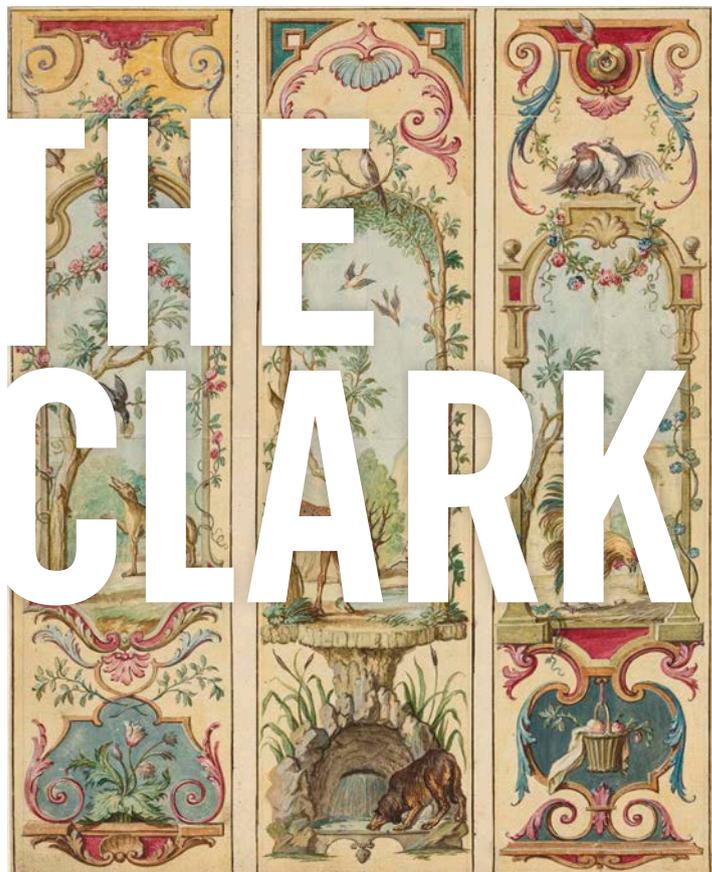
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IT'S THE PERFECT
TIME FOR

Buffalo chicken chowder



By Olivia Valentine &
Caroline Markonic
info@mainstreetmag.com

Here's to a happy and healthy 2023! That said, we are changing things up for January. Instead of a sweet treat, we are switching gears and spicing things up a bit! The chilly weather is just right for this chowder, which packs the perfect amount of heat depending on your tolerance level! Chowder is a hearty soup (like a stew) which is typically made with a creamy base made from milk or heavy cream, and meat, vegetables, seafood or fish.

If you like buffalo chicken wings, you are going to absolutely love this soup. It has celery and carrots which we all know pair so well with buffalo chicken. It is made with The Original Franks Hot Sauce. The hearty potatoes are what makes this a winter comfort food.

Olivia finally caught the 'vid (covid) at the end 2022 so luckily this soup comes together rather quickly. Because of this, we ended up making the recipe separately this month instead of together as usual. Olivia took a shortcut and purchased a rotisserie chicken to then shred. Caroline, however, chopped some chicken breast into bite size pieces and cooked it in the pot before the veggies. You can also cook a chicken breast and shred it yourself. You can do whichever is easiest for you. We have very different spice tolerances so while Olivia's soup might have been spicy enough to clear her

stuffy sinuses, Caroline probably wouldn't have noticed much of anything. And vice versa, Olivia probably would deem Caroline's soup practically inedible. You can adjust the heat to taste by adding more or less hot sauce and also adding an optional diced jalapeno pepper.

Ingredients

- 4 tbsp butter, divided
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks diced (use the leaves of the stalk too. They provide additional flavor and are nutritious!)
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- ¼ cup of flour
- 4 cups of chicken stock (add more if you feel chowder is too thick)
- 1 pound of cooked shredded chicken
- 2 tbs – ¼ cup of Franks Red Hot (you can add more if you prefer it to be spicier)
- 1 jalapeño, diced (optional)
- 2 peeled Yukon gold or russet potatoes ½ inch dice
- 1 cup of heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ blue cheese or cheddar cheese (optional)
- Bacon (optional for garnish)
- Parsley (optional for garnish)

Directions

1. Melt the butter in a large saucepan or dutch oven over medium

high heat. Add the onion, carrots and celery (and optional jalapeño) and cook until tender, about 8-10 minutes.

2. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about a minute or so. Do not let your garlic brown. Add additional 2 tablespoons of butter.

3. Mix in the flour and cook until fragrant (you're making the roux here) about 2-3 minutes. Stir constantly.

4. Add the chicken stock, hot sauce and potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let simmer until the potatoes are fork tender (about 15-20 minutes).

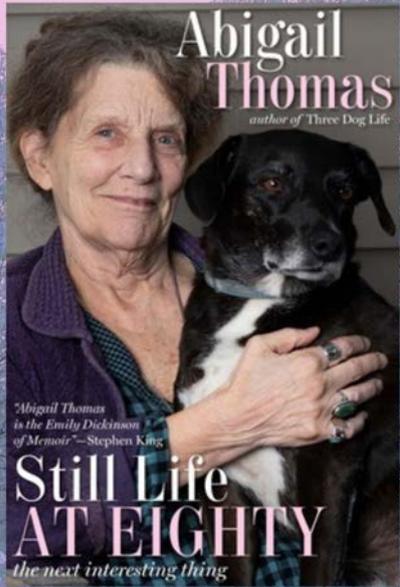
5. Mix in the chicken, heavy cream and blue or cheddar cheese. Remove from heat when the cheese has melted.

6. Stir in salt and pepper and adjust hot sauce to taste.

7. Garnish with extra crumbles of blue cheese, cheddar cheese, bacon, scallions and parsley. You can also drizzle more hot sauce on top! •

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviaavalentine.

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GILDED MOON FRAMING

Aging & attitude

A positive, youthful perspective helps us to live our best lives regardless of age

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

After celebrating the New Year (and for most of us, when we celebrate another birthday), we become even more conscious of time and how quickly it's slipping away. In my opinion, there's no point in lamenting about aging. There's nothing we can do to stop time from ticking on. Rather than focusing on all the perceived negatives about growing older, we should strive to shift our perspectives and embrace the positives. As the saying goes, "aging is another word for living."

Celebrating another New Year or another milestone birthday is a reminder that we are still here and are fortunate enough to have witnessed another year. For many, that translates to more cherished time spent with family and friends, another year of making memories, and another chapter in the book of life.

It's important to note that attitude and personal perspective play a significant role in how we live every day and how we experience our later years. Of course, being in poor health limits our possibilities, but many people forge on despite their limitations.

Matisse

In the late 1940s, artist Henri Matisse turned almost exclusively to cutting paper as his primary medium after an illness, which resulted in him being confined to a wheelchair. Rather than focusing on painting, Matisse used scissors to create the iconic "cut-outs" in which he is known for.

After painting sheets into forms of varying shapes and sizes, Matisse arranged them into compositions. The cut-outs, which he referred to as "drawing with scissors" mark a brilliant final chapter in the artist's career.

According to the Henri Matisse website, "Matisse's extraordinary creativity was not dampened for long. *Une seconde vie*, a second life, was what he called the last fourteen years

of his life. Following an operation, he found renewed and unexpected energies and the beautiful Russian-born assistant, Lydia Delectorskaya, to keep him company."

Other artists gained notoriety in their older years. At 90 years of age, artist Marc Chagall became the first living artist to be exhibited at the Louvre Museum in the late 1970s. American folk artist Anna Mary Robertson Moses, who also went by the moniker "Grandma Moses," began creating needlework images and quilts portraying colorful scenes of farm life. At age 78, when arthritis made it too difficult for her to embroider, friends suggested she explore painting. Grandma Moses exhibited her work while she was in her 90s and painted until a few months before her passing at age 101.

Perception plays a role

In December 2021, when actress Betty White of *The Golden Girls* (1985 to 1992) fame, passed away at the age 99, people around the world celebrated her long, healthy life and the vitality she represented.

The timing of White's death happened to coincide with the launch of *And Just Like That...* – a television show developed by Michael Patrick King for HBO Max. The series was a revival and sequel of the 1998 television series *Sex and the City*, which was created by Darren Star and aired on HBO in 2004.

With White's death and the launch of *And Just Like That...* dominating the headlines, people recognized a link between the ages of the characters in both shows and how vastly different their conversations, personal styles, and lifestyles were.

"People have been pointing out this fact: Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte (of *Sex and the City*) are approximately the same age as (the characters in) *The*



Photo: istockphoto.com
contributor Halfpoint

Golden Girls," cited TODAY.com. In Season one, Rose was 55, Dorothy was 53, Blanche was 47, and Sophia was 79. In *And Just Like That...*, Miranda and Charlotte are 54 and Carrie is 55 years old. The stories of the characters in *Sex and the City* have certainly helped shift the recent narrative about aging.

Let's get scientific

Attitude matters. How we think about aging impacts how we age. Dr. Samantha Boardman, author of *Everyday Vitality – Turning Stress into Strength*, wrote an article on aging. It appeared in a previous issue of *The Purist* – a wellness magazine.

Dr. Boardman pointed out that contrary to the stereotypes that tell us it's all downhill after 50, getting older is, in fact, associated with higher wellbeing and better psychosocial functioning.

Continued on next page ...

“Most people become more responsible, more agreeable, and less neurotic with age. This is known as ‘the maturity principle,’” she said. The author also noted that people tend to become greater contributors to society in their old age. They also get better at regulating their emotions, experience fewer negative emotions, and enjoy more positive ones.

Dr. Boardman’s article also referred to *Breaking the Age Code* by Becca Levy. It says that “More important than gender, income, social background, loneliness, or functional health was how people thought about and approached the idea of old age. Age beliefs, it turns out, can steal or add nearly eight years to your life. In other words, these beliefs don’t just live in our heads. For better or worse, those mental images that are the product of our cultural diets, whether it’s the shows we watch, the things we read, or the jokes we laugh at, become scripts we end up acting out.”

Gaining wisdom

As we meander down the path of life, we gain lots of life experiences and with that, comes wisdom. According to “The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing” at Trinity College Dublin, negative attitudes about aging affect both physical and cognitive health in your later years. Participants in the study who held positive attitudes towards aging had improved cognitive ability as they aged.

“The way we think about, talk about, and write about aging may have direct effects on health. Everyone will grow older and if negative attitudes towards aging are carried throughout life, they can have a detrimental, measurable effect on mental, physical, and cognitive health,” said the study’s lead researcher Deirdre Robertson.

Another perk: we gain better control of our emotions as we age. An article in *The Smithsonian* referenced Susan Turk Charles, a psychologist at the University of California, Irvine, who monitored the shifting moods, the sense of satisfaction, the moments of contemplation and the occasional outbursts of anger, sadness,

and despair of people of all ages, with a special interest in how we handle and experience emotions as we grow older. She and her colleagues have found that, on average, older people have fewer but more satisfying social contacts and report higher emotional wellbeing.

When asked what might explain why aging brains get better at managing emotions, Charles said that neuroscientists believe that because we’re processing information a little slower with age, that makes us think before we act, instead of reacting quickly. She said we see a decline with age in the overall mass of the brain’s frontal lobe, the part that is responsible for emotion regulation, complex reasoning, and speed of processing. But researchers such as Mara Mather at the University of Southern California find that older adults often exhibit greater prefrontal cortex activity than younger adults when processing emotions.

A lot of research suggests that older people have a positive bias, even without realizing it. Their default mode is, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

A 2011 article in *O, The Oprah Magazine* addressed older people’s ability to tackle problems. It cited that brain scans show that while young people often use only one side of the brain for a specific task, middle-aged and older adults are more likely to simultaneously activate both hemispheres, allowing them to make more fruitful connections on problem.

The article also referenced a study published in *The Journal of Neuroscience*. German researcher Janina Boyke and her colleagues taught 60-year-old adults how to juggle. Afterward, scans of the subjects’ brains showed growth in a gray-matter region that processes complex visual information.

In another experiment, Swiss neuroscientist Lutz Jäncke studied people who were learning to play a musical instrument. After they had been practicing for five months, Jäncke noted significant changes in the regions of the brain that control hearing, memory, and hand movements, even in participants who were 65 or older.

Kids are people, too

Although we’re never too old to achieve success and make our marks

on the world, we’re also never too young to do something truly noteworthy. With so much focus on aging gracefully and getting better with age, we should also mention people at the other end of the spectrum – youth.

Some of us may recall *Kids Are People Too*, a television series that aired on ABC from 1978 to 1982. It’s focus: recognizing kids as people too as the name suggests. Its catchy theme song features the words, “So maybe we should listen, To what kids have to say, And if we let them reach us, Maybe they just might teach us.”

We all remember the accomplishments made by Greta Thunberg – the Swedish environmental activist who challenged global leaders to tackle climate change. A catalyst for the school climate strike movement, Thunberg also addressed the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2018. She was 16 years old at the time.

Thanks to Thunberg’s voice and drive, student strikes were organized around the globe. Each one involved millions of students. In 2019, *Time* named her one of the “100 most influential people.” Thunberg was also honored as the youngest *Time* “Person of the Year.” This shining star also received several nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize.

On the topic of young success, there’s also Mark Zuckerberg who co-founded Facebook and its parent company Meta Platforms. In 2004, while he was a student at Harvard University, Zuckerberg teamed up with his roommates to create Facebook. At the age of 23, he became the world’s youngest self-made billionaire.

Historical greats

There are also more obscure stories about teens and extraordinary success. In 1997, Floridian Hunter Scott was just 12 years old when he used a history project to help exonerate Charles Butler McVay III – the deceased commanding officer of the World War II ship USS Indianapolis who was court-martialed due to the sinking. Scott was inspired while watching *Jaws*, which features a scene that refers to the sinking.

To recap, on July 30, 1945, Japanese torpedoes sank the USS Indianapolis in the Pacific. The incident

marked the worst sea disaster in America’s history. The 316 survivors of the ship attempted to clear their skipper’s name in the court-martial conviction.

Decades after the incident, Scott’s project helped re-spark awareness of the miscarriage of justice. While researching, he interviewed nearly 150 survivors of the sinking and reviewed 800 documents. The testimonies of Scott and the Indianapolis Survivors Organization resulted in the passage of a Congressional resolution, signed by President Bill Clinton in October 2000, exonerating McVay.

Finally, America’s current 50-star flag was designed by Ohio high school student Robert G. Heft. According to Ohio History Central, Heft’s teacher Stanley Pratt asked his students to design a flag for the admittance of Hawaii and Alaska as states. Heft arranged the 50 white stars on a blue background in alternating horizontal rows. Five rows featured six stars and four rows included five stars. Seven alternating horizontal red and six white stripes completed the flag. These represent the original thirteen colonies. The flag’s colors – red, white, and blue – represent courage, purity, and justice. It took Heft 12.5 hours to sew the flag together.

Pratt gave Heft a B- on the project because he believed it lacked originality. Pratt also offered to raise Heft’s grade if he could get the flag accepted as the United States’ national flag. Heft sent his flag to Walter Moeller, his Ohio Congressman. Moeller succeeded in having Heft’s design adopted as the new United States flag on July 4, 1960.

Heft’s original flag has flown over the White House and every state capital building. Eighty-eight museums offered to purchase the flag. One offer was for \$350,000. Heft’s design was the twenty-seventh official flag of the United States.

The people mentioned certainly demonstrate that age is just a number and it’s up to us to achieve regardless of if time is on our side or not. •

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The Carrie Chen Gallery does it again A Perfect Echo

By Anna Martucci
info@mainstreetmag.com

If you are a regular *Main Street Magazine* reader, you will likely already know something about Carrie Chen. Perhaps you have worn one of her beautiful Casana Designs cashmere scarves or sipped tea at her former tea house in Hillsdale, NY. Perhaps you have stayed at her exquisite Bed and Breakfast, The Barrington in Great Barrington, MA, and perused the Carrie Chen Art Gallery on Railroad Street. There is no doubt that Carrie Chen is a well-known and successful local entrepreneur.

Throughout all of Carrie's endeavors and accomplishments a few themes remain consistent: social and environmental responsibility and artistry. As an environmental space designer for a successful Seattle firm, Carrie designed water filtration systems. As an interior designer, Carrie focused on Feng Shui, creating positive energy and flow in each space. As a fashion designer and retailer Carrie ensures a sustainable process and the wellbeing of her artisans. As a gallery owner, Carrie is committed to supporting and highlighting local artists.

A Perfect Echo: Nancy Hagin & Stephen Niccolls

The upcoming exhibit at the Carrie Chen Gallery features two long-established local artists who have exhibited throughout the country, while forming deep roots in the Hudson Valley and Berkshires communities.

Hagin works in one of the oldest visual genres, still life. Her paintings feature delicate fabrics, lush flowers, and traditional domestic objects, beautifully rendered with painstaking detail. Niccolls works in the abstract, prioritizing phenomenal luminosity and a color palette of blues, grays, greens, and ochres. Though the pairing of two artists with such distinctive styles may seem an unconventional choice, Carrie believes that viewing their works together leads to a richer experience. Hagin and Niccolls share a color palette, an emphasis on light, and a meticulous approach to craft.

We had a chance to catch up with both artists and preview their work before the show's opening on January 28 at the Carrie Chen Gallery in Great Barrington, MA.

Stephen Niccolls artist statement and bio

Every sensation I've known can potentially find its way into my paintings. The colors, shapes, and textures in them have qualities that I have perceived, or that I remember, even fleetingly. This happens whether I intend it or not. My work arises from a fascination with structure. Each painting establishes its own unique context, or world. It may have elements that evoke still-life, landscape, or portrait painting, or some combination of any of these, or perhaps something else entirely. I want to sum up the mood



Above, L-R: *Seer*, 2022, oil on canvas, 11 x 14". *Naxos*, 2022, oil on canvas, 24 x 18".
Below, left: The artist, Stephen Niccolls, in his studio.



of being in a place and time, whether it is distant or close, whether it is in the past or now.

I was born in Texas. Eventually, I studied art in a semi-formal setting at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. At that time I was making paintings about certain kinds of space, especially the spaces remembered from childhood in the southwest. Through the influence of my teachers and exemplars, my work gradually focused on other ways of seeing, exploring color, form, light, and more. The paintings needed to be "abstract," in the sense that they should visually refer [as much as possible] to their own internal logic and context. This approach continues to the present. A Master of Fine Arts degree was awarded to me at the University of Massachusetts in 1997.

Learning more about Niccolls: Describe the type of work you do and the mediums you use.

I make abstract paintings, using mostly oil paint. The support is most often stretched canvas, but I also work on panels and occasionally on paper.

How do you develop your art skills?

By looking. I spend a lot of time looking at paintings, whether they

are made by another artist or they are made by me. A great deal can be learned from that. Experiments in the studio are another way I learn. Mostly, I learn by doing.

Who are your biggest artistic influences?

It is hard to name just one influence... Giorgio Morandi's work has been in my mind for many years, but the works of Philip Guston, Paul Cezanne, Richard Diebenkorn, Amy Sillman, Friedel Dzubas, Henri Matisse, Lee Krasner, Piero Della Francesca, and many, many others have had an impact on my work.

Describe how where you live affects your work.

The Hudson River valley, where I live, is a very beautiful place to be. It has inspired artists since at least the early nineteenth century.

What, besides art, brings you joy?

Music, conversation, reading, and travel.

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: *Threes*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 32 x 32". *Birds*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 41 x 29". The artist, Nancy Hagin, in her studio.

Nancy Hagin artist statement and bio

I am a still life painter who works from direct observation. I paint familiar objects and situations in my immediate environment. Setups can occur spontaneously or take a very long time to arrange. Sometimes, I'll lurk in my studio for days in search of the next idea or situation. I love the light and the ambiguities of perception. It's a puzzle to decipher certain visual situations. I came out of school in the Abstract Expressionist era. I frankly hoped my work would move in that direction. My first teaching job required that I teach basic painting from an observational point of view. I had never worked that way and in order to teach it, I began to try working that way. Bit by bit, I became fascinated by the mysteries of appearance. It was the late 1960s and painters like Philip Pearlstein, Jack Beal, Fairfield Porter, and Jane Freilicher were involved in something called the "New Realism." Even my own Yale contemporaries, like Janet Fish, Rackstraw Downes, and Chuck Close were starting to paint from direct observation. I continue to paint that way. I

work half the year in watercolor in my upstate studio and the other half in acrylic on canvas in the NYC studio. I like the change of pace that alternating the two media give me.

I was born in New Jersey, in 1940. I received a BFA degree from Carnegie Mellon University in 1962 and a MFA from Yale University in 1964. From there I went to the Maryland Institute of Art in Baltimore to teach for nine years, with one year off for a Fulbright Grant to Rome, Italy 1966-67. In the 1970s, I moved to New York City and began teaching at the Pratt Institute, Fashion Institute of Technology and later, the Cooper Union. I retired as an Associate Professor from FIT in 2006. After group shows in the DC/Baltimore area and at the Alpha Gallery in Boston, I had my first New York City solo shows at the Terry Dintenfass Gallery in 1975 and '78. Alpha Gallery continued to show my work and gave me nine one-person shows through 2000.

In 1980, I began a long association with the Fischbach Gallery in NYC that lasted until the gallery closed in 2015. I had 19 one-person shows there. Besides the Fulbright Grant, I won a New York State Grant and two National Endowment Grants. I was elected to the National Academy of Design in 1992. I continue to live and work in New York City. Since 1983, I also spend a good part of every year near Hudson, NY.

Learning more about Hagin: Describe the type of work you do and the mediums you use.

I'm a still life painter and I work in either watercolor on paper, or acrylic on canvas. I paint from direct observation of objects or situations in my immediate environment.

How do you develop your art skills?

I had a great art school education beginning with Carnegie Mellon University and concluding with graduate work at Yale.

Who are your biggest artistic influences?

Vermeer, Hopper, and Morandi have probably influenced my work the most.

How does where you live affect your work?

It affects me very much. I live in a small loft in mid-town Manhattan from mid-November through May each year. From June back into November, I'm at my house in rural upstate New York. There, I have a light-filled studio in a barn and beautiful gardens situated on a creek. I've been doing this back and forth since 1983. My NYC studio is set up for me to paint acrylic on canvas and the barn studio is set up to do watercolors. It began as a logistic decision, but I grew to like and look forward to the division of methods.

Is art important to society?

I think it is, but not always in demonstratively obvious ways. Think of our world without the cave drawings, or Michelangelo's exquisite *David*, or Van Gogh's dazzling images? Think also of a world without music or literature? What kind of world would that be?

How do you define success as an artist?

Fame and fortune would be nice, but more important is being able to live the life of a working artist. It's wonderful to be able to pursue one's dream. I survived financially on adjunct teaching and some showing and selling of work.

Besides art, what brings you joy?

I'd say: gardening, food, friends and pets. In my youth, I loved to travel but now I'm happy to be at my two homes. ●

To learn more about these artists and the Carrie Chen Gallery, you can call (413) 645-3006 or visit 281 Main St Level 3, Great Barrington MA, or visit online at www.carriechengallery.com.

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STARTING 2023 OFF HAPPY & HEALTHY

and keeping the momentum going all year long

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
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To many, a new year marks a fresh start and a new opportunity to set and achieve goals – some call it resolutions others call it a commitment to oneself. Regardless of what you call it, I'm all for it! I'd just like to advocate that any other day of the year works just fine too, not solely January 1. With that said, I thought it a good time to throw a few tips your way to help those who are looking to set some new goals for themselves in the coming year. But as a disclaimer, I'm no expert or know-it-all on the matter, but here are some tips and tricks that I personally use or have found from other sources, specifically the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), that are useful. Of course, feel free to Google (anything) "tips" and you'll find a plethora of information, but as long as you find something that works for you, your life, and your life goals – it's all good!

The importance of self-care

In today's day and age, we are inundated with so much that affects us physically, mentally, and emotionally, and so it is so very important to practice self-care. Self-care simply means "taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health," according to the NIMH. They continue to explain: "When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact."

So what are some of the things that you can incorporate into your life to add self-care?

The NIMH lists these activities as a few:

- **Exercise:** It seems that exercise helps us in so many different ways, it's almost like a catch-all! The NIMH states that just engaging in 30 minutes of walking per day, for example, will not just improve your health but it'll boost your mood, too. And the NIMH adds the tip that if you can't engage in 30 consecutive minutes don't worry! Small amounts of exercise add up.

- **Eat healthy:** It seems that exercise and eating healthy go hand-in-hand, so of course having a balanced diet is the next logical tip. It's important to not just eat healthy, but to eat regular meals and to stay hydrated. The NIMH states that "a balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day." They also advise to limit your consumption of caffeinated beverages... well, there goes my third cup of coffee!

- **Sleep matters:** The NIMH would like to advise us to make sleep a priority and to stick with a schedule in order to ensure that we're getting enough sleep. That seems pretty do-able.

- **Relax:** This isn't something to scoff at, some folks struggle to relax with everything that life throws at them. So the NIMH advises to try to incorporate a relaxing activity into your regular schedule. If you need help, there are so many programs and apps available that help with meditation, breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, or a combination.

- **Goals and priorities:** This is one that really works for me, because setting clear goals and priorities helps me to stay on target and

to feel accomplished and to avoid feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and/or anxious. The NIMH states that one should "decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say 'no' to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much."

- **Practice gratitude:** Now, this is a topic that we've touched upon in a few issues of this magazine. Our writer, Mary O'Neill has written on this subject a number of times and for good reason. The NIMH states: "Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down at night, or replay them in your mind."

- **Focus on positivity:** I have to share that this one is one of my favorites because our mindset and attitude can dictate so many parts of our lives. The NIMH advises that we should not just identify but challenge our negative and unhelpful thoughts, which also helps us frame and focus on the positive ones.

- **Stay connected:** We are not alone on an island, and it is important to remember that. Mary O'Neill has written about this in some of her gratitude articles and it often advised how important it is to keep, maintain, and foster relationships. The NIMH states that we should "reach out to our friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help."

What works for me, may not work for you – and vice versa

We are all different, but we may also share similar traits, likes or dislikes. Don't ever assume that there is one cure-all solution – we shouldn't paint ourselves with a broad brush stroke. It is important to keep that in mind and not to feel pressured when something

doesn't work out. It's important, instead, to find what works for you, and then go from there.

One of the most important things that the NIMH states is: "Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to find what you need and enjoy. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you." They elaborate that when it comes to various parts of our lives, including mental health, it is important to understand and identify our triggers, and from there know what coping mechanisms work to help you manage the challenges you face.

So as we enter this new year and some of us use it as an opportunity to set some resolutions and or goals for ourselves, it's important to do so in a way that works for you, both in the short- and long-term. Throughout the years, a lot of people and organizations like the NIMH have reiterated the importance of setting achievable goals – but don't think I'm discouraging you from those big pie-in-the-sky ideas and goals. I for one love a big goal and pie-in-the-sky ideas. But I advise to just mix in some smaller, more easily achievable goals. And remember to take time to take care of yourself, and be kind to yourself. We can achieve anything we set our minds to, it's just finding the steps and methods that work specifically for you that is important to help you achieve anything that you set your mind to. Happy 2023 and may all of your goals and dreams be achieved and come true! ●



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Bread & Beyond

THE STORY OF FLOUR IS THE STORY OF OURSELVES AND AMY HALLORAN IS TELLING IT



By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

Is there anything more intoxicating than the smell of bread baking in the oven? Is there anything more magical than a first slice from a fresh-baked loaf, warm and welcoming and begging for butter? For anyone who's experienced the rewards of baking bread, the answers are clear – resounding No's.

MFK Fisher, one of the most masterful of writers on the glories of food, said, “The smell of good bread baking, like the sound of lightly flowing water, is indescribable in its evocation of innocence and delight.” And the poet Robert Browning declared, “If thou tastest a crust of bread, thou tastest all the stars and all the heavens.”

As I was writing this, there was great news out of France: UNESCO declared the baguette an intangible cultural heritage practice that should be preserved. This gives France the opportunity to apply for funding to keep the baguette in full production, which is importance since it's estimated that the

average French person eats half a baguette every day! *Vive la baguette!* But I digress (and dream of French baguettes).

A flour child

If anyone can understand the intoxication of bread and its cultural heritage, it's Amy Halloran. She's been elbows deep in baking from the time her mother introduced her to flour as a way to improve at math – scooping it into measuring cups. If she was going to work with this elemental ingredient, she decided, she was going to see what it was capable of. Today, Amy is the author of *The New Bread Basket: How the New Crop of Grain Growers, Plant Breeders, Millers, Maltsters, Bakers, Brewer, and Local Food Activists are Redefining Our Daily Loaf*. She writes a blog called “Dear Bread.” She is a sought-after guest on WAMC's “Food Friday” program with Ray Graf. She is a fanatic for flour and everything it is and represents.

“When I started baking,” she says, “oatmeal cookies were my obsession. I made batch after batch, and I started playing around with the ingredients and exploring how others made them.”

That play continued, and she added history into her questions in her 20s. “I found old baking powder pamphlets and books at thrift stores, and ran a farmers' market, all of which led to wanting to learn more about where our food comes from. How do we get the flour that makes the breads that sustains us?”

Amy grew up in Lansingburgh, just north of Troy, NY, and has lived in Troy most of her adult life. It was with delight that she learned that Freihofers Bakery was established in Lansingburgh in 1913 by the brothers of the company's founder, who started the company in Philadelphia. The importance to the neighborhood and the region was huge and special. Freihofers delivered breads and cakes door-to-door from 1913 to the early 1970s. There was even a television show called *The Freddie Freihofers Show* in the 1950s. Bread is still being made under the Freihofers label, which was bought by General Foods in 1987 and is now owned by Bimbo Bakeries

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USA. Amy loves to think about the Freihofer bakers doing their thing so close to where she calls home.

Making connections

“If you start exploring,” Amy says, “you find that there are ancestral connections to small bakers in and around any area you live.”

Interestingly, Amy’s mother wasn’t a baker. But she does remember being with her grandmother making pie crust. “I learned that pie crust is like skin,” she says, “it needs patience and planning. Bread is more flexible,” she continues, “and you can play with it in more ways than you think.”

Amy was encouraged and not surprised by the craze for making sourdough bread that happened during COVID lockdown. Baking bread became a way to not only feed family members (and friends and neighbors), but a way to experiment with ingredients we take for granted and to use our hands. Why sourdough in particular? Oddly, there was a yeast shortage during the pandemic, and sourdough starter is just flour and water that naturally ferments. It’s a baking “experiment” that needs attention and upkeep, but on a very simple and ultimately very satisfying level. While you can start a starter at home, Amy suggests getting some from a friend, a bakery, or even in the mail; many baking instructors

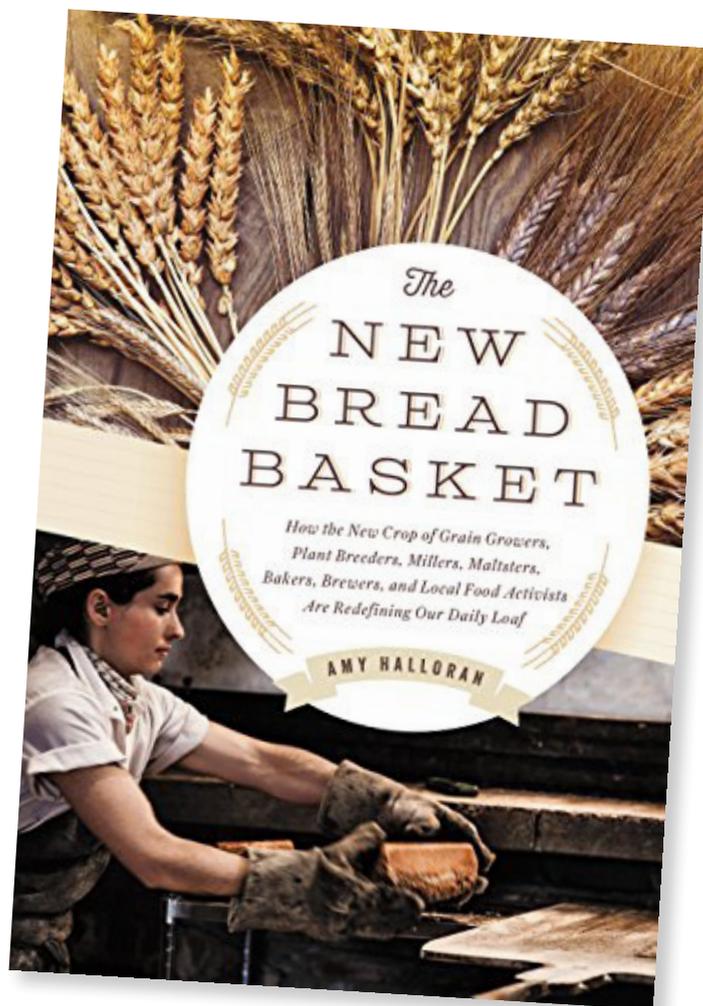
sell it dried online, for easy sending in the mail.

Screaming flavors

Back to flour. It’s Amy’s passion because it’s at the heart of what she does, how she does it, and who she shares it with. She describes her “aha” moment with this ingredient in a blog post on Fresh Flour Facts: “I fell in love with this ingredient because I had a cookie whose grains screamed loud and clear – I am oats! I am wheat! Usually, good chocolate shouts, but oatmeal and flour? I was stumped, and set out on a journey to understand why I’d been deprived of such great stuff for decades of obsessive home baking.”

The blog post goes on to outline in detail types of grains that produce flour (they’re all grasses); the parts of a grain; and how flour is made by grinding the seed. “The habit of grinding starches is older than agriculture,” she writes. “Bread began as ground seeds mixed with water to make a pasty gruel. One day, somebody slid a puddle of gruel on a hot stone and voila, there were flatbreads, or maybe flapjacks! Over time, pancakes, hoecakes, griddle breads have remained a staple food for people with minimal resources. Flour plus water equals fuel.”

Just as freshly roasted coffee beans yield more pronounced flavors, freshly ground flour, which



Above: Above: Amy’s book is a gold mine of information. Left are her Ukrainian Garlic Sourdough Buns (recipe follows).

will include the bran and germ from the seed, tastes different from flour that’s roller-milled. Roller milling separates the parts of grain kernels and then recombines them to keep them shelf stable for a long time.

Baking with different kinds of flours is part of the fun for Amy. “I’ve been described as ‘gluten-full’ rather than ‘gluten-free,’” she says, “because I love wheat. But there’s also cornmeal, rye, buckwheat, even cricket flour,” she says, “and you can play with these to get out of ‘loaf brain.’” She recently posted about Boston Brown Bread, made with cornmeal and rye and steam-cooked in a tin can – its production “an historical tour of America.”

Ever-present for Amy is the connection, with the ingredients, with the process, with the past – and the future. She muses in her post on Boston Brown Bread, “As I was baking this morning, I thought about how good I feel when I’m handling



Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: A slice of sourdough; Photo: istockphoto.com contributor VICTORIA DROBOT. Amy loves where she lives - the Cohoes Falls are in the background; butter makes every bread better!

cornmeal and rye. I love the tastes they make, sweet and earthy. I have celebrated the presence and prevalence of these grains, developing recipes for pancakes, muffins and breads to show that bread is not just wheat and sandwiches, but a staple food that morphs to suit our situations.”

Micro and macro

We talk about Amy’s role in her community. “I’m always baking,” she says, “and all the neighbors know it. The kids come over for ‘Amy bread,’” she laughs. “I love holiday baking, and I love baking for people’s birthdays. I want my baked goods to be an expression of my emotions around the people I’m giving them to.”

She’s working on a book that will combine her history with a history of baking in Troy because she’s discovered that a “history of baking can tell one’s story; you learn that the past wrote you.” She’s a self-declared ambassador for the city of Troy, too, and when asked what she loves about it, she reflects, “I have a history here. I can look at the good parts and the bad parts and figure out what it is to be a person now in the context of this place.”

There is so much to learn from and about Amy. She’s a sourdough starter herself, evolving into something rich and sustaining from just a few ingredients of imagination and wonder and attention. One thing leads to another. I couldn’t come away from my time with her without a few favorite recipes, and she generously shared the one for pampushky – Ukrainian Garlic Buns (winner of Best Bread at the 2022 Schaghticoke Fair!) and a link to a recipe and full instructions for making sourdough English Muffins: www.thekitchn.com/recipe-sourdough-english-muffins-236494.

Her favorite cookie is still oatmeal. Go to <https://amyhalloran.net> to learn more about Amy, to subscribe to her blog, Dear Bread; to access sources of fresh flour; to find out how to get her book; and to connect with why food is the most intimate of things we share together.

Amy’s Variation on Olia Hercules’ recipe for Pampushky (Ukrainian Sourdough Garlic Buns)

Make a levain (leavening agent) 1-2 days before you want to make the buns. Mix the combo you’d like in a quart jar.

For yeasted buns

½ tsp yeast
4 ½ ounces (130 g) milk or whey
½ cup (130 grams) flour
Let this set in the refrigerator until ready to use. The yeast mixture will double.

When ready to make the buns, in a large bowl mix together the levain and the following ingredients:
8 oz (227 grams) milk or whey
3 eggs
1 tablespoon sugar
1 ½ cups (200 grams) sifted bread flour
1 ½ cups (200 grams) whole wheat flour
¾ cup (100 grams) rye flour

Combine just until blended and let set for 20 to 60 minutes. This allows the dough to get started without the presence of salt, and is called an autolyse.

Add to the dough

2 tsp salt
50 g butter, softened

Thoroughly blend everything together. If using a stand mixer, mix on medium for 5-7 minutes, or until the dough is pretty stretchy. If the dough is very stiff, add up to another 60 grams of liquid. Using whole grain flours means you’ll have to adjust the liquids, as the bran is pretty thirsty.

Let rise for 2-4 hours, stretching and folding at half hour intervals if you remember. You can also let the dough rest in the refrigerator overnight, right after mixing.

Shaping

Divide dough into 12 to 14 pieces and roll under your palm on a floured board. Place in a well buttered pan. I like to make two 8 inch pie pans, which gives about 6 rolls each. You might have a couple of strays to tuck into a tiny pan. Let the shaped rolls rest overnight in the fridge; alternately, let rise at room temp for 1-2 hours, when they seem to have filled the pan. I like to use a second pie pan as a hat to cover the rolls while rising.

Bake in a preheated 425 Fahrenheit oven for 45-50 minutes. I leave the pie pan hat on my buns for the first half hour of baking. Rolls are done when dark on the surface and the internal temp is at least 205 Fahrenheit.

When you take them from the oven, spread with:
4 tbsp butter or sunflower oil, or a blend of the two
2 tbsp dried dill or 3 tbsp fresh parsley or dill
1 tsp salt and 1 -2 cloves garlic, minced
Enjoy! •

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LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD

John Morra transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary through his work

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Artist John Morra arrived in the Hudson Valley about two decades ago with two pugs in tow. He soon took up residence and set up a studio in an old church in Stuyvesant where he currently lives with his wife Isabelle Bosquet-Morra – a floral designer who initially hails from France.

Knowledge and experience are sources of inspiration for his oil paintings. “Knowledge means ‘thinking about art’ and this happens when I read art history, study old paintings, or abstractly dream about a concept and try to give it form,” said Morra.

“Experience refers to the act of looking at things, people, places – all the things that are right under our noses. I don’t look to movies or digital imagery. I think the real world is far more beautiful and bizarre than anything online. Just studying someone’s face or marveling at the texture of an onion is enough to light the fires for me,” he added.

Like many artists, Morra began creating art as a child. He recalls the first time his teacher’s eyes lit up when she saw his drawings. Although he was only in second grade, he knew he wanted to be an artist. At the time, Morra gravitated towards subjects of monsters, war scenes, and kung-fu fights. Since he wasn’t particularly good at sports, art seemed like a means of being accepted and admired. It provided a source of comfort and

validation.

During high school, Morra drew cartoons for his school newspaper. After graduation, he traveled to Europe where he visited many of the world’s most notable museums. “It was as if I were seeing my destiny. Some boys might feel that way upon watching baseball player Mickey Mantle, but for me it was Rubens paintings in the Museo Nacional Del Prado in Madrid,” he said.

Europe was also where Morra discovered ancient history, classical music, romantic castles, and mind-boggling cathedrals. “It was overwhelming and lit a fuse of insatiable curiosity and wonder that still burns today,” added Morra.

Formal training

Since his father was in the United States military, Morra’s family moved around a lot. Meridian, MS; Troy, NY; South Carolina, and San Diego, CA, were all destinations he called “home” at one time or another.

After earning his bachelor’s degree in English from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, Morra enrolled in drawing classes at Santa Barbara City College. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts from University of California, Santa Barbara before he attended Manhattan’s New York Academy of Art, where he earned his Master of Fine Arts degree.

After working as a mural painter for various studios, Jacob Collins – a realist painter based in New York City, became Morra’s “unofficial” post-graduate teacher and mentor. He had a profound influence on Morra’s career.

While Morra was in New York, he established his career as an exhibiting artist. The now defunct John Pence Gallery in San Francisco was the scene of his first solo show. The artist was previously represented by New York’s Hirschl & Adler and Eleanor Ettinger Gallery, which have both closed their doors. Since then, Morra has been



Above: *Mertz 26 The Mouth of Hell*. Oil on canvas. Below, left: Morra’s church in Stuyvesant. Images courtesy of John Morra.

selling almost exclusively from his studio in Stuyvesant.

Studio and subjects

Morra ended up settling in the Hudson Valley after visiting the region and touring the church that was for sale. It was then that he decided to flee New York City. Although Manhattan’s culture and art still excites him, Morra couldn’t pass up the opportunity to create his dream studio, which also had an apartment on its premises. After renovating the church, Morra moved in around 2002.

“The church has a beautiful, gigantic bell from the Meneely bell foundry, which was the most important bell maker in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. Whenever I ring it, I’m delighted. Who gets to have their own bell tower?” asked Morra.

His interest in still life painting evolved after his formal training. As a student of the New York Academy of Art, he spent hundreds of hours drawing models and studying anatomy. Under the guidance of his mentor, Jacob Collins, Morra began painting landscapes and still lifes, and honing his use of color.

“Once I spent time painting outdoors and setting up elaborate ensembles of fruits and vegetables, I suddenly loved these genres. I was soon painting landscapes and still lifes and selling them. What began as refresher course with Collins became a joy and source of income,” revealed Morra.

Still life will always be a favorite for the artist who is drawn to the endless possibilities and established nature of the genre – the conventional subjects that have been done by everyone. “My reason for this is simple. When painting a basket of apples, one must bring something truly fresh to the image that makes it take flight. Regardless of what some say, conventional subjects can have a continuing ability to surprise and delight, simply by their excellence,” he added.

Landscapes and *plein air*

When Morra travels to France, he paints outdoors – *plein air*. “Every trip makes me see something novel.

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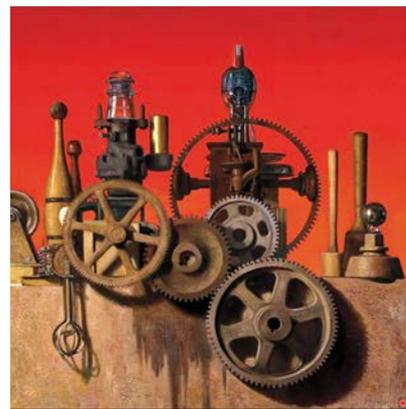
I enjoy making the unlovely and the unexpected into something beautiful. My approach is governed by this idea, as is my approach to landscape. I love the conventions, but also the departure from them,” said Morra.

Although he hasn’t painted a proper human figure in years, Morra has a keen desire to create a “market picture,” common in 17th century Flemish painting. He explained that it’s typically a booth or display filled with either game (meat) or vegetables and fruits for sale. In these works, there’s often a figure, typically a “farm girl.” Morra has already found a farm worker to pose for him.

When creating portraits, he usually works from photographs. Morra said he learned a lot from working that way. He pointed out that very few people are willing to sit for hours, over a period of weeks or even months, for a portrait painting. Today, almost everyone uses photographs in some form.

Artists to admire

“I love all the good ones from all centuries and the okay ones. The horrible ones are sometimes fun, sort of like the pleasure of watching a bad movie,” revealed Morra. His favorites include artists Johannes Vermeer, Jean Siméon Chardin, and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. “There is no one really like Vermeer. He is rare because he’s one of the few artists who was able to make great art out of visual experience alone. He is truthful and yet also, paradoxically, beautifully and deliberately designed,” explained Morra.



He credited Chardin for inventing the still life as we know it and believes the French painter’s way of bringing personal vision and emotional depth to the genre was unprecedented and seemingly ended the entire Dutch tradition. “I love Dutch art, but not as much as Chardin’s art. His closest descendent is painter Walter Tandy Murch, who I see as his only real heir in our time,” shared Morra.

He believes that Corot may be the greatest of all landscape painters. Most of all, Morra appreciates the French landscape painter’s range – from frightfully honest paintings of the lighting in Italy’s vistas to misty, dreamy reveries. His figure inventions were unique. He seems to be anticipating cubism – or something modern,” concluded Morra.

All these painters were relatively untrained. Morra senses that they became distinctive due to their lack of knowledge. It may have encouraged them to try harder.

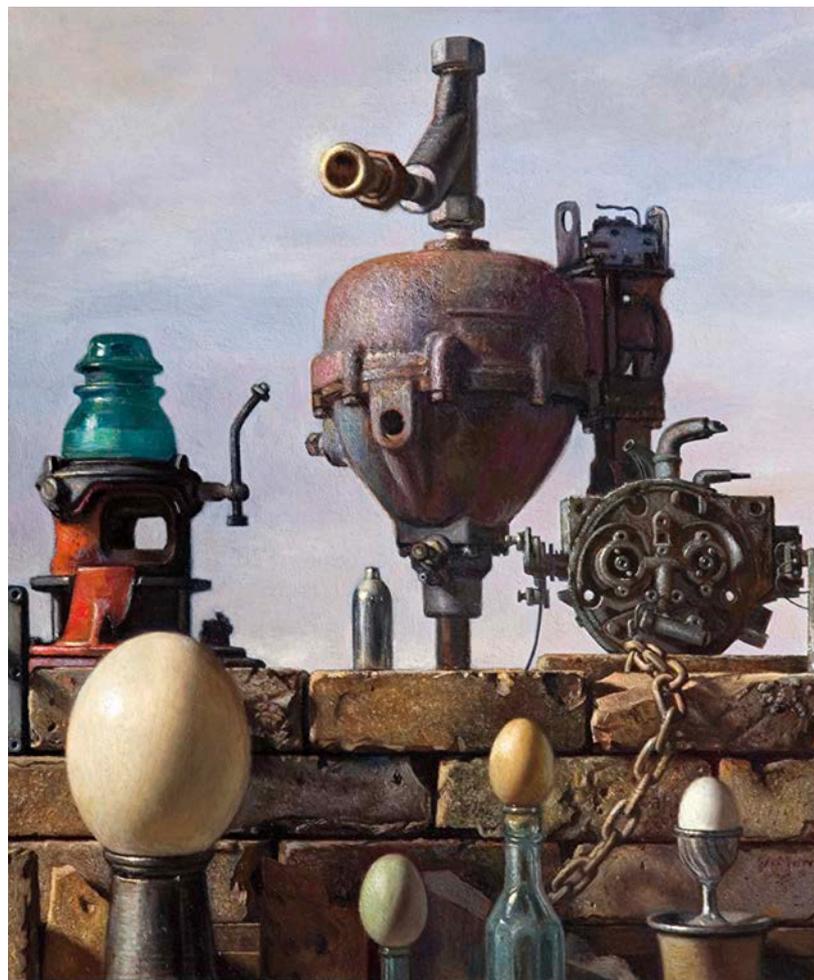
Mertz

Morra’s *Mertz* series offers a unique perspective in terms of lighting and outcome of the finished works. A favorite subject, he said that he is continually surprised by this body of work. “I wonder sometimes how I made them at all,” he added.

The *Mertz* experiment came about by accident. In 2001, Morra took a box of old radio parts, set up a combination of vacuum tubes, diodes, and knobs, and set out to explore a technical problem – how bright can he make a painting and still have room for the highlights?

The vacuum tubes, with their silver interiors and glass skins, afforded the ultimate in gleaming surfaces, so he had a splendid time just getting the metallic colors right. “As I was finishing what seemed like an exercise and felt that I had learned what I could from the junk in front of me, I was surprised to see the little world I had arranged taking on an entirely unintended persona. It looked like something more than a still-life; in fact, it started to look like a little cityscape,” said Morra.

Since he wasn’t sure exactly what it was, Morra searched his memory, so he could provide a title to the work.



Above: *Mertz #15*. Oil on panel. 19 1/2” x 16 3/8”. Below, left: *Mertz #18*. Oil on canvas. 30” x 30”.

The chaos of the set-up reminded him of Dadaist collages, and those by Kurt Schwitters. Morra recalled that the German artist invented a kind of collage with machine parts and garbage. It was titled *Mertz*, so Morra decided to pay homage to this by titling the work *Mertz Number 1*.

“The problem was, when I went back and checked some books about Schwitters, I found that it was ‘Merz’ not ‘Mertz.’ I decided to stick with my faulty memory and probably made Dada artists happy in their graves,” said Morra.

Chardin and Walter Tandy Murch, who he sees as the modern continuation of Chardin, were also sources of inspiration for this series. He believes that both Chardin and Murch have a special way of seeing very ordinary things.

An entire series of works followed, which Morra plans to continue until he puts down his brushes. Other collections include *Kitchen Mixers*, which caught Morra’s attention because he thinks these gadgets are “hilarious-looking.” He sees human faces and mechanical insects in what others see as ordinary kitchen tools. The mixers are a continuation of the Chardin

spirit – the ordinary that becomes the extraordinary by a mixture of intense inquiry/observation, which is mixed in with love.

There’s also a nostalgic component to these works. Morra believes that mixers look like spaceships and remind him of the cheery optimism of the 1960s. In this sense, there’s a celebration of the space-age optimism and bittersweet lament since it did not turn out as people hoped. In this sense they are part of the *Mertz* series, which is both a celebration of the machine and a criticism of what used to be called “progress.”

Up next

Last month, Morra hosted an open studio party. He may host another event in summer 2023. At press time, the painter was working on his Flemish-inspired market theme. Stay tuned for exhibitions in the new year. •

To learn more about John Morra and his paintings, visit him online at www.johnmorrapainting.com, or you can call him at (518) 758-8884.

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The Iceman Cowereth

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

In most publications, this is the part of the article that usually includes a disclaimer meant to either dissuade the reader from engaging in the about-to-be-described activities or at least distancing the writer or publication from any kind of liability for the reader's suggestibility and — let's call a spade a spade — stupidity. Whether the editor will insist on more robust and legal-sounding language remains to be seen, but the author feels duty-bound to go out of his way to discourage most people from the following activities, at least until an M.D. signs off.

Shrieking like a schoolgirl

For the sake of preservation, I will withhold the name and location of my favorite swimming hole in the area, but regardless of the season, its pools are always limpid, deep, and cool, made all the more refreshing by their cloistering in a shaded ravine that cleaves a prominent ridgeline. Even on the most oppressive summer day, immersion in them requires monkish exercises in repressing the urge to shriek like a schoolgirl as the waters approach ones reproductive organs, but on this, the first day of November, I was hoping that the temperature would somehow push beyond my brain's ability to sense the cold, like an *hors catégorie* climb in the Tour de France. Beyond categorization cold.

I was about to go swimming. Outdoors. In November.

Or really, submerging. It was a potentially dumb idea that germinated four months earlier on a trip to California when, with no good way to work out, I adopted breathwork exercises as a surrogate. Using the Breathwrk app, I shifted my

default rhythmic breathing patterns by practicing, variously, diaphragmatic breathing, alternate-nostril and exclusively nasal breathing, holotropic breathing practices, and breath holding. These, along with a copy of James Nestor's bestseller *Breath*, would constitute my initiation into the world of breathwork that would ultimately lead me to an icy mid-November dip in a mountain stream.

Breathe less, and breath through your nose

Nestor's book documents his personal exploration of breathwork as a strategy for addressing his own pulmonary ailments, and he investigates practices from around the world and throughout time that expand his repertoire of respiration. His quest sends him to ancient yogic practices and Navy SEAL training, gum-chewing, mouth taping, and "nose songs," ultimately landing on some simple conclusions: breathe less, and breathe through your nose.

Harmless enough.

So, sitting poolside in Millbrae, CA, I pulled up the app and followed the guidance of the voice that exhorted me with the enthusiasm of an aerobics instructor to breathe into my belly, extend through the chest, then release to exhale, for thirty or forty repetitions. At the end of this modest hyperventilation, I released almost all of the air in my lungs and held my breath for as long as possible.

Or really, I just held still.

The rounds of belly-chest breathing had supercharged my cells with oxygen in a palpable way, and when I exhaled, I could remain breathless for about a minute in a profound meditative state that was heightened by the lack of breathing. Nothing was moving, allowing me to focus on the most subtle sensations. I felt a tingling in my



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Nastco

extremities that I attributed to the oxygenation, and I sensed energies shifting around my body. It began with the compulsion to breathe again that surged from my belly to my shoulders. Shifting this downward, I noticed tension in other parts of my body, and I focused on assigning attention to each one. For that minute, I was as present in my body as possible.

I kept up the breathing regime for the rest of the week and extended it into other parts of the day. It wasn't hard. Moments seemed to find me when I needed to take a long, slow breath, and so I did. The app had other brief exercises to shift my mid-day breathing patterns, and as I tested them out, they became part of my repertoire. Some involved holding my breath, some involved extended exhalation. In general, it all led to slower respiratory rates.

Continued on next page ...

I was wearing an Oura, a digital fitness tracking ring that monitors a number of vital signs including heart rate, respiratory rate, body temperature, and heart rate variability. Over the course of the next month, I was training for one last event of the season, and as the intensity of my workouts increased and my breathwork migrated into my exercises, my respiratory rate slowed moderately, my body temperature consistently registered lower than my average, my sleep was more consistent, and remarkably, my heart rate variability increased with the predictability of a mountain slope, each week's average slightly higher than the previous one.

This was not completely scientific, as there were several variables in play, but it was proof that for me, at least, the breathwork certainly wasn't hurting. I began to dabble in some of the other strategies in Nestor's work: I bought a box of jaw-strengthening Falim gum and began shifting to a nose-mouth pattern during aerobic exercise that kept my sinuses clearer and my respiration slower.

The Wim Hof Method

The same name recurred in everything I read, however: Wim Hof. After the fourth or fifth mention, I decided to hit up Wikipedia and soon after, buy his book, *The Wim Hof Method*. Frankly, it's the kind of book that could have been written in thirty pages, or maybe thirty words, so here goes: practice his breathing technique, immerse yourself in the cold, and harness the power of your mind to do more than you thought possible. (Twenty-three, if you're keeping score).

Breathing? Check. But cold immersion? That's new. I'd been curious about ice baths and cryotherapy but largely written them off as fitness fads of the beautiful and

famous. That's where Hof's book is helpful. He provides accessible entry points to the power of the cold, starting with a fifteen-second shower at the end of the typical warm shower, and with zealot-like gusto ("It's amazing!"), he exhorts readers to take that first small step to turn off the hot water ("You have to take a shower anyway, right? So it's very simple. Just end up cold").

The benefits to the vascular and limbic systems, Hof claims, warrant the two minutes of exposure to the cold, and there is scientific support for his thesis, at least in his own body, which has been tested in several lab situations and during bare-chested climbs on Mt. Everest and swims beyond the Arctic Circle. But still, I was skeptical.

True to his word, though, after two weeks, I had built up a relative immunity to the cold showers that originated in the limbic system – that old fight-flight-freeze mechanism in the reptilian brain. Yes, the shock of cold hit me as soon as I turned down the hot water, but knowing that it would happen, how it would feel, and mentally preparing for the sensation allowed me to control my reaction.

And that is the power in this practice. In a world where so much is beyond our control and where forces larger than us seem to thrust us about like flotsam in the tide, this minor discomfort activated a superpower of discipline and self-management that I had only fleetingly experienced in other parts of my life. It changed my meditation practice and my workouts, and now it was time to take it outdoors, to the cold.

Fiercely frigid

There I was, a mile into the woods, situated on a table-sized rock slab, armed with breathing practices and a newfound mastery of matter that promised to render this spring-fed stream into a veritable bubble bath. I performed my breathing exercises as usual and steeled myself for the bolt of ice that would hit me momentarily, though I had asked my girlfriend to come along, just as a



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Nastco

precaution. I stripped down to running shorts and planted my right leg into the stream, then my left. All of the breathing in the world was not enough for me to submerge myself beyond mid-thigh. This was truly *hors catégorie* cold – so fiercely frigid that it almost burned. I could feel that it was helpful for my calf and thigh muscles, so I stuck it out for a minute or so before calling off the foolishness. I could not envision going any deeper than that.

The next weekend, though, air temperatures remained relatively warm, buoyed by the remnants of a tropical depression that was petering out over New England, so I made my way to a different set of falls – this one less secluded and shaded but still charged with ice-cold mountaintop spring water. I had performed the breathing exercises earlier that morning and decided to forego them in favor of immediately hitting the pool below the falls, this time with a knit hat on to cap my body heat.

I tiptoed out to the deepest part of the pool, the waterline hitting my thighs, then my waist. The falls, flush with rainwater from the storm, sprayed a fine mist on my torso, accelerating my desire to just get it over with, and soon I was up to my shoulders in very, very cold water.

For about two minutes, I could think about little more than how cold the water was, which is the point. But in the middle of November, it is safe to say I was the only human being in Northwest Connecticut who was submerged in a natural waterway, which was exhilarating to know. As I dried off and prepared to hike out, the sense of calm and connection that I felt to the natural world was profound. It was as if I had merged with the surroundings and shared their pulse for a few minutes. I'm not sure that I'll be going for a dip again next weekend, or even this winter, but eventually, after I warm up, I'll be back. •

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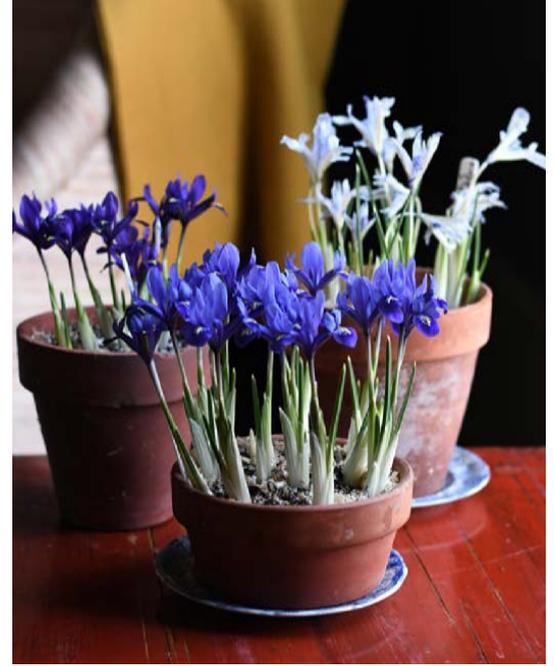
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Forced bulbs



By Pom Shillingford
info@mainstreetmag.com

Oh, the depths of winter are upon us now! There's no escaping that – unless you're a snowbird – we are now in for some long dark weeks. As a native of a country where the grass stays green all year round and nary an inch of snow is required for the country to grind to a halt, not even a winter in Chicago and then 15 more in Manhattan prepared me for the realities – in length and irrationality – of a New England winter.

Certainly, as a gardening freak being holed up inside waiting for the snow to melt is akin to the torture of watching paint dry. Desperation levels come the end of February to get back outside again and start growing are through the roof. You can imagine my first year here when I realized we were so far from done and I still had at least another six weeks to endure at that point.

What kills me about winter is a) not being able to grow things and b) not having the fruits of those labors alive in my house. From the first daffodils in late March through to even now as I write this in December, I have fresh flowers and foliage from my garden inside. To me, my house feels empty and somewhat dead with-

out them. So fast forward to January rolling around and the Christmas decorations are gone, the garden is barren and Houston, could we have a problem!

Not going to happen!

Perhaps the easiest solution at least to having flowers inside would be to head to the grocery store and pick myself up some plastic-wrapped flowers. Well, if we've ever met, you know that's not going to happen! While we each choose to protect our planet in our own ways, I'm not ever going to sit on the fence about the true cost of buying flown-from-afar, chemically-doused, scentless, rigid blooms with massive environmental and social footprints. While I might feel like flowers are a necessity, they are in fact a luxury – and one that should not literally be costing the earth.

Far better for everyone, and one that also ticks my need-to-grow box, is forcing winter bulbs. And even better for those of you dear readers who feel you are not blessed with even a

tinge of a green finger, these are quite simply the easiest flowers to grow. Bulbs are one of Mother Nature's greatest inventions. They came fully loaded with absolutely everything they need to burst into beautiful bloom. You simply need to plant into a medium (soil is definitely easiest for beginners), follow some very simple directions in terms of light, temperatures and watering (directions easily found on labels and the internet and which, I hasten to add, a ten-year-old could easily keep up with) and hey presto weeks, if not months, of home-grown beauty produced by you with minimal cost to the planet.

Not convinced? Well, there's more! Find a flown-flower that can ever compete with a forced bulb in terms of scent. I know, like the taste of cilantro, there are people out there who cannot abide the smell of paperwhites (I think the two are linked by a

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom, L-R: Mixed hyacinth. Iris and muscari. Pink hyacinth.

Previous page, L-R: Forced hyacinth. Forced muscari. Forced iris reticulata.

common gene), but I defy anyone to come up with anything more heavenly than the scent of a bowl of hyacinths in full bloom? Just a few bulbs will infuse a whole room, if not floor, of a house with their perfume. And even if paperwhites are not your thing, the scent of narcissi such as Bridal Crown and Erlicheer are in a whole different category of joy.

Wait and watch

Plus forced bulbs provide something that shop-bought flowers are never going to give – anticipation and longevity. Waiting and watching for the flower tips to appear is a pleasure unto itself. Having something green and growing (literally before your eyes) in your home, tickling all of your senses, at a time of such outside bleakness does untold wonders for morale. As every bowl of bulbs will last you at least three weeks, if you force a few different types of bulb, you can have beautiful seasonal home-grown flowers adorning your home from Christmas to those long-awaited first days of spring.

Top bulbs

My top bulbs for forcing are, in order of flowering from Christmas to Easter,

paperwhite narcissi, amaryllis, hyacinths, iris reticulata, muscari, regular narcissi, and tulips. Not only do you have plenty of variety in type of flower to grow but within each type there's a treasure trove of different colors to pick from. (Aside from paperwhites of course who, as the name would suggest, are always white!)

My one suggestion when choosing what to force indoors would be not to mix varieties within the same bowl or pot. Outside in larger garden pots it's possible to build bulb lasagnas that will throw up a succession of different flowering bulbs over time. (We'll get to these another day).

But for now, and for inside, let's stick to one type of bulb – be it tulip, hyacinth or whatever. And then, because different varieties within these can flower early, mid and late, it is safest to pick only one variety within that type of bulb per bowl or pot, say just Palmyra tulips or just Woodstock hyacinths. In that way you can ensure that when these beauties burst into flower, they will be doing so all at once and you'll get the most killer display.

I hope you will consider adding forcing winter bulbs to your list of New Year's resolutions. You will not regret it if you do. ●

Pom Shillingford is an obsessive gardener originally from England and now based in Salisbury, CT. She offers seasonal cut flowers through English Garden Grown. Find her on Instagram @english_garden_grown.

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The vital bean

By Jesse DeGroot
info@mainstreetmag.com

This cannot be good. There I was, for the most part minding my own business, when along came a news story that gave the distinct impression coffee plants around the globe were universally doomed. WHAT?

As it turns out, clearly I missed the first noises surrounding “coffee leaf rust” when they surfaced around a decade ago, which I’m considering a blessing in that it spared me that specific period of angst. As it turns out, the discovery of the fungus known to obliterate entire coffee plantations dates at least to the 1970s, sparing me those 40-plus years of thrashing about in agonized anticipation of this vital bean’s demise. But I’m catching up.

What would we do without coffee? Ever get that sparkly, lit-up sensation from a cup of joe? Of course you have. But can you duplicate that at will? Likely not. Some of us, it seems, continue to chase that type of reaction, whereas others – most – appear content with the caffeine maintenance program they’ve perfected for themselves.

There are types of coffee drinkers...

As I spoke with various and sundry avowed daily coffee drinkers, several themes came into focus, leading to breaking things down into several categories: maintenance drinkers, the intravenous-if-they-could-arrange-it crew, the never-after-noon cabal, the oddly specific crowd, and the only-when-needed gang.

Let’s turn to Steve, a two-cup per day man whose two cups come in the morning, making him an oddly specific. He describes the first one as “great. The second cup is desperation.” Always black, and quality is no consideration: “Lousy coffee tastes good to me, too.” But it’s time to stop after two cups before caffeine has a chance to monkey with sleep.

As someone who could drink a he-man loaded-with-maximum-caffeine-sized cup as I’m climbing into bed with no interference with sleep, I’m happy to say that’s not a problem here. Likely that was the result of having been weaned into the world of coffee consumption by a grandfather who’d worked on the railroad and as a cop, which may explain why, when he made the coffee for our Saturday morning breakfasts, the end result was a concoction that could get up and go outside to plow the north 40 all on its own.

Energized?

One young man, a friend of one of my sons, recently wandered into my house looking for all the world as though he’d just inserted a knife into the outlet, far from his usual demeanor. “My wife made the coffee this morning. My wife never makes the coffee. She used double the grounds and let it percolate a long time,” he said by way of explanation, before I could even part my lips to begin inter-

rogating him. I didn’t bother to tell him that in 20 or 30 years, chances are he’d be grateful to achieve the state in which he currently found himself. But for now he was, shall we say, energized.

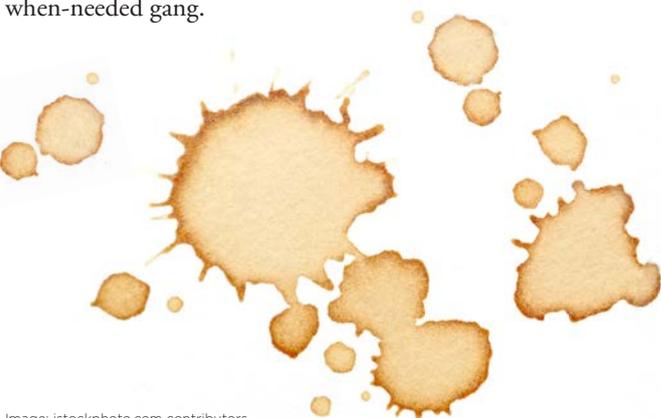
Attention swiveled to Maria, with whom I once shared a workplace, and thus am able to state with certainty that – back in those days – she fell into the intravenous-if-they-could-arrange-it category. These days, she tells me, it’s a “pot for breakfast, then three-four cups the rest of the day,” which I’d have to think is closing in on the intravenous method sans needle. She was, however, the sole being among those I queried who professed to adding junk, errrr, half-and-half and sugar to the operation.

Once upon a time, I had a college roommate by the name of Dave who decided he needed to put in some serious cramming for a final exam, and who, I might add, was not ordinarily much of a coffee drinker. (No, this is not one of those Dear Abby things that’s about me instead). I lost track of how many cups of coffee he’d consumed before I hit the sack. Around 5am, I was aroused from my state of peaceful slumber by what I could only interpret as the sounds of a seriously annoyed mountain lion that had somehow made its way into our room

much against its will. Dave was not a well man at that particular moment. And he didn’t make it to his test.

In this most non-scientific of surveys, I uncovered no one who steers clear of coffee consumption, although there’s every chance I failed to cast my net in a sufficiently wide arc. Nonetheless, the results have not been what I anticipated. Perhaps this can be attributed to my introduction to the world of coffee and to a certain amount of time spent in and around newsrooms, where caffeine was more important to the continuation of life than food. Nor did I spend much time plumbing the demographic that’s currently in the midst of raising children and working a full-time job, where coffee is also a tool.

Meanwhile, let’s leave the possibility of a wipe-out of the planet’s coffee supply to another day. I’m pretty sure those types of thoughts would keep me up at night. •



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Embrace the feel-good lifestyles of other cultures to enhance your quality of life and wellbeing

FOREIGN CONCEPTS

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

The holidays are behind us. We spent our time gathering with loved ones, sharing meals, exchanging gifts, baking and gifting cookies, and indulging in all the feel-good festivities that make the season bright. As we approach the rest of the winter season, we can continue to create ambiance and warmth while making a conscious effort to usher in some more light. Many cultures around the globe found rituals to get them through a dark season or enhance their wellbeing. Here are a few ideas to get your 2023 off to a great start.

Hygge

Embrace the concept of “hygge.” Within the last few years, even those without any connections to Danish culture have probably heard about hygge. Pronounced “hooga,” it’s a lifestyle trend that hails from Denmark – the country that consistently nabs a top spot in the World Happiness Report rankings, which are based largely on life evaluations from the Gallup World Poll. In 2022, Denmark landed in the No. 2 spot, followed by Iceland at No. 3.

In *The Scandinavian Guide to Happiness*, Tim Rayborn said, “Hygge is not really translatable into one word or idea. It’s something that’s felt rather than understood exactly and it will mean different things to different people. It’s about reveling in the cozy, the familiar, and the safe, about having a personal space to retreat to and cocoon – or having a few friends over for a great evening of good times and good company. It’s about having a drink that you love at hand while you read a cherished book on the couch. It’s about drinking wine with your partner while watching your favorite movie. It’s about hearing a raging

storm outside while sitting in front of a fire, as your favorite music plays in the background. It’s about candles glowing and soft lights illuminating your home.”

The *Oxford Languages* dictionary defines hygge as “a quality of coziness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or wellbeing (regarded as a defining characteristic of Danish culture). It’s about “togetherness and coziness.” Various definitions of hygge can be traced back to the Middle Ages. A similar Old Norse word meant “protected from the outside world.”

As we know, winters in Denmark are long, cold, and dark, so January and February are ideal for embracing the hygge lifestyle. The concept reflects the values of Danish society: equality and wellbeing for all. It’s time to make a conscious effort to spend more time together indoors with a partner, friends, and family. This time of year is also ideal for hygge décor, which includes cozy blankets, twinkling lights, lots of candles, and other ways of creating warmth and light. Invite people over for a hygge evening at your place. Make hot chocolate or your favorite libation, share some bites, engage in discussion, play games – whatever you wish.

And here’s a local connection: on a damp winter day, you can invite a few friends over to Tousey Winery in Germantown, NY. Spend a few hours unwinding together with a glass of Hygge. This classic sauvignon blanc features the flavors of tropical fruits and grapefruit. It was inspired by Tousey’s Kimberly Tousey who spent many years living in Denmark and embracing her Danish heritage.

Fika

In Sweden, another Scandinavian country that also continually lands at the top of the World Happiness Report rankings, there’s the concept of “fika.” Rayborn of *The Scandinavian*



Photo: istockphoto.com
contributor enikreis

Guide to Happiness, also addressed this lifestyle idea in his book.

Rayborn said, “Fika is a simple word that means something like ‘coffee break.’ But it doesn’t have a good translation, and fika is much more than that. It’s a whole component of Swedish society, but the idea behind it is simply that we should set aside time for a daily break, and enjoy the good things in life.”

The word fika is actually slang for “coffee.” *Kaffi*, the Swedish word for coffee was inverted to “ffika,” and then evolved to fika.

Rayborn explained that rather than being a 15-minute break in the workday, as it is in some cultures, or being used as “fuel” as it is in America, fika is a state of mind.

“Instead of giving you a boost to speed things up, it’s all about slowing things down for a while and taking the time to savor a great cup of coffee (or whatever beverage you prefer) along with some sweet treats: pastry, cakes, cookies, cinnamon buns, sandwiches, whatever takes your fancy.

Continued on next page ...

It's said that people in Sweden are among the main consumers of coffees and cakes in the world, along with Finland. It's estimated that Swedes consume around 18 pounds of coffee beans each year! Fika is no doubt a big part of the reason." Simply put, it's time for unplugging and slowing down.

Head over to Bread Alone Bakery in Rhinebeck (45 E. Market St.) or to Rough Draft Bar & Books in Kingston (82 John St.) for local fika spots. Other great destinations to "fika" (yes, it can be used as a verb) include All That Java in Tivoli. It is located inside Hotel Tivoli (53 Broadway). The coffee shop also boasts locations in Millerton, Kingston, and Rhinebeck. The Berkshire region also has a great destination for the art of fika. Visit twoflower Great Barrington (34 Railroad St.).

Fredagsmys

"Fredagsmys" (pronounced frey-dags-meas) is a weekly Swedish ritual, which translates to "Friday coziness." Johnaé De Felicis wrote about this concept for Blue Zones – regions of the world that have the longest life expectancy, disability-free life expectancy, or concentration of people over 100 years old.

De Felicis said, "The Swedish work ethic is one like no other. Swedes take their jobs very seriously. It's not in their nature to dilly-dally around on the clock. Instead, they reserve playtime for Friday evenings. After a hard week's work, it's Swedish tradition to unwind at home every Friday night. Swedes call it 'fredagsmys,' which means 'Friday coziness.' They use this time to relax with family and friends. A typical fredagsmys includes games, TV time, and plenty of snacks."

According to the BBC, "Instead of staying late at the office, or going out for drinks with colleagues, fredagsmys is about embracing a softer end to the working week, by heading home early

to enjoy a feel-good, no-frills meal, followed by crisps or sweets on the sofa. Families usually watch TV or a movie together, with blankets and candles brought in as essential accessories during the long, dark winter." The weekly ritual marks a symbolic change from the work week to the weekend. It also helps people focus on work-life balance.

There are lots of innovative ways to embrace this concept. Invite some friends over for a movie or game night. Be sure to create ambiance and embellish your space by lighting candles and throwing some cozy blankets around.

Wabi sabi

Moving over to Japan, we have the concept of "wabi sabi" (pronounced "wah-bi sah-bi"). It's about appreciating the beauty of imperfections. Rather than discarding "damaged" objects, wabi sabi is about embracing imperfections and celebrating the worn or cracked. Although wabi sabi could relate to the crack in a piece of pottery, it also relates to the simplicity of the movements used to make and serve tea. It's about efficiency rather than extravagance.

In fact, the concept's roots are traced back to the early tea ceremonies of Japan. The aesthetic philosophy, wabi refers to modest circumstances while sabi refers to internal quiet and peace.

In *The Little Book of Japanese Living*, Yutaka Yazawa said, "Wabi sabi remains the cornerstone of the Japanese aesthetic. We continue to seek private, happiness and contentment in modesty and quietness, which are, with a little effort, available to all, not just a rich and powerful."

Author Beth Kempton also addressed this concept in her recent book, *Wabi Sabi: Japanese Wisdom for a Perfectly Imperfect Life*. She says "Wabi Sabi teaches people how to let go of perfect and embrace the gifts of a simple life so you can find happiness right where you are." So, what's this concept about?

According to Kempton, "Wabi sabi offers a whole new way of looking at the world – and your life – inspired by centuries-old Japanese wisdom. Wabi sabi is a captivating concept from Japanese aesthetics, which helps us to see beauty in imperfection, appreciate simplicity, and accept the transient nature of all things. With roots in Zen and the Way of Tea, the timeless wisdom of wabi sabi is more relevant than ever for modern life, as we search for new ways to approach life's challenges and seek meaning beyond materialism. From honoring the rhythm of the seasons to creating a welcoming home, from reframing failure to aging with grace, wabi sabi will teach you to find more joy and inspiration throughout your perfectly imperfect life.

Shinrin-yoku

This Japanese term literally means "forest bathing." In recent years, people worldwide have embraced this feel-good concept, which originally hails from Japan. The practice encourages people to simply spend time in nature – no actual bathing is required. Also known as nature therapy and ecotherapy, forest bathing describes a broad group of techniques or treatments that harness the serenity of nature to boost mental or physical health.

Brooke Mellen, founder of Cultured Forest – a New York City-based business sheds some light on this practice. "Shinrin-Yoku is a wellbeing practice that translates to 'Taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing,'" says Mellen. The term, which dates back to 1982, was coined by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries.

Mellen explains that forest bathing was developed in response to a public health crisis, which involved high burnout rates in Japan's densely populated cities such as Tokyo. As a result, the Japanese government invested millions of dollars in investigating the health benefits that emerge from spending some time in nature. Mellen offers forest bathing events in the Hudson Valley. For announcements, join her email list at culturedforest.com.

Read on

For more on these lifestyle concepts, these books can be ordered via Oblong Books in Rhinebeck or Millerton, NY. Although the books were out of stock at press time, they can be ordered via Oblong's website using the links below.

The Scandinavian Guide to Happiness by Tim Rayborn is available at <https://www.oblongbooks.com/book/9781951511210>; *Wabi Sabi: Japanese Wisdom for a Perfectly Imperfect Life* by Beth Kempton is available at <https://www.oblongbooks.com/book/9780062905154>; and *The Little Book of Japanese Living* by Yutaka Yazawa is available at <https://www.oblongbooks.com/book/9780711249929>. •

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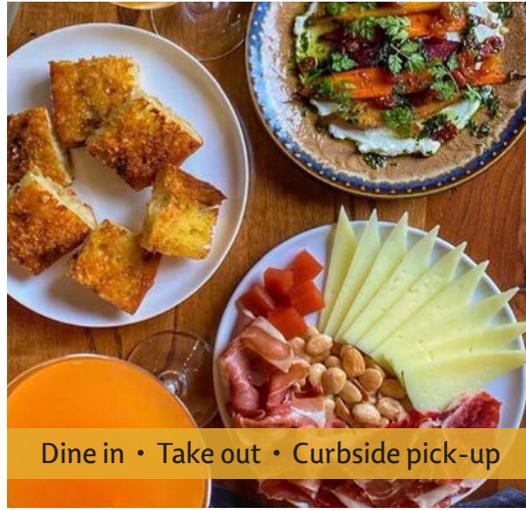
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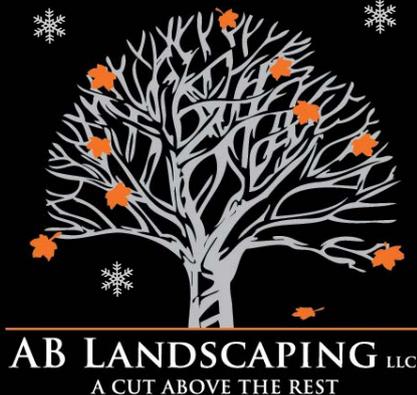
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Richard Mack, LCSW

Psychotherapy with a private practice in Sharon, CT and online via Zoom. (646) 284-5962. richardjohnmack@gmail.com

Richard Mack shared that many years ago a colleague of his handed him a copy of *Jung and the Story of Our Time*, saying “I think you might like this.” That small gesture changed his life, as it started a lifelong study of psychology and CG Jung, one of the pioneers of psychotherapy. The result was pursuing a career in psychotherapy seeing patients for therapy and couples work. “I’m now the associate clinical director at the Fifth Avenue Center for Psychotherapy in Manhattan, and offer services in private practice online via Zoom.” What sets one psychotherapist apart from others is their particular sensibility, “I have a down-to-earth, pragmatic approach, perhaps reflected in my business background. Equally, I use deeper tools like dream analysis to help patients understand the difficulties they are experiencing, and their way forward. It’s personally rewarding to be a lifelong learner in a challenging and evolving field, but above all – seeing patients resolve difficulties in their lives, seeing their depression or anxiety lift, seeing them move ahead in their lives with renewed energy and enthusiasm – all these make my work very meaningful.” Going forward, Richard would like to focus more of his life and practice in Sharon, and using his skills, training and experience to be useful to individuals and couples in our local community.



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Catskill View Weddings & Events opened their farm up to becoming an event venue for a select number of events each year after family friends asked if they could get married at the beautiful 70-acre horse farm in Claverack, NY, ten years ago. Since then, dozens of couples have started their lives together on this farm, overlooking an unobstructed 360-degree view of the Catskill Mountain range. When guests arrive, they pass by the barn yard and drive through fenced-in fields with horses on either side, while they wind around the farm road up towards “The Hill” where tents and all amenities are set up for the big event. The beauty of having an open field work as your “blank slate” is that each wedding is as unique as the couple getting married. “We’ve had everything from a chic NYC-style wedding to simple and rustic country weddings – and everything in between,” shared the owners. “Everything from the style of the tent and décor, to the food and music can be customized to the couple’s desire, but it is all with the beautiful backdrop of breathtaking views – and that’s what makes our farm so unique, that plus driving through an operating horse farm!” Catskill View Weddings looks forward to helping more couples begin their happily ever afters.



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Watsons Forestry Services, LLC.

Sustainable logging and landclearing, specializing in timber consultations. Based in Millerton, NY. lawrence.watson89@gmail.com

After scaling logs for years and helping loggers on weekends, Lawrence Watson Jr. decided it was time chase a dream and started Watsons Forestry Services in 2018. “I obtained a skidder and started practicing sustainable logging and land clearing with my father,” he explained. They offer: managing woodlands using best management practices, sustainably harvesting hard and softwoods, removal of invasive and undesirable trees, sale of log-length firewood, land clearing, creating food plots for wildlife management, and marketing timber products to ensure highest financial yield. They use best management and sustainable harvesting practices to guarantee landowner satisfaction. By doing so they promote future growth for a renewable resource and highest financial gain for the proprietor. “The most rewarding part of this job is fulfilling any goals or expectations and exceeding them!” Going forward Lawrence would like to expand the business and manage more private woodlands. He would like to educate landowners of current issues, including but not limited to the damage invasive insects have caused to thriving woodlands, fungal diseases that have caused decay in various species, and the removal and marketing of damaged timber before it becomes useless. By doing so he could ensure future growth and thriving woodlands for generations to come.



RIGA YOGA

A yoga practice that promotes wellbeing, longevity, and joy. 15 Academy Street, Salisbury, CT. rigayoga.com

Nina Embiricos just opened Riga Yoga in Salisbury, CT. She was born and raised in Paris, France, she then trained at the original YogaWorks studio in Santa Monica, CA, as well as the Prenatal Yoga Center in New York City, and l’Institut de Gasquet in Paris. She brings all of that to Riga Yoga, which offers yoga classes for every level – beginners to advanced practitioners who want to refine their technique. Riga Yoga also offer prenatal yoga and a variety of workshops, daily group classes and private sessions. They also offer studio rental to other wellness and movement practitioners. “Our classes give our students the tools and techniques to feel well in their body and mind. We offer classes that are inspired by the best teachings of different yogic lineage and styles, making our sequences unique and refined. Our classes are safe and approachable for anyone,” explained Nina. She continued by sharing what she feels is the most rewarding thing about her practice: “It is when students leave class and/or a session with that heightened wellbeing that comes with doing yoga.” Looking ahead, Riga Yoga is looking forward to further connecting with the Litchfield, Hudson Valley, and Berkshires communities.

INSURING YOUR WORLD

The New Year brings us hope that the future will be better than the past in many aspects of our lives. Your insurance program shouldn't be left out in this assumption. As such, I thought it would be a great idea to recap the many themes that I have written about over the past few years. If you can act on a few of these recs, your insurance program will be more complete and up to date in 2023. The first and foremost item that we all should be aware of is "insurance to value for our home or business buildings." Building costs have risen tremendously, residential homes are costing between \$300-400 per square foot! Take a moment and measure up your home... all floors... and multiply that figure by \$350 per foot and I think you'll be amazed at what it will cost to rebuild your home in today's marketplace. If you own a commercial building, the cost might be a bit less, perhaps \$250-350 per foot depending upon construction type, yet still quite a bit more than three years ago. How is your umbrella liability coverage, do you own an umbrella liability policy, if not please consider one... they typically start around \$200 per million. If you have one already, consider increasing the limit to match your net worth. You might be surprised how inexpensive it is to go from \$1 million to \$3 million. There's typically a quantity discount as you increase the limit. Lastly, how is your life insurance coverage? Do you have any? If not, consider a policy to protect your loved ones or any outstanding mortgages or credit owed. Let's face it: there are two things in life that we can count on, death and taxes. Well that's it for our 2022 year in review, get a head start on 2023 and review each of these three items, you will be happy once you have done a complete review!



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- **Model design:** Some de-icers are designed to float on top of the tank, keeping upper levels of water liquid right where animals will be drinking. This is convenient, but could also lead to uneven temperatures in the tank or mischievous animals nibbling on the de-icer or its cord if they can reach it. Submersible de-icers can eliminate these problems but may not be suitable for every tank style.
- **Tank Capacity:** A larger tank will require a larger, more powerful de-icer to safely keep the water liquid. In the largest tanks, there may still be freezing around the rim or edges of the reservoir, but it is important that the bulk of the water stay liquid to avoid any problems with ice expansion or temperature variations.
- **Power Source:** Some de-icers run off batteries, which is convenient for isolated regions or if electrical power may fail, but the batteries do wear out and will need replacing. Electrically-run de-icers require a suitable outlet to operate, and there are also propane-run models that can be hooked up independently.
- **Thermostat:** The best de-icers have built-in thermostats that monitor the water temperature and automatically shut off as the water warms. This keeps the water liquid but also conserves energy and minimizes the risk of the unit operating unsafely.

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Easy steps to financial wellness in 2023

Just like physical health, your financial wellness requires routine attention. In these uncertain times, understanding your whole 2023 financial picture is essential.

Here are 3 easy steps to financial wellness:

- 1) Review your assets and liabilities. Write down all your assets: bank account balances, retirement plan balances, investment accounts, valuables, cars, homes, property etc. Then write down all your liabilities. Personal loans, mortgages, student loans, credit cards, HELOCs, etc. You now know what needs to be improved over the course of 2023.
- 2) Create a 2023 budget. You can set up your own budget using a spreadsheet or have a budgeting app monitor your cash flow. Then pick a goal to focus on in your budget. For example: increasing an emergency fund, saving for a new car or paying off credit card debt.
- 3) A will. And for total peace of mind make sure you have an updated will or comprehensive estate planning for you and your family. Always double check your beneficiaries are up to date!

If you need help to better understand or improve your 2023 financial picture, call for a 30 minute free consultation.

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Stress in today's world

Did you know when stress is experienced at the cellular level, the body's innate knowledge doesn't know the difference between positive stress, such as getting married or having a baby, and negative stress, such as the loss of a loved one? All it knows is that any time there is change, there is stress. Stress sets off alarm bells within the body, more widely known as "fight or flight" reactions. The body responds to stress in a variety of ways and each person experiences reactions differently based on physical, emotional, psychological strains occurring. Stress can be experienced as acute, in the moment, or chronic, ongoing. An example of acute stress is falling and breaking a bone, while an example of chronic stress is diabetes or smoking.

The arrival of the coldest season of the year here in the Northeast, along with shorter days and less sunlight exposure (leading some to experience seasonal affective disorder), and the holiday season filled with festivities (increased loneliness for some), increased financial spending, uptick in illnesses, are all examples of current stress. Throw in the COVID pandemic with sicknesses, deaths, long-haul issues, and the unknown, and we have quite the ingredients for acute and chronic stress.

How to cope? Remember, there is no magic pill or bullet. It truly takes a village. Finding options that work best for you by creating your team of support is key! For example, our office, Great Barrington Integrative Wellness, LLC offers Combined Hands Therapy utilizing Bio-Integrative Therapy ©, a gentle hands-on approach, to help the body help itself for optimal healing. Check out our website for more details. Happy healthy healing to you!

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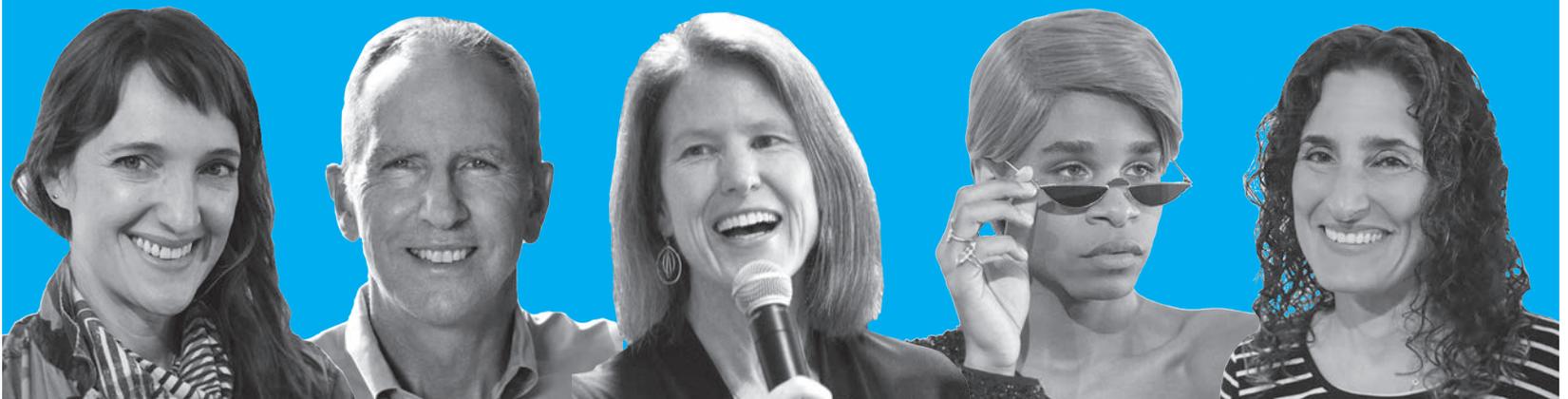
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