



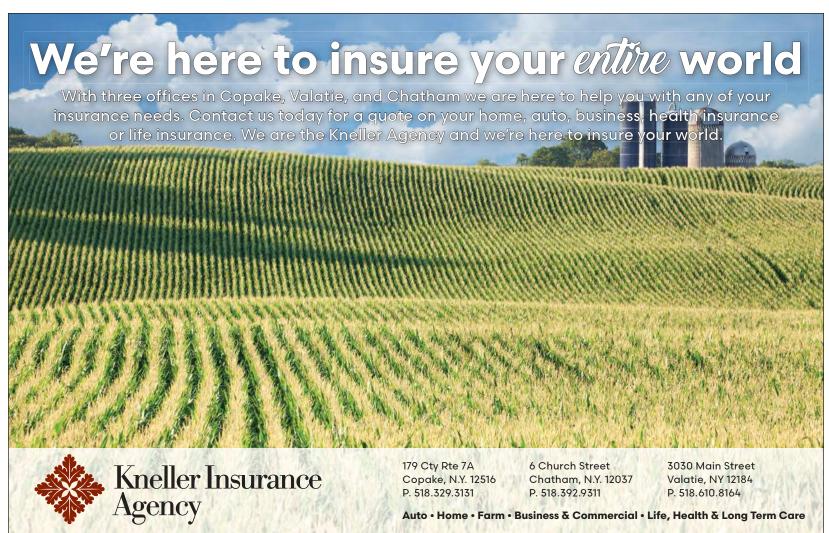


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TO MAKE IS TO LIVE

I love October. It's one of the best months of the year, the days are usually crisp yet warm, the sun and light is perfect, the leaves are gorgeous, the smell in the air is delicious, and it is just all around cozy. As long as it doesn't rain and that early cold-snap doesn't come too early. You know what I mean.

I often like to refer to October as ROCKtober because it rocks so hard. I just wanted to share that.

In the past we've published an "Art & Design" issue around this time of year and it's always fun to be able to focus on the arts as well as the makers and shakers in the art industry in our region. For this issue, we decided to take a slightly different angle when we look at art. We thought focusing rather on "makers" would be interesting. To us, the art of creating and making is so vast and so much can be encompassed within that. It's not just fine art like drawing and painting, or ceramics or print-making, it's not just interior design or basketweaving. No, no. There's so much that falls under the umbrella of creating.

My writers understood the assignment. With that as our only criteria, the ideas they came back to me with were so fun. Ian asked if he could share a piece on building a deck at his house - that he did all by himself. You see, Ian had spent part of his summer figuring out how to beautify his house by building an amazing back deck. Meanwhile, Dominique was like, "Hey! There's this ah-ma-zing art supply store up here in the Albany area." My response? "Sold!" I love a good art store - I can get lost for hours just looking at pens, papers, and paints.

We also have two pieces by Abby where she shares the stories of two local stores, one in Red Hook that focuses on artists, and another across the border in Connecticut that just opened and is a curated home goods store. Talk about bringing art into your life and home.

Abby and Lindsey both share with us stories of growing - daresay, "creating" - food for their respective communities. These farms and organizations have built something from nothing and are not only helping local farmers thrive, but also helping to feed their neighbors while cultivating the soil and environment. I consider that an amazing way to create something greatly meaningful.

I hope that you find something on these pages that sparks your fancy. When it comes to art, design, and creating, there is no limit. May creativity inspire you every day.

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



OCTOBER 2025

Jenna Anderson, a senior at Kent School, has been dancing since childhood, training at Fineline Theater Arts and performing with the Kent School Dance Ensemble. She recently completed a celebrated Summer Intensive at The Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory.

The photo was taken in front of the Morrison Gallery, Kent, CT.

Photo by Olivia Valentine

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PUBLISHER, EDITOR, WRITER, & DESIGNER: Thorunn Kristjansdottir

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Abby Audenino | Barbara Peduzzi | CB Wismar | Christine Bates | Dominique De Vito | Ian Strever | Jesse DeGroodt | Leora Armstrong | Lindsey Clark | Mary B. O'Neill | Olivia Valentine & Caroline Markonic | Regina Molaro | Whitney Joseph

COPY EDITOR: Viveca Gardiner. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Lazlo Gyorsok & Olivia Valentine

ADVERTISING Ashley Kristjansson & Abby Audenino 518 592 1135 or info@mainstreetmag.com

CONTACT

Office 135 Rt. 44, Millerton, NY 12546 • Mailing address PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503 Phone 518 592 1135 • Email info@mainstreetmag.com • Website mainstreetmag.com

PRINT, LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, & INSURANCE

Printed by Snyder Printer, Inc. • Legally represented by Downey, Haab & Murphy PLLC Accounting services by Zulch Tax Consultants • Insured by Kneller Insurance Agency

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PAUSE INTIME

- CHRISTINA DOBBS

By Leora Armstrong info@mainstreetmag.com

I caught up with Christina Dobbs on a cool summer morning in her studio in Lakeville, CT, for a chat about her painting practice. Dobbs' work often originates from photographs and experiences she has witnessed, transporting the viewer back to that time and moment. The paintings depict landscapes blurred through gestural marks and washes, with built-up layers gradually giving depth and resonance to the surface. The viewer's focus lands on the figures and their actions, inviting questions about the narrative unfolding within the scene. Through this interplay of setting and gesture, the paintings emanate the tactile sensations of the moment, either the oppressive heat or biting cold equally to moments of pure joy. The viewer is fully immersed in that moment. Whilst there are hints of an idea, we don't know what lies beyond the picture plane, nor what might happen in the next frame.

What does creating art mean to you?

Art for me is a way of expressing an emotion, a place in time. It's a feeling you recognize, and it must come out as something from within oneself. The feeling takes form in a painting, a drawing, or whatever creative form you need to express something inside of you that needs to be expressed. The art I create is narrative, but not straightforward, because my work explores the fragility of life and everyday experiences. The change in life is the existence in these moments in time that are constantly shifting

and changing. We're not in control of pushing a button on a tape recorder to stop time. But in a way, painting is a method of doing that.

So, it's going back to a particular moment in time and just being in that place?

Each work shows one moment when the temperature was a specific number, and the grass had a certain tone. You can recreate it, but it's not about what's happening – it's more about figures in a landscape caught in a single instant.

I work from photographs, and the image must be compelling enough for me to see potential in it. I take the essence of what's in that photograph that holds meaning for me; everything else is abstracted away. The figures in my work tend to be in their own world, reflecting the idea that we often don't realize - especially when we are young – how quickly time passes and that we cannot rewind. That is the joy of childhood: living entirely in the now, unaware that the freedom of a particular age or moment will never come again. The figures feel vulnerable because they exist within a landscape, and when you view it, what's there is not straightforward. The figure remains in its own world just as we all do – because life is not within our control. It is unpredictable.

The Goldfinch is a significant book for me in this way, as it shows how a single moment in time can shift everything you have ever known.

Have you always painted?

I returned to painting later in life, though I have always been creative. It was only after moving to London that I truly had the opportunity to focus on it. Honestly, the weather was so bleak that I made a New Year's resolution to take either a painting or writing class to get through the winter. I discovered Heatherley's School of Fine Art and on a whim walked up to the receptionist after the semester had already begun. She told me, "It's funny, someone just dropped out of Ian's class. He's teaching today. You could join."

That moment proved transformative. Ian Rowlands became a pivotal figure and mentor for me. Until then, I had never painted formally with oils. Everything I learned in those early years came from him. His belief that materials are an essential part of artistic practice deeply shaped my own approach. I went on to take more and more of his classes — intense, full-day, atelier-style sessions that pushed me forward.

Eventually, Rowlands encouraged me to pursue an MA. Around the same time, a close painter friend was applying to graduate programs, and her excitement about the process made me realize I should do the same. On the very night of the deadline, I submitted my application to City & Guilds of London Art School. That program was a turning point in my development. It wasn't simply about producing work; it was about articulating the deeper drive behind why I paint. In many ways, the MA felt like an intense form of psychotherapy, and I would not be where I am now without it.

The MA taught me the language of artmaking, which opened my practice and gave me the freedom to work in new ways. It also helped me expand a voice I hadn't yet been able to articulate. Which leads me to ask: what motivates your practice?

For me, making work is like an itch that must be scratched. When I see the potential in a photograph, or when I witness a moment that prompts me to take one, I sense the possibility of creating something

unusual. That spark is what excites me about life. When an image carries potential, I'll explore it through many iterations, returning to it until I know I've fully resolved it. I work from current experiences, translating them into paintings that carry both memory and presence. For example, last year we dropped our youngest son off at college in Nashville, and I was heartbroken. Back in the studio, I turned to a photograph I had long wanted to paint: the back of him standing on a beach, the water in front of him, tossing a ball repeatedly into the air. I titled the piece Launched. In painting it, I felt I was with him again. I know him so well that the act of painting became a form of comfort, a way to stay close even as life moved forward.

Recently, while visiting my mother in South Carolina, I discovered a box of old family slides. Looking through slides takes effort, but the images were astonishing moments of myself as a child, captured in time. A photograph holds a memory in a way that can summon everything about that moment: the heat in the air, the atmosphere, the emotions.

One image was of my sister and me, and I remember it vividly. That summer was unusual, almost surreal. My mother was in the process of leaving my father, though we didn't know it then. She was from North Carolina, and she drove us through the South Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia – trying, I think, to get us away from the familiar. It was sweltering, an inferno, and the trip felt like a fracture in my life. When my parents split up, I hadn't seen it coming. That painting of my sister and I came out of that moment, holding both the memory and the rupture it contained.

You can feel the heat and hear the insects hum.

There were these old cotton mills, defunct and abandoned, set against the dry, red clay dirt and a constant haze. That atmosphere carried a deep sense of loneliness, which seeps into some of my work because that's exactly what it felt like. The paintings I made from that time reflect the experience of being a child, without control, placed in environments that weren't always joyful, which shapes



Above: Christina Dobbs in studio. Opposite page, far left: *Launched*. 2024, oil on grey board, 30x 21 cm. Top: *Acid Rain* (cropped). 2022, oil and acrylic on linen 167.5 x 91 cm. Bottom: *Beach Girl* (cropped). 2024, oil and acrylic on linen 81 x42 cm.

both its mood and its narratives. These fractures come through in my work: moments in time that you don't recognize as pivotal when you're living them

Those ruptures ultimately put you on your path. I wouldn't be able to do what I do without the experiences I've had – no regrets. The way life has unfolded for me feels fortunate, because every shift and fracture has shaped who I am and the work I create. I believe our experiences evolve us into what we're capable of doing. Very few artists haven't endured some kind of rupture. It gives you resilience, and that resilience is essential.

I was one of the oldest people in my MA program, and I came to realize that my life experiences are the material I draw from in my work. They are what give it depth and substance. You reach a point where those experiences need to be expressed, and when you're ready, the work pours out of you. I've often turned to writing as a way of understanding things. When I find myself in a confusing place, writing helps me uncover the reasons behind it. Painting serves the same purpose for me. It is a process of discovery and interpretation. What matters most is capturing the essence and mood within a photograph. From there, I work to translate that feeling into a painting, stripping away everything irrelevant so that only what is essential remains.

Have you ever made a commission for a stranger? As you didn't have a clear sense of them, was it difficult?

It can be, but I learned from the first one. A client saw one of my works at a show in London and asked me to paint him and his wife walking together. She had been seriously ill and was now cancer-free, which he shared after I completed the initial piece. I approached the piece working from the photograph of them walking in a quiet, urban landscape and translating it into my own visual language. As he had seen my work, I assumed he appreciated my palette and style, so the shift in emotional tone he requested, required me to reinterpret the work while balancing my own artistic vision with his personal narrative.

I am now more aware of how important it is to communicate on a commission. You must really find out what it is they are anticipating and what they want.

What artists or writers have inspired you?

Gerhard Richter has been a significant influence. He also works with photographs and archives, which I do in my process. He will render something and

Continued on next page ...

then obliterate it. That's part of what resonates with me.

But the memory is still there, and it becomes a conversation in the work.

Exactly. You get these "ghosts" through the paint. His relationship with the material is so important. He lets the materials have a voice and take their course. We're not in control of everything, and sometimes what you don't control turns out to be brilliant. It's a dialogue between oneself and the material, requiring a continual response from the artist.

Additionally, other artists I admire include Peter Doig and the Swedish artist Karen Mamma Anderson. Mattias Weischer, whose mentor was David Hockney, also fascinates me. His empty, hugely textural rooms make you wonder what's happening inside, and you can clearly see Hockney's influence. Noah Davis is another huge influence; I loved his show at the Barbican, and it's exciting that his work is coming to Philadelphia. Hernan Bas captivates me as well, with his narratives of beautiful young people in this in-between space. You're left questioning who they are and what they're doing. I love Fairfield Porter for the clarity of his work. There's nothing ambiguous about it. In writing, anything by Joan Didion is epic; she has this uncanny ability to capture both mood and a precise moment in time. Luc Tuymans and his new book are also remarkable.

If you could beg, borrow, or steal a piece of work from anywhere in the world, what would it be?

Oh, I'm sure it would be a Richter. And I'd love to have dinner with him – just sit next to him, talk about the painting, and talk about everything.

What is your favorite time to create?

From the morning until about six o'clock at night. I am not a night person. When I'm tired, I get supercharged. I start rearranging furniture, shuffling papers, or cleaning the brushes.

What media do you generally work with?

I'm more entrenched in oil, but I'll use some quality watered-down acrylics to distress the canvas and lock in certain areas where I want the sky horizon to be. Then I can abstract in those areas. When I have enough texture going on, I'll go into oil.

How do you overcome a creative block if it ever happens?

Sometimes stepping away is useful. I usually work on multiple projects at once, so I don't get too stuck on a single piece. You can dabble in different things, and if something isn't working, it usually means there's a reason – you just haven't figured it out yet. Painting is all about problem solving. If you recognize there's a problem in a piece but can't identify it, you're not ready to continue. Stepping away allows you to see it clearly. Until you know what the problem is, any attempt at a solution is just slapping paint on a surface, hoping to hit the mark by chance. That's sloppy, and I would never do that. Sometimes you catch yourself mid-process and think, "wait a second, what am I doing? I'm just repeating." That's usually the point to pause and reassess.

It's almost like a jigsaw puzzle. If you get stuck in one corner, you can move to another. When I'm unsure how to approach an image, I sometimes just paint over a ratty computer printout, sloppily working in oil to break it up. Little tricks like that help me move forward.

What brought you to this area?

My husband and I were living in New York before we had kids and were looking for an escape place outside New York City. The Hamptons felt too much like a scene. In October 1996, we came up for a weekend to stay with a friend. We went swimming, played tennis, and biked. I wanted to rent a house for the summer and see what it was like. This lake house was the last one in my long search. I was about to give up when Susan Rand called and said, "There's one house I think you might like."

Water is essential for me, so we rented it that day. Six weeks in, they decided to sell. Oliver was on a busi-



Battleship. 2025, Gesso, sructura paste, acrylic and oil on archival board, 8 x 12 inches.

ness trip in London, and I called him in the middle of the night: "They're putting this house on the market. We should buy it. I know it sounds wild." We ended up buying it, literally pulling all our savings together. That Christmas, we gave each other bathrobes. There was no extra money, but we had the house!

I love it, when you just instinctively know something is right; it's the universe speaking. I've always believed that houses choose you. Do you have a project you're most proud of or want to do, and how do you maintain focus on a long-term project?

I have pieces I'm proud of, and sometimes the process itself can be exhilarating – like the painting of the boys, which was pivotal for me and experimental. I work across large, medium, and small pieces simultaneously, approaching one painting at a time while keeping an overview of what I want. I created an entire series with kids in the garden, climbing on each other, playing football, and having fun. I made small works on paper and a couple of larger paintings; it's a whole body of work in progress, where each piece speaks to the others. I'd love to have a show in Berlin, but solo shows are exhausting. You give everything, and it's so exposing. I loved the mix of critique and positivity, but you also must plan for what comes after the show.

What was the best piece of advice you received regarding your practice, and what advice would you give an artist today?

Step away when you don't know which direction to take. Pay attention

to the warnings about overworking a piece; placing too much material without intention can ruin it. Don't be a perfectionist. Experiment with materials like a child and allow the work to lead you; you might create something you didn't intend. Most importantly, relax.

What shows and residencies do you have coming up?

I'm heading back to the UK this month for the John Moore exhibition, which features my work. I am excited to see it. A few years ago, I had a residency in Newfoundland during March. It was both raw and amazing. I had to wear crampons just to go outside! The studio was huge, with a bedroom and bathroom; it was a phenomenal experience. Sometimes I joined the communal dinner, but other times I worked all day in my pajamas. Adjusting to the quiet and being unable to go anywhere takes getting used to, but it allows you to become embedded in your work. I created two extraordinary pieces there, building rituals like lighting candles every morning. When I returned home, it felt like everyone was shouting. I'd become so used to the silence.

Now I treat every trip as a sort of residency. When I'm in my studio, I can't stop painting; it's like denying someone food. It's a physical practice; I make a big mess, and it feels like being in a rocket ship, ready to fly. •

To learn more about Christina Dobbs, you can visit her website atchristinadobbs.com, on Instagram: dobbschristina, or email her at either cdobbs@me.com or info@christinadobbs.com.

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OCTOBER MUSTS



to eat & drink

Salvatore's Wood Fired Pizza in Red Hook, NY: With over 23 years experience, Salvatore's Wood Fired Pizza comes with rave reviews, so it was only fair we check it out for ourselves. The friendly staff greeted us and invited us to pick a table of our choice. We had the option of indoor or outdoor seating, but with the big garage door open, we got the best of both worlds. The woodburning fireplace added to the already warm and inviting atmosphere. The menu offers pizza, pasta, salads, wraps, wings, beverages from the bar, and everything in between. We ordered garlic knots and a dozen wings, and must say we appreciated ordering pizza by the slice. No need to compromise on who wants what on their pizza pie! Everything was mouthwatering, and we can't wait to go back. 10/10 would recommend! Salvatore's is located at 7582 N Broadway, Red Hook, NY, and you can visit their website at salvatoresitalian.com.



The Clearing by Wolf Alice. Although UK-based band Wolf Alice has been making pop rock for over a decade, they find themselves right at home in a bout of nostalgic eighties rock with the release of their fourth album, The Clearing. Wolf Alice formed in 2010 as an acoustic duo made up of singer Ellie Rowsell and guitarist Joff Oddie, and the band has featured bassist Theo Ellis and drummer Joel Amey since 2012. The band released their first EP in October of 2013, and has been steadily creating new music ever since. "White Horses" - my favorite track on the album - showcases Rowsell's beautiful range, highlighting haunting wails that rival The Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan's set against beautiful, nimble acoustic finger-picking. "Know who I am that's important to me / Do what I can to see the wood from the trees / Know who I am that's important to me / Let the branches wrap their arms around me," Rowsell cries in the chorus. Read the full album review on mainstreetmag.com.

Oktoberfest: Oktoberfest is the world's largest Volksfest, which combines a beer festival with a fun fair and takes place each year in Munich, Germany, from mid-September to the first Sunday in October. If you don't feel like traveling all the way to Germany but would still like to celebrate with some authentic German beer and giant pretzels, you're in luck. The Hudson Valley and surrounding area host plenty of local Oktoberfest celebrations. Head over to ArtPort in Kingston, NY, on October 4 for their Oktoberfest and Balkan Music Festival. Purchase a ticket online for a fun-filled day of traditional German music, dancing, and plenty of beer, as well as performances by MacNCheez Balkan PowerTrio and others. If you'd like to stay on this side of the river, you can also head to Lasting Joy Brewery in Tivoli, NY, for their Oktoberfest celebration on October 4 and 5. There will be food from Gather at LJB and Oh My Gyro; DJ Sean will be spinning tunes on both days; Highland games, including keg toss, stone toss, and stonelifting, will take place on Saturday and Sunday; and fall beers – Oktoberfest Marzen lager, pumpkin ale, and smoked helles lager - will be on tap. For more information about Oktoberfest and Balkan Music Festival or Oktoberfest at Lasting Joy Brewery, visit the business' websites.





to do: New York State Sheep & Wool Festival

Flock to the Dutchess County Fairgrounds in Rhinebeck, NY, on October 18 and 19 for the annual New York State Sheep & Wool Festival. Over 300 wool and fiber arts vendors, including knitters, crocheters, hand-spinners, and growers of natural fiber-producing livestock, make up the show. Natural fiber-producing animals such as angora rabbits, llamas, alpacas, musk oxen, and many different breeds of sheep and goats are showcased. In addition to the assortment of vendors, demonstrations, and workshops centering around fiber arts activities, the festival also features livestock competitions, including a "Make It With Wool," fashion show, a photo contest, and a fleece show and sale. A variety of food and drink vendors will be available, offering not only their usual menus, but also dishes that they've created specially for the festival. For more information about the New York State Sheep & Wool Festival or to purchase tickets, head over to dutchessfair.com/all-events/sheep-and-wool-fest.

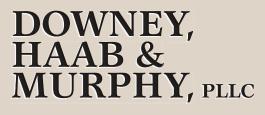


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LIZ MACAIRE AND SIMON KRISTOPH OF MACAIRE + KRISTOPH, WEST CORNWALL AND KENT

By Christine Bates info@mainstreetmag.com

Could you describe your business?

Liz: Our business is multi-dimensional, and we manage quite a few moving parts: two retail stores, interior design, staging, estate sales, and an art business. Our mothership store and design studio is a sprawling space in West Cornwall, CT, and we just opened a satellite location at Kent Barns, which we adore. The stores all sell curated vintage objects, furniture, lighting, and art. We deal with design and art history, which is something we are both obsessed with.

Our stores are open Thursday to Sunday, and we spend the rest of the week hunting down unique pieces, staging properties for sale, and working with our interior design clients. The espresso machine is on at all times!

How did two designers get together as business partners?

Liz: I have a long history working in the interior design industry in New York City and then started estate sales and interior design assignments in Litchfield County. The new business grew quickly so I needed a partner. I was fortunate enough to be introduced to Simon through a mutual friend. It was immediately a successful match. Simon brings a fresh and whimsical edge to the scene, always introducing color and modernism to the traditional.

Simon: My background was primarily in fashion; I started out in Japan, moved to the US to write, and ended up in design and merchandising. I was ready to move away from the rag trade and was hum drumming along doing small interior projects when I was introduced to Liz. We just hit the ground running, and that's what I love about her. She's all action, so it has been super fun from day one. Liz brings the romance to projects. We have similar taste but are also different in complementary ways. Liz has really changed my perception of having a business partner. She's the kindest hustler I've ever met and has a design eye like no other.

Do you have a specific style?

Simon: We both appreciate authenticity and uniqueness. I have extensive mid-century to postmodern expertise, and Liz knows everything about textiles and the antiques world. So that's where the collision happens. We tend to avoid mass-market pieces and replicas and instead look for craftsmanship and historical importance. Our mantra is "mix it up," so I'd say that's our style. It's all about the juxtaposition.

Liz: Yes, agreed, and we love to accessorize with texture, color, or architecturally inspired items that pull everything together. It can be a monumental effort, or not. The end product is worth it either way.



Who are your design icons?

Simon: Salvador Dali and Rei Kawakubo are icons because of their visionary creativity and design honesty. A little-known fact, Salvador was actually an amazing interior decorator and incredibly handsome when he was young. I've always been in love with him. Rei, what can I say? She checks every box for me. She is commonly considered an avant-garde fashion designer, but I see her more as an architectural purist. She is also famously reclusive, which I love.

Liz: Oh good lord, too many to mention but lately I gravitate toward abstract artists. I adore the motions of color and shapes of artists like Marthe Keller, Don Bracken, and Peter Cusack. And of course, classic abstractionists like Jackson Pollock, and

Continued on next page ...

Above: Liz Macaire and Simon Krostoph together in their sunny

Left: A desktop imagined and mixed in Macaire + Kristoph's new store in Kent Barns with espresso cups, art, and ceramics. Photo by Christine Bates.



Louise Nevelson inspire me. It's the disarticulation of thought reframed in visual form that moves me.

What has been a surprise?

Liz: That we work so well together. Our skill sets are quite different, but our vision is very similar. Neither of us are fond of restrictions, so we have managed to create a space of freedom as a team. We learn a lot from each other because we allow each other space.

Simon: That is so true. I think we have both felt restricted in past roles, so to have freedom works very well for both of us. I'm always surprised at how we manage to create harmony where chaos is more common. It's very symbiotic. We have almost no ego in our work relationship. Liz has better taste in music than I do as she reminds me often – and she's right.

How do you bring this huge variety of art, objects, and furniture together?

Simon: In the stores we create groupings around a theme or function to help clients imagine things in their own homes. I love creating suggested spaces that breathe and are interchangeable.

There's so much original art. Are you also a gallery?

Liz: Art galleries show art but don't give you a feel of how it would look hanging on a wall or over the sofa or how to mix it with color and light.

Art usually comes to people at different phases of their lives and tells such a specific story of an individual. We mix it up, hanging traditional with contemporary, sculpture with sketches, photography with textiles. It's an endless journey in making suggestions but also in experimenting. I think that's sort of how we do things. Experiments work out well ... most of the time.

How do all these businesses fit together?

Liz: We do high-end estate sales and include selective pieces in the stores. We also stage properties for sale. What's different about our approach to staging is that we use authentic pieces from our inventory, which are also for sale. People come to see a house, discover objects they love, and buy them. You will rarely see the same thing in any of the homes we stage. A buyer can visualize a mix of antique and modern.

On the interior design side, we can be called in to rearrange and edit what Luckily, we have an amazing team of a client has, or do a refresh, a rethinking of a space. Often clients will tell us that they have a specific budget, and we work within that constraint without charging percentage design fees on top of the cost of the materials and objects.

Simon: We are mix masters. Throw all the ingredients in and see what works. The rest you take home for another recipe.





Above: A living room tableau at the Macaire + Kristoph store in Kent Barns features art, furniture, sculpture, and even drinking glasses. Photo by Simon Kristoph. Below, left: Paintings by local artist Don Bracken are showcased at Macaire + Kristoph. Photo by Christine Bates.

That sounds like a lot of moving parts.

Simon: A lot of moving indeed. And no two jobs are alike. We like to approach everything with an open mind and use our expertise to fit the needs at hand. We've created somewhat of a network by connecting all the dots. movers, assistants, and planners helping us.

Could you explain your pricing?

Simon: About half of what you see is from local estates, and the rest we import from Europe and Asia. Everything is priced to move. We price fairly and have discovered that placement in the store and knowledgeable conversations about each piece do the rest. This notion that a well-designed home has to cost a fortune is irritating to me, because it's not true. We price things based on how we shop personally. There is reasoning behind every dollar, and we are able to communicate that effectively because we hand pick everything.

What have you learned?

Simon: I've learned to listen and observe. To move slowly and pay attention to detail. To compromise but also to have an opinion. I don't like dictators. The process of trust in a design

scenario comes from feeling heard but also being motivated by new ideas. That's a lesson I really treasure.

Liz: It's super important to nurture genuine relationships within the industry. If something is not a fit for us, we will always refer to other buyers in the trade. We work closely with some fantastic logistic services like Karl On Wheels movers out of Cornwall. They leap to the rescue whenever we need them and help us get things from A to B. We can't do everything ourselves, so learning to let go and allow others to help has been a big lesson. And we have been very fortunate in being surrounded by such responsive comrades.

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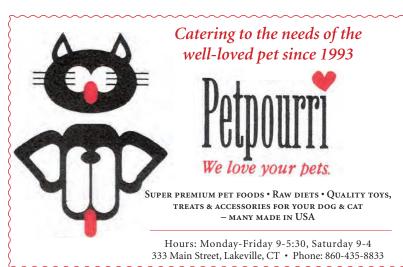
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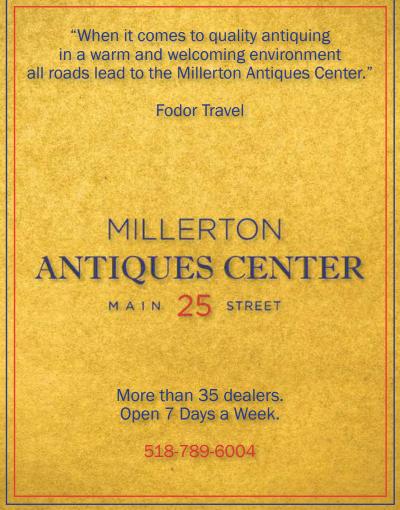












zucchini BREAD

By Olivia Valentine with Caroline Markonic info@mainstreetmag.com

There's nothing quite like the smell of **Instructions** freshly baked zucchini bread wafting through the kitchen. This recipe makes two loaves, each with its own personality – one studded with dried cranberries and shredded coconut and the other with crunchy walnuts and chocolate chips. You can pop one in the freezer after baking to save it for later or give one to a friend. Who wouldn't love a nice loaf of freshly baked zucchini bread!

Ingredients

3 eggs, at room temperature 1 cup oil of your choice 3 cups all-purpose flour* ½ tsps baking powder 1 tsp salt

1 tsp baking soda

2 tsps cinnamon

3 cups shredded zucchini

2 tsps vanilla extract

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup light brown sugar

½ cup walnuts

½ cup dried cranberries

½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut ½ cup chocolate chips (milk or dark)

*For the flour, you can substitute 2 cups white flour + 1 cup whole wheat flour. The whole wheat adds a subtle nuttiness.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour two light-colored metal loaf pans. [Don't use glass. Glass loaf pans brown the outside too quickly while leaving you with an undercooked center. Metal pans conduct heat more efficiently, giving you an evenly baked loaf of bread. If using dark metal or glass, bake at 325°F].

In a large mixing bowl, beat the oil, sugars, and vanilla together until well combined.

Add the eggs one at a time, mixing thoroughly after each addition.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda, and cinnamon.

Add the dry mixture to the wet ingredients, alternating with the shredded zucchini.

Divide the batter evenly into two bowls:

Loaf 1: fold in the dried cranberries and shredded coconut.

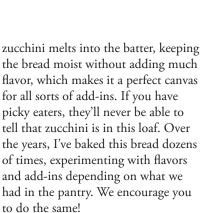
Loaf 2: fold in the walnuts and chocolate chips.

Pour each batter into a prepared loaf pan.

Bake 50-60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Let cool in the pans for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

When my three daughters were little, I was always looking for ways to add fruits and vegetables into treats. Zucchini bread was an easy win. The

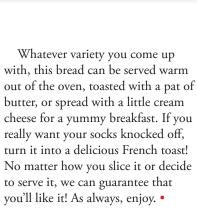


The add-ins here are just suggestions:

Swap cranberries for golden raisins or another dried fruit.

Skip the nuts or coconut if you prefer. You can use pumpkin seeds or pecans instead. Maybe try a hazelnut and chocolate chip!

Mix and match flavors to suit your taste and what you have on hand. Most of our recipes are meant to be tweaked, so be creative and make it your own!



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 @oliviawvalentine.











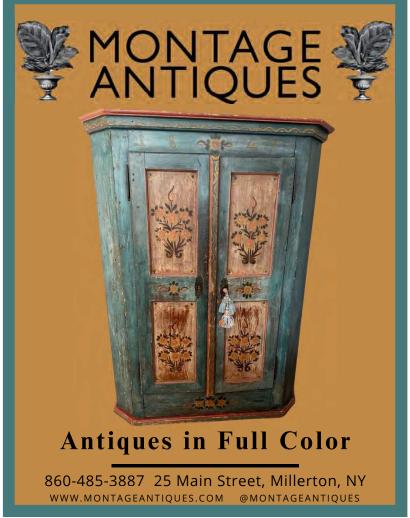
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Showcasing local artisans and makers in Red Hook VERSE WORK/SHOP

By Abby Audenino abby@mainstreetmag.com

Verse Work/Shop is a brick-and-mortar art gallery and retail space run by sisters Vanessa Shafer and Cassandra Ruff and located in Red Hook, NY. After growing up in Red Hook, the sisters went their own separate ways for nearly two decades before finding their way back to the Hudson Valley. With the launch of Verse, they have been able to actualize a lifelong dream of creating a destination to showcase regional artists and makers.

Vanessa received her Bachelor of Arts in Art History from Trinity College before graduating from Yale with a master's degree in architecture. She spent the first decade of her career with Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects, where she had the privilege to work on the homes of many great collectors, as well as the museum of a renowned private art collection. About a decade ago, Vanessa launched a design practice of her own, Verse Works, which spawned the idea for Verse Work/Shop.

In 2015, she began her architecture and residential design practice, VERSE Works, to pursue several independent projects that consequently brought her back to the Hudson Valley.



"The name 'Verse' came from the phonetic pronunciation of my initials, which are VRS," Vanessa explains. "Verse, for me, also has a lot of metaphors that I appreciate. Verse is a single line of a larger whole, often used in relation to music and writing. If we're drawing a metaphor to architecture, that's also an assemblage of many lines to form a whole. Verse, the gallery, is about the assemblage of artists and makers, and the amplification of their work when exhibited together. It's become an exciting nexus for art to be brought together and the community to be brought to experi-

Cassandra, meanwhile, has had an expansive career as a designer and project manager with a specialty focus on event planning and design. She has taught art, practiced art herself, and spent most of her career in event production. She has produced intimate dinner parties, elaborate corporate events, and everything in between. Verse Work/Shop was the perfect synthesis of the sisters' strengths, professional experiences, and consummate collaboration.

Coming home to the Hudson

Although Vanessa and Cassandra grew up here in Red Hook, they did not return until about five years ago. Both sisters were extremely inspired by the "energy percolating" in the Hudson Valley and the immense amount of creativity and talent brewing. After forging relationships with the multitudes of artists and makers who call the Hudson Valley home, Vanessa and Cassandra were inspired to establish Verse as a destination for art and design to showcase the bounty of talent in the area.

"The ethos of Verse is to celebrate the contemporary art and goods being made here and now in the Hudson Valley, and present them to the public in a way that's tangible and accessible," Cassandra shares.





Showcasing local artists and makers

When first opening Verse, Vanessa and Cassandra envisioned the space more as a showroom, but as they formed strong relationships with local artists and makers, they shifted the focus to encompass highlighting art at large and the specialty crafts that are created here in the Hudson Valley.

Vanessa and Cassandra were blown away by the success of their original opening reception, which they co-curated with artist Beka Goedde. Since then, Verse has hosted an "After Hours" segment throughout the duration of each show, in which they stay open later and offer another opportunity for the artists to meet one

In between group shows, Verse also hosts shorter programs that highlight an individual artist or cause, which have also been incredibly impactful. At the end of this past school year, Verse displayed 115 paintings of local buildings, one from each sixth grade student at the Red Hook Middle School, that were painted during the course of the past school year. For that

Continued on next page ...

show, Verse also collaborated with Historic Red Hook – a nonprofit organization that works to connect Red Hook's past to its present and future – to provide historical context for many of the pieces.

"That may have been our favorite show to date because of the direct connection to our town and its residents on many levels," Vanessa says.

When it comes to curating shows, Verse enjoys both curating them themselves and partnering with other artists to co-curate. "When we curate them ourselves, we are looking for diversity. We like to show a vast crosssection of mediums, as well as styles and schools of thought," Vanessa explains. "We are female-owned, and we're happy to report that our shows are often filled with female artists, but we also host many wonderful male artists and makers as well. Our artists represent a broad spectrum of ages, too, which is important to us. We believe that art has no boundaries and hope to convey that in our shows."

Verse hosts four main shows per year, one for each season, but endeavors to have a diverse collection in the shop at all times. Vanessa incorporates textiles, fiber arts, ceramicists, and others to showcase a large, diverse spectrum of art. Vanessa and Cassandra also reinvent the space with every show, showcasing the particular art styles that are being highlighted and rotating new, local products that align with the current show.

"I think a lot of people visit galler-



ies to just look at art, but we want to arrange and introduce it to people in a way that shows that you can live with this modern art, too," she says. "The space feels so different with every collection. When you get all of the pieces in here, there's this new discovery experience that you encounter while installing."

Curating the goods

The products that Verse curates are just as hyper-local as the artists and makers that they feature in their shows. "We love a locally-made, sustainable, and loved product, and there is no shortage of local makers that are developing high-quality goods from body oils and soaps to jewelry and accessories," Cassandra notes.

One of the brands you can find on the shelves at Verse is & Tread Well, which is a clean, high-quality skincare company based right in Red Hook, NY. & Tread Well products are made with ethically sourced, plant-based ingredients and sustainable practices that support and nourish all skin types. Another Hudson Valley-based maker featured in Verse is Swish & Hammer, hand-crafted art, jewelry, and decor that integrates up-cycled materials by artist Traci Pinczes. Verse showcases a robust line of her beaded jewelry and hand-dyed silk tapestries.

"It's not hard to find goods – in fact, both & Tread Well and Swish & Hammer are both within walking distance! Everyone is right here, and that's the whole point of the store portion of Verse. We have so many interesting and authentic acts in this area, and it's so great to highlight that," Vanessa says.

Upcoming shows at Verse

From September 25 to October 19, Verse will be presenting "Peregrination / Russell Steinert & Janis Stemmermann." Husband and wife, Steinert and Stemmermann have been partners in life and often in work for the better part of the last three decades. In 2020, Steinert and Stemmermann moved their lives and practices to Sharon, CT, from Brooklyn. "Peregrination," will showcase the broad spectrum of work developed on and of their property, responding to their new rural living and work spaces.





Verse's winter group show, "Talk Shop 9.0," will be announced in the coming weeks via their Instagram account and their website.

"We set out to create a venue more than business. Our mission was community-centric from the onset. Not necessarily a traditional business plan per se, but we adhere to that value and priority in all that we do," Vanessa says.

"Being that this is our hometown, we are aware of the number of renowned artists and makers here especially in and around Red Hook, as it is also home to Bard College. We wanted to create a space, specifically in our village, dedicated to that," Cassandra adds. "The Hudson Valley has always been home to incredible artists and makers. It's our honor to showcase and celebrate them."

To learn more about Verse Work/Shop, visit them in-person at 35 W Market Street, Red Hook, NY, online at verseworkshop.com, or on Instagram at @verse_work_shop.



All photos with this article courtesy of Verse Work/Shop.

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Art and anguish: Event production 101

By CB Wismar info@mainstreetmag.com

"What exactly does a producer do?" If I got a nickel for every time that question has been asked, I might have amassed ... perhaps ... close to \$2.00. It's a fair question, however, even if the financial payout would hardly be worth the effort.

Given the opportunity to describe what actors do; what a director is responsible for; or what a lighting director, an audio technician, a set designer, a make-up artist, or a camera operator do for a living, the answers would seem quite apparent. After all, the clues are in the titles.

But a producer? Guessing that they "produce" is easy enough but doesn't quite cover the combination of intuition and luck, of expertise and sheer bravado, of imagination and common sense, of stoic patience, and the capacity to make instant, shoot-fromthe-hip decisions that are woven into starting with absolutely nothing and creating a film, a concert, or an event.

Welcome to the club

Anyone who has endured the painstaking detail of organizing a wedding and reception can understand what a producer does. Anyone assembling a birthday party for a dozen highly energetic ten-year olds that includes a visit to the fire station, coordinating the convenient stop-by of an ice cream truck, and assembling "goodie bags" for everyone to take home knows what being a producer entails. It is, in the end, simply a matter of scale.

Ride to end hunger

When, some years ago, we brought Jeff Gordon, Kasey Kahne, Rick Hendrick, and Alan Gustafson to Lime Rock Park on the cordial invitation of Skip Barber and his dedicated track staff, our effort was focused on raising contributions for "Drive to End Hunger," the years-long effort by the AARP Foundation to stem hunger for older Americans.

The event had three components. A question and answer session with the drivers, crew chief, and racing legends was the first act in a program that fed into the opportunity to ride along with NASCAR legends Jeff and Kasey driving the newest Chevrolet-supplied Z-28 Camaros around Lime Rock's legendary track.

Act three was a reception, dinner, and auction at the Falls Village Inn under the guidance of Colin Chambers and Susan Sweetapple. When all was said and done, over \$150,000 went to local food pantries and feeding programs. Quite a production.

What the eager participants did not see were the negotiations to land two helicopters on the athletic fields of Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village so that Rick Hendrick, his drivers and entourage could add a stop on their trip from North Carolina to a New Hampshire race. Lakeville ordinance prohibited landing helicopters at the track unless it was a medical emergency. So, with the much appreciated cooperation of the school and the excellent support of the Falls Village Fire Department, whose members patiently not only welcomed the in-coming flight but stayed in place until our VIP guests took their "carry out" dinners and lifted off in the September darkness, the idea sparked in a casual conversation months before at a NASCAR race became reality.

There were, of course, a few more details to iron out. Rick Hendrick, a giant in the automotive world, had to cajole Chevrolet into providing the cars and then, had to get them to Northwest Connecticut. A stage had to be built. There needed to be microphones and speakers for the question and answer period. We needed a small cohort of volunteers to manage the ridealong participants and a pit crew of sorts to keep the cars running. And fuel. And tires. And insurance. And permission from the neighbors to extend beyond a 6pm curfew.

Continued on next page ...

The devil is in the details

Hosting 24 for a New Year's Eve or SuperBowl party at your house? No small accomplishment. Food, drinks, table settings, perhaps some decorations, parking, funny hats, noise makers ... the list quickly gets long.

Take the next step and gather 15,000 people on the National Mall to hear Buzz Aldrin commemorate the moon landing, listen to Patti Austen and Wynonna Judd sing with a live band, hear from Sally Fields, and then get the crowd to their feet to engage in a "Stand Up to Cancer" promotion video, and what starts out as a simple idea becomes a leap of faith ... or maybe insanity.

There were extensive National Park Service permits, Architect of the Capitol approvals, construction crews to build (and quickly remove) a stage on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, thousands of folding chairs to set up and take down, a sound system staffed by expert technicians that could project across the reflecting pool, five camera positions to record the event all cabled into a fully staffed video tent, a fleet of buses to transport attendees to and from hotels, construction and staffing of a hospitality tent with four make-up stations and ample refreshments for the featured guests, ten private cars with drivers to make sure our stars arrived on time and left with minimal hassle, a small army of private security, and a dedicated team of "production assistants" who made sure everything ran like clockwork.

True, there were no "goodie bags" to bother about, even though it was a birthday party of sorts.

Where's Santa Claus?

The Christmas season is soon upon us, and it's not too early to start planning to produce the party for neighborhood parents and their children, complete with a visit from Santa Claus. What if the old gentleman doesn't arrive on time? What if he doesn't arrive at all? You've got the cookies and the punch. There's wine for the adults. You've prewrapped some generic gifts and stuffed them in a pillowcase for Kris Kringle to hand out amid "Ho-ho-hos" and "Merry Christmas."

But where's the guy from the office for whom you bought the Amazon Santa Suit? What if that text you just got was a bumbling attempt at an apology for not showing up? Is there a "Plan B?"

Fortunately, a back-up suit was only \$30 and the guy across the cul-de-sac owes you since he borrowed your lawn mower and didn't return it for three weeks. Get him into the bedroom where the costume is in the closet. His kids will never suspect it's him. See you in ten minutes.

You just became a producer.

Shyness is not a virtue

We've walked convention center back halls with nervous performers – not unknowns trying to get their big break, but chart-topping mega-stars



who command huge performance fees and seem to enjoy trying to back out of a concert one hour before showtime.

We've argued with agents and managers about whether the exit signs could be turned off so as not to distract their star during a show. (The answer, by the way, is "no." Fire marshalls don't care how many are in the audience or how much they paid for a ticket or how big the star is. No exit signs, no concert. End of story.)

We've made a detour to WalMart to buy some underwear and socks for the forgetful performer we just picked up at the airport ... and tried to sneak him in and out of the store without causing an unscheduled riot.

Wondering who? Indulge in a moment of "pick the celebrity" matching. No hints. No accusations. Just three names. Michael Bublé, Paul Simon, John Cougar Mellencamp.

The art of the event

Is there an art to all of this? It's certainly not like painting or sculpture. It's not like researching and writing a novel. Those are artistic endeavors that live inside the mind of the artist and can only be shared once they become tangible.

Events happen in real time. It may seem like it takes years for the planning and preparation to inch forward, but if the program is scheduled to start at 9am on Tuesday ... the audience will likely be less than thrilled if they're still waiting at 10:45.

A mantra over the years, spoken in a level tone through the headsets of the entire crew was "go means go."

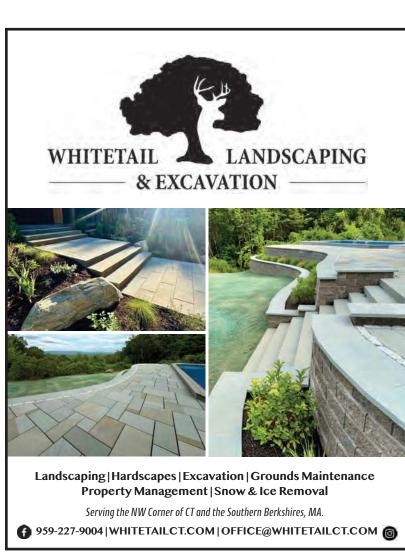
Enough said. •



Left: Jeff at Lime Rock.

Previous page: BB King in concert.









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Dugazon Shop a home goods shop in the making for 21 years, opens in Sharon







Photos by Jeff Holt

By Abby Audenino abby@mainstreetmag.com

"Dugazon was born from our shared deep appreciation for heritage, discovery, and experiences that have shaped a life well-lived," says Bobby Graham and Matt Marden, owners of the newly opened home goods store Dugazon, located in Sharon, CT.

The concept behind Dugazon has been in the making since Graham and Marden's first date 21 years ago. "Bobby told me about his idea for Dugazon on our first date, so I'm thrilled that his dream has now become our reality," Marden says.

Bringing their roots to **Litchfield County**

Marden, who grew up in New Hampshire and Cape Cod, before moving to New York City following college, worked in fashion for many years. His first job in New York was at the Staley-Wise Gallery, where he learned about the history of fashion through photography. He went on to work in men's fashion in a variety of capacities, including as an editor at Town & Country, stylist and former fashion director at Details, and style director at Esquire.

"We had been talking about Dugazon for years. At every apartment we had, there was always a moodboard in a corner where we would tack inspiration and ideas. After we bought our house in Salisbury in 2020 and fell in love with the area, we started discussing it for real," Marden shares.

For Graham, who is originally from South Dakota, Dugazon is a personal project that hits close to home. He drew inspiration from his mother's maiden name – Dugazon. "I always look forward to and cherish the time that we spend every summer in Louisiana with my mother's family," he says. "They taught me the importance of bringing together family and friends through hospitality, entertaining, and cooking fabulous meals to be shared together at home."

After living and working in New York City for 28 years in fashion advertising sales for Conde Nast across a smattering of magazines including Vogue, GQ, Vanity Fair, AD, and The New Yorker, it was finally time to make the dream of Dugazon a reality.

"The store's message can be summed up as the warmth of a welllived and loved home, where every object has meaning," Marden and Graham say.

Curating goods with a discerning eye

Dugazon is filled with items that feel both rare and familiar. Graham and Marden curate with care, basing their choices around the concept of elevated simplicity for products that are meant to be used and lived with.

Specifically, Dugazon offers items for the home, kitchen, and entertaining, as well as special, unexpected pieces. The shop features finds from well-known brands including John Derian, La Double J, Zucchini Fish, Ursa Major, and Il Buco Vita, as well as recent discoveries such as candles from Dévoile, ester&erik, and Charvet Editions linens from France. Additionally, customers can find products from favorite local makers, including ceramics by DBO Home, and stationery and jams from Mr. P's Place Card Company.

"Dugazon is about taking the time to choose what feels right, embracing the beauty of the everyday, and always adding a lagniappe - 'a little extra," Marden and Graham share. "It's a place for those who love their home and find joy in cooking, entertaining, and sharing. Where each visit unfolds like a story – rooted in taste, history, and thoughtful intention."

Dugazon also has a beautiful collection of first-edition hardcover on Marden's book carousel, including You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again, a memoir by Julia Phillips detailing her career as film producer in 1970s and 1980s Hollywood; The Rules of Attraction, a satirical novel by Bret Easton Ellis about a group of rowdy students at a liberal arts college in 1980s New Hampshire; and Every Secret Thing, the Patricia Hearst memour.

In addition to the hardcover books, Dugazon also has a plethora of Marden and Graham's favorite Junior League cookbooks, including River Road, Colorado Cache, Soup Con, Dining Dakota Style, Talk About Good!, and many more.

"Our products are always changing and evolving within the shop. Come in often to discover what we are up to!"•

To learn more about Dugazon, visit them in the shop at 19 W Main Street, Suite 2, Sharon, CT, online at dugazonshop.com, and on Instagram @dugazonshop.



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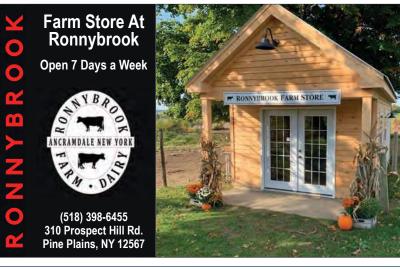


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get lost, then get to work

ack in February, I decided it was time to rekindle the art spark for myself. I was a studio art major in college (way back when!), and while I've retained an active interest in art, I have not consistently practiced making art. Regular efforts over the years left me feeling frustrated and definitely "not good enough."

By Dominique DeVito info@mainstreetmag.com

After a visit to the Frances Lehman Loeb in Poughkeepsie, where there's a gorgeous large work by Agnes Martin - her signature style is graphite lines on canvas forming a meditative grid - I decided that drawing lines across a small piece of paper was a good place to start. No judgement, just play. I would – could – make a simple mixed media collage on top of the lines, and I could do it every day.

And I have. The art spark is ignited. Everywhere I go I look at things differently, and I'm always exploring things to use to make the collages. In my wanderings and gatherings, I kept hearing about Arlene's Artist Materials in Albany, NY. I went to the store's website to learn more, and instantly realized what a treasure for artists this store is.

"Come get creative"

What is immediately apparent about Arlene's is that it's there to offer not just the supplies, but the inspiration to use them. The store's tagline is

"come get creative." Arlene's offerings are so extensive they're broken into categories on a linktree site. It includes the store's merchandise, of course, but also membership info, newsletter sign-up, and info about custom framing, as well as several categories under "Atelier Arlene," which focuses more on classes and workshops, and selections under a heading labeled "RG," which is for the gallery space. There's also a tag for "MMAA," which is for a makers market hosted by Arlene's. It's a festival for local creatives that is held on site three times a year. Exploring the offerings was like opening up a box of crayons. They all begged to be experimented with.

Arlene's Artist Materials is a quirky and somewhat dated space, all of which adds to its charm. It's not a big, impersonal box store. A handwritten sign in the window declares, "You're not sad, you just need ART SUP-PLIES." There's no arguing with that!

Before you even go through the front door, there are flyers and postcards galore pinned or taped to a board letting creatives know about up-and-coming events of all kinds. Walking into the store is its own celebration. The aisles stretch out before you with supplies of every kind, including lots of fun, gifty items like clever magnets, decorative wrapping paper, trinkets, games, and postcards. Irresistible!

The history's no mystery

Arlene's is named after - you guessed it! - Arlene. In 1960, Arlene was doing ceramics in a small space on Madison Avenue in Albany. Her husband made the clay and poured the molds for her. Students from The College of Saint Rose (1920-2024) started stopping by and asking for art supplies. This started small and grew and grew until they decided they needed more space. They moved to the current location at 57 Fuller Road in 1974, naming it Arlene's Artist Materials.

Another thing I noticed was special displays of supplies targeted to art classes at local schools and colleges. It's great to see that an early inspiration for the store is still part of what makes it special.

Arlene and her husband, Mike, ran the store for over 45 years, retiring about 20 years ago. It is now run by their daughter, Donna Garramone. Donna grew up with the store, of course, and worked in it as a teenager and into her twenties. She flirted with other interests for a time "until I decided what I wanted to do," she explains. "Fast forward forty-plus years, and I'm still here!"

Continued on next page ...

Artists all around

While Donna's early interest in oil painting morphed into the full-time passion for everything the store has to offer, and she doesn't paint any more, she is proud of the fact that working artists are essential to the store. The employees are artists. There are artists-in-residence at the store: artists who teach classes and workshops and the artists who contribute to the shows that take place in the store's galleries and other special events. And the artists who shop at the store regularly.

With online shopping becoming more and more mainstream and convenient, Donna knows that "the knowledge my employees possess is unmatched in comparison to shopping online." One of the (many) reasons Arlene's Artist Materials is such a cherished and valued destination for artists and anyone shopping for art supplies and other creative goodies is that "we're very personable and enjoy talking to people," Donna says. "You don't get that kind of attention when you shop online."

It's all there

If you need something to assist in your creative practice – or you just want some color and paper to play with – Arlene's has it. From oils to acrylics to brushes, pastels and pencils and palate knives, inks and erasers and sculpting tools, canvases and crayons and charcoals. "We carry high-quality art supplies at a discount," Donna says. "I love being around all the creative people that shop and work here," she says, "and I'm proud of the fact that we've been in business for over 60 years and have survived all the ups and downs of the business, and we're

still an independent store."

As you move to the back of the store, there's an area for custom framing. Another large room nearby that's chock full of paper, board, and easels along the walls is also home to folding tables set up for working. It's one of the rooms in which classes and workshops are conducted. There is also a full basement that has been converted to studio spaces for classes. Classes have been taking place at Arlene's since 2015. Because they are so popular, they have their own designation through Arlene's. They're part of the "Atelier at Arlene's," which has its own website where you can find descriptions of upcoming classes and workshops and register for them.

There are classes offered in everything from drawing and painting to printmaking, calligraphy and lettering, textile and fiber arts, ceramics and sculpture, and digital illustration. Workshops and specialty classes that might focus on portraiture or pleinair painting are also offered. There are only two times a year when the store and its staff take a break from the classes – September and January, when the focus is on "back to school."

Arlene's has an artist-in-residence program designed to offer artists time, space, and a supportive community in which to develop ideas and focus on their artistic direction." It's a year-long program that has to be applied for. Many of the AIRs also teach classes. There are "Make & Take" sessions where the art supplies are provided and for a minimal fee people can come in and literally "make and take" art. This is popular with individuals and groups.





Above: Donna and Josie. All other photos with this article depict the many art offerings that can be found at Arlene's Artist Materials on Fulton Street in Albany, NY.

Show it off

And if you're going to create, why not show it off? Arlene's hosts several shows in its gallery space every year. One is a 3x3 show of works that are limited to three inches by three inches. When it's up, the walls are filled with these special small works, and they fill the space like a giant quilt. The show is also a fundraiser for a local organization. This year it was Capital Roots. In the past it's been the Mohawk Humane Society, Create Community, Albany Center Galleries, Free Food Fridge Albany, and Collar City Works.

Arlene's also hosts a makers market, where artists can come and set up a booth to show and sell their works. They're festive occasions, with food and live music, all with the goal of supporting artists and the community. There are markets in May, late August, and for the holidays (November 15 and 29, and December 13). These have been held since 2017, with the theme, "where creativity meets community."

Then there's Josie

If the supplies, classes, fun and funky gift items, personalized service, and opportunities to be involved in a

creative community aren't enough, you can come in to say hi to Josie. Who is Josie? She is Donna's pug. "Josie is the best!" Donna says with a big smile. "I have been a pug owner for over 20 years. She loves everyone and has become our store ambassador. She comes to work with me every day, and people always ask to see her. She brings joy to people."

If your dream or desire is to get creative – or more creative! – get to Arlene's Artist Materials. You can become a member and receive discounts and special invitations. My collages are already including new colors and textures and patterns with some things I picked up there. It's seriously addicting, and for all the right reasons. •

Arlene's Artist Materials is at 57 Fulton Street, Albany, NY. Learn more at arlenesartist.com, or go to atelieratarlenes.com to find out about classes and workshops. Explore the full menu of offerings at https:// linktr.ee/ArlenesArtist.



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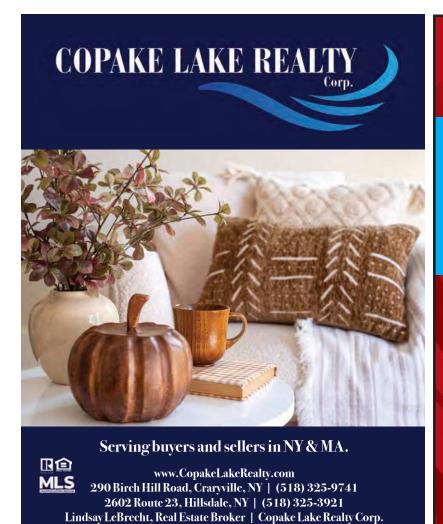
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Growing more than just vegetables at HEARTY ROOTS COMMUNITY FARM IN CLERMONT

By Abby Audenino abby@mainstreetmag.com

Although Ben Shute didn't grow up on a farm, he's been immersed in the profession for his entire career. He first began working for other farmers while he was in college, and many of the farms that he apprenticed at were farms that functioned via community supported agriculture (CSA), which is a direct marketing model in which a community of consumers supports a farm via a weekly share of the farm's harvest.

"They all grew a wide variety of vegetables, so I learned a lot about growing different crops and different systems in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Oregon," Ben explains. "After working on other farms for a while, I was interested in taking on more responsibility. I met a friend who was in the Hudson Valley and wanted to start a farm. The location was perfect because it was close enough to the city to have a large customer base, but far enough away that it's still a farming community, so we joined forces to rent a little bit of land in Red Hook in 2004."

That's how Hearty Roots Community Farm, based in Clermont, NY, came to be. The farm is family-run by Ben, his wife Lindsey, their family, and a crew of hard-working farmers. A first-generation farm, Hearty Roots' land base has grown over the past two decades from three-quarters of an acre of rented land to now encompass over one hundred acres of vegetable fields and pastures.

An average day on the farm

Hearty Roots has a lot going on. They currently grow 60 different types of vegetables on land across three locations that are all within a few miles of one another. In addition to growing and harvesting vegetables, Hearty Roots also cares for chickens, pigs, sheep, and goats.

Ben's day typically starts with meeting with the vegetable crew and going over the harvest list for that particular day. The vegetable crew typically harvests around 20 different items each week, some of which are for CSA shares and some for the farm market in Clermont.

"Most of the people on the farm have a set list of tasks for the day, but my list is always changing," Ben says. "I do all of the seeding, so if there are vegetable seeds to plant, that's a priority. But my list of tasks changes and often depends on what's gone wrong! If something is broken, I'll fix it. If someone is sick, I might be driving a delivery. If a group of sheep needs to be moved, I'll work with the animals."

About Hearty Roots' CSA

Hearty Roots' CSA has always been at the core of how they farm. Ben was trained on CSA farms, so it was a nobrainer to run Hearty Roots the same way. "CSA members are how we were able to get our farm started, so I really appreciate the CSA of a group of customers coming together to partner with a farm in a way that supports the farm and the health of the members," Ben explains.

If you look back to Hearty Roots' first season over two decades ago, the CSA is very similar today in terms of the list of vegetables that the members receive. However, the farm has grown significantly and added more convenience for members over the years. For example, CSA members can pick up their share on the farm, at five other Hudson Valley locations, or at one of five New York City locations.

Over the last decade, Hearty Roots has not only grown bigger, but also added more to their repertoire. When the Shutes purchased their own land

Continued on next page ...







All photos with this article are courtesy of Hearty Roots Farm.

in 2012 in Clermont, they were able to add livestock to the farm, which was great because they provide food that Hearty Roots' CSA members want, add fertility to the soil, and in the case of grazing animals, make good use of marginal land that isn't as suitable for growing vegetables.

Additionally, for the past five years, Lindsey has operated Farm Generations Cooperative, an organization that is committed to empowering local farmers while promoting transparency in the food supply chain. Farm Generations Cooperative provides tools for farmers around the country to sell directly to customers, including its app, GrownBy, which is a free, farmer-owned software platform built for local farm sales and connecting growers across America. Hearty Roots currently utilizes GrownBy to manage its CSA sales and offer convenience to its members, allowing them to take vacations, swap pickup weeks and locations, and pay via flexible schedules or with SNAP benefits.

Growing sustainably

Hearty Roots is certified organic for all of its vegetable production, and on top of that, they strive to utilize regenerative farming practices whenever possible to build soil health and sequester carbon on their land.

In addition to strictly adhering to

organic practices for their vegetables, they also "set a high standard" for themselves in other aspects of their farming, including land preservation and environmental stewardship.

"To me, that's important because our goal is not just to provide food to our CSA members, but to take care of our community's health, which includes taking care of our town's water, our neighbors' air, and our climate," Ben says. "The beauty of organic agriculture is that you can do both at once. As you build healthy soil, plants become more resilient, can withstand drought better, and have more nutrients available to them, so we are encouraging a more productive system overall over time."

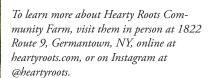
Speaking of extreme weather conditions, the heat waves that the region encountered in June and July were particularly challenging for the Hearty Roots team. To avoid being out in the sweltering heat of the day, the Hearty Roots team often started their harvest days at five o'clock in the morning so that they could end early.

The heat was not only challenging for the workers, but for the animals, too. During the heat wave in June, the nights weren't cooling off as much as they typically do, which makes it uncomfortable for animals like sheep, who are able to tolerate hot days so long as they can cool off at night.



The Shutes' short term goals based in sustainable farming are actually the beginnings of longer term, more expansive goals. "We are partnering with an environmental group to plant a pollinator meadow at our new land in Red Hook next spring, which we hope will provide food for beneficial insects for decades to come," Ben explains. "If we have good habitat and food for beneficial insects, we hope that they will help keep pest insects in check, making our vegetable fields healthier over time."

Above all else, being able to run a business that directly contributes to and benefits the community and the environment is the most rewarding part of operating Hearty Roots. "There are lots of daily frustrations when things break or go wrong, but stepping back, we see the big picture - fields buzzing with activity and life, happy animals and people, and both us farmers and our CSA members enjoying the farm. Never underestimate the power of supporting a small farm or a local business. Each of our CSA members and customers makes a huge difference in allowing us to do this work." •









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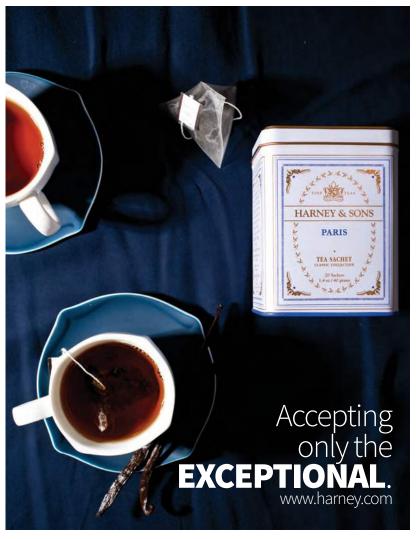
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Taking the dining experience higher:

Elevated Gatherings brings creative, cannabisinfused cuisine to the Hudson Valley and beyond

By Lindsey Clark lindsey@mainstreetmag.com

One day in December 2023, Kira Proper woke up with an idea: to combine her own background in the cannabis industry and her husband's professional experience as a chef. From here, the couple became business partners, and Elevated Gatherings launched in April 2024. "It made sense to combine the two," Kira muses. "Looking back, I'm a little surprised it took me so long to come up with it!"

Elevated Gatherings brings the restaurant experience to clients' homes or short-term rentals, often for groups of eight to twelve people, or with staffing for larger events as necessary. By taking care of all the details, from the shopping and cooking to the serving of a customized meal, Elevated Gatherings not only delivers a restaurant-level event, but for those who are so inclined, they'll even add a little something extra (cannabis)!

Their service areas include Albany, Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Rensselaer, and Ulster Counties in New York, as well as Berkshire County in Massachusetts and Litchfield County in Connecticut.

"Our mission is to bring the best of upstate New York in a new and unforgettable way," Kira explains. "We want to bring joy to our clients and their guests, we want people to eat delicious, local food, and we want to serve them in the comfort of their own space where they can celebrate however they wish."

Keeping it local & distinct

Indeed, the business prioritizes fresh, simple food, purchased directly from local farmers as much as possible, while bringing in a unique cannabis infusion aspect that makes Elevated Gatherings truly stand out in the crowd.

"We love seeing our clients get to really enjoy their own events," says Kira. "It's a lot of work to host and cook and serve and clean up, and we do all of the work so all they have to do is relax and have a great time."

One of the core tenets of their business is a deep connection and commitment to the region. Maintaining close ties to the community, for Elevated Gatherings, is not only essential for their own success, but crucial for uplifting others along the

They certainly accomplish this by sourcing products from small businesses and local purveyors, but they also do their part to spread the word about local businesses, even listing a range of preferred partners on their website. "We believe that the world doesn't have to be cutthroat and that we can lift each other up along the way," Kira asserts. "There doesn't have to be just one winner."

Forging a new path in local cannabis cuisine

Even with this community-based mindset, Kira recognizes the difficulties of launching a cannabis-related culinary business. While there are plenty of private chef companies, Elevated Gatherings is rare in their specific offerings, posing both an advantage and an obstacle.

"There is really no one else around here doing exactly what we do, so we're not only figuring out how to build and run a successful business, we're also trying to figure out how to explain to people what it is that we are doing with no one else to compare to," Kira points out.

Because of her years in the cannabis world, Kira also understands that people bring their own assumptions and stigmas to discussions surrounding the substance. And sometimes, that means interacting with folks who write off the cannabis industry and its patrons as lazy, criminal, or unserious. their own business flourishing. In

"While we know none of that is true," Kira clarifies, "we understand that we carry a bit of a stigma wherever we go. We understand the mental hurdles people have to jump over before bringing us into their homes, and it all makes sense if you think about it: you're hiring us to come into your home, to cook for you, to put a psychedelic substance in your food, and to make sure everyone at your table has a good time."

However, Kira emphasizes just how experienced they are at this craft. Elevated Gatherings focuses on cheffing up delicious meals, infusing cannabis responsibly, and ensuring the utmost safety throughout the entire experi-

Underscoring this to people without seeming too arrogant or too stern can be a challenge in itself, she admits, but word-of-mouth and positive reviews have worked wonders in assuring folks about Elevated Gatherings and their capabilities. "We hope to continue going in the right direction, changing minds about cannabis-infused dining and the people who both cook it and partake in it, as much as we can," she observes.

Looking forward as business owners

The importance of focusing on this core mission has been a crucial lesson while starting this business. Kira shares that in starting a new venture, it's felt tempting to pursue things that don't necessarily fit their vision, like chasing clients or attempting something outside of their expertise, to try to grow the business.

Ultimately, though, Elevated Gatherings has realized the value of sticking to what they do best. "It took us a little while and a few stumbles to decide we just have to do what we do, because that is where we shine," Kira

And this value extends far beyond

addition to supporting other small businesses in the area, generally encouraging that folks shop small and local, and striving to reframe the narrative surrounding cannabis use, Elevated Gatherings is also committed to supporting their favorite charities.

"We recently made a commitment to donate at least 10% of our profits to local animal rescue charities," says Kira. "Our favorites are the Columbia-Greene Humane Society and Animal Farm Foundation. The first dog we ever adopted was from CGHS and our current two dogs are both AFF alumni. We adopt, we foster, we volunteer, we donate, and we'd like to encourage others to do the same however they can."

Looking forward, Elevated Gatherings plans to continue their current business model - private dinners in people's homes - with the hopes of expanding into larger events as well. Kira notes that ultimately, their abilities depend on New York State laws, but one day, they'd love to create a vertically integrated operation with a brick-and-mortar location. This would entail onsite consumption, as well as supper clubs, a delivery service, and a continuation of their private chef model.

"Right now, we are working out the plans for where we want to go first and how we are going to do it," Kira shares. "For 2026, we are planning to take one of those steps while still staying true to the model that has gotten us this far." •

To learn more about Elevated Gatherings, please visit elevatedgatheringsny.com. Get in touch with them via email at takemehigher@elevatedgatheringsny.com or phone at (518) 821-9991. Their mailing address is PO Box 29, Claverack, NY, 12513.



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A deck of my own

By Ian Strever info@mainstreetmag.com

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

Assuming fifteen miles to Lowe's in Torrington, five miles to Harrington's in Lakeville, and three miles to Lindell's in North Canaan, one step led to roughly 300 miles in Connecticut this summer.

My back step, specifically.

The grass that inexplicably sprouted from it, along with the shifting Brady Bunch-era slate on the top landing, convinced me that the entire flight had to go. Having tried my hand with an excavator a few times, I was not convinced I could rip it out without collapsing the adjacent wall of my kitchen, so I settled on the equivalent of sweeping it under the rug: burying it with a deck.

My primary job – the one for which I earned advanced degrees – is that of a high school principal. Familiar as I have become with the installation of white boards, the inner workings of industrial furnaces, and various floor waxing strategies, the construction of a deck naturally falls within my scope of practice. Armed with daily refreshers on the Pythagorean theorem and a working knowledge of physics, I set out to engineer a deck substantial enough to support myself and a few confederates while concealing the horror show of magically germinating concrete underfoot.

My carpentry apprenticeship has been decades in the making, beginning in middle school with a prefab birdhouse, then unceremoniously suspended for thirty-five years while I dabbled in the world of education. And although a masters degree in English has served me well in identifying iambic pentameter in the works of Chaucer, observations of high school geometry classes have done far more to stoke my desire to graft mathematical theory onto reality. In short: I wanted to make something.

deal in the concrete. Literally. After consulting local building codes and weighing the virtues of five different types of footings, I opted for the motor overbuilt and secure choice: poured concrete. My plans for the house six of the deck involved securing it to the concrete.

However, any successful student of English 301 is forever plagued to deconstruct the meaning of something as simple as a deck, reading it as a perfect liminal space where one could invite Thoreau, Derrida, and the Pope for one banger of a dinner party. I had visions of twilight convivialities, accented with candlelight, clinking whiskey glasses, and the kind of existential riffing for which a dinner party with a slightly tipsy Thoreau, Derrida, and Pope is famous.

The Holy Trinity

I was clearly putting the theoretical cart way before the horse, because while I have never been averse to taking risks, I prefer that they be calculated ones. So before I started cutting into perfectly good cedar siding, I spent an inordinate amount of time on tasks for which I am more qualified, such as research (very qualified) and drafting (sorta qualified). This fed my need to gird myself with all manner of contingent considerations while simultaneously serving as an effective procrastination strategy. Etsy, YouTube, and Reddit were the Holy Trinity of opinionated forums on how to go about construction. Every two-bit DIY-er and erstwhile contractor had something to say about how to affix one piece of wood to another, and I gladly soaked in the warm bath of their admonitions.

At some point, though, it was time to get out of the theoretical tub and

deal in the concrete. Literally. After consulting local building codes and weighing the virtues of five different types of footings, I opted for the most overbuilt and secure choice: poured concrete. My plans for the house side of the deck involved securing it to the rim joist of the house with a ledger board (more on all of this construction lingo later), and the commensurate security of three, 42"-deep concrete footings seemed like a real belt-and-suspenders way of holding up my most corpulent guests.

This meant groundwork, literally. I find the need to excessively point out that all of this work is literally happening because so many construction metaphors have worked their way into common usage and so many of them are especially well-suited to figurative, literary usage that I want to be clear that in this case, a writer is – uncharacteristically – working with his hands to create something tangible.

A nice companion piece - and procrastination resource - to my project was Michael Pollan's A House of My Own, which chronicles the development and construction of a small writing hut in the backyard of the writer's former house in Cornwall, CT. Although I'd read the book before for academic purposes, it took on new meaning in my parallel venture into home improvement, and I felt a kinship with his efforts to wring something square and flush from a brain most often employed in endlessly negotiating between words like "square" and "flush." Removing those quotation marks would constitute a threshold (figuratively, this time).

The unfamiliar world of home improvement enriched my vocabulary. "Tolerance" was a threshold not to

be crossed instead of a virtue to be sought. New and exotic terms entered my lexicon, and I can now confidently deploy words like "ledger," "joist," and "15-amp, 10-inch, corded compound miter saw" with moderate assurance that I will not elicit puzzled stares from the associates at Lowe's. In fact, by the end of the project, I knew the store better than most of them.

Other words did not take on new meanings as much as earned new admiration. Square and flush are the *sine qua non* of any structure, and my return to the strictures of geometry shifted my thinking from terms of possibility to those of precision and certainty. Back to those footings.

The new Bob Vila?

We're all familiar with the craftsman's adage, "measure twice, cut once," and it echoed in my brain at every turn. I measured out nine feet from my house, planning on footings that would support the outer edge of my deck, which would frame the edge of my fire pit with about a foot to spare. Having watched a clip from *This Old House* (starring the host whose name will forever be not-Bob Vila), I would construct batter boards (another new term!) to square them with the side of the house.

This was a monumental pain in the ass involving endless amounts of pink landscape string that provided a highly dissatisfying sense of squareness and that would eventually wind its way around every tool handle as I cleared the space of vegetation. To my way of thinking, squareness connotes rigidity, and string lines are the opposite of

Continued on next page ...





Left: The completed deck, landscaped and decorated. Right: LED strip lighting, for that chic, Death Star aesthetic









Top, L-R: The offending step and the new ledger board that would obliterate it. Construction stalled while I figured out how to engineer a floating step. Thanks, Etsyl Above, L-R: Simpson Strong-Tie hardware and frame tape cleaned up the rough edges of my work Mitted framing and butt-loined corners solved my step challence.

that, subject to every wayward breeze and forgetful step. Eventually, this led to the purchase of the coolest tool I now own, a laser level, which was only slightly more accurate, but came with lots of exciting and dire warnings along the lines of "you'll shoot your eye out." When I finally put spade to dirt, my prevailing thought was something like, "that's about as good as you're going to get."

Because ultimately, I would be pouring a ten-inch circle of concrete into the ground, three-and-a-half feet deep. Permanent, yes, but there would be a margin of error about where I planted the anchor bolt, thanks to some niftily-engineered foot plates from my friends at Simpson Stong-Tie. From what I can tell, these dudes have a monopoly on joist and decking hardware that is well-deserved, and their hardware made up for my lack of carpentry skills. I've heard it said that any self-respecting carpenter will blanch at the suggestion of blending steel with wood construction, but having no reason to respect my carpentry skills, I went all-in on anything Simpson sells.

A borrowed one-half-inch drill made quick work of the concrete mixing, which was concerning. One can do a lot of permanent damage in a short amount of time with that kind of tool, and even with all of my measuring, my footings weren't quite perfect – slightly ovoid and more off the mark than I'd hoped – but there they were, as immovable as the pyramids.

Fortunately, another truism of woodworking played into my hand: wood is an imperfect medium. Individual pieces can be bowed and warped from the lumber yard, but they can also be bent to one's will - to a degree - with the right tools and hardware. Instead of making the posts align with the outer rim joist of the deck, I opted to extend the deck to a full 10 feet and use the posts to anchor a supporting beam. The result was a longer deck that would make better use of the 10-foot 2 x 6s I had bought as well as provide some additional seating near my firepit. Win-win.

A DIY warrior

Once I solved that problem, it was time to take the monumental and ineradicable step of cutting into the house siding. Scores of YouTube videos had convinced me that this was the way to go to create the most stable deck, and although I wasn't quite sure where the rim joist of the house was, I figured it had to be right under the back door, basically. The problem was that the house was primarily built atop several ginormous I-beams that would resist anything but an acetylene torch when it came to modification. The rim joist rested atop those beams but hidden with some sheeting and more or less decorative courses of siding.

I'd hired an actual carpenter to build out a closet in the house recently, and I'd noticed his deft use of an oscillating tool to make precise

cuts around trim. This, along with the surety of the thousands I was saving by DIY-ing this stunt, convinced me of the necessity and long-term value of having such a tool in my arsenal. After another round-trip to Home Depot, I stood before the perfectly good siding, prepared to make permanent cuts where my new deck would rest. The vertical cuts were simple enough – thirty seconds with a power tool can undo hours of craftsmanship - but cutting through the nails and extracting the siding was a bit of a chore. After an hour, though, I stood before a sixteen-by-one-foot hole in my house, rather aghast at the damage I had done.

Nonetheless, like an archeologist, I had uncovered that apocryphal rim joist. It was dry, sturdy, and secure as the day it was installed, and my research suggested several strategies for keeping it that way. I wedged in some metal flashing and sealed every possible crevice with butyl tape in preparation for installing what would be the linchpin of the deck: the ledger board (or "bawd" as pronounced by the *This Old House* guy somewhere in Newton, MA).

By this point, I had become something of a lumber snob. I'd tried curbside pickup from Lowe's, where the employees had hand-curated a selection of the most knotted, warped assortment of 2 x 4s this faceless customer had ever seen, so I now opted for my local lumberyard: Herrington's. Here I was able to drive right into their sheds and select the finest 2 x 6's this side of a Brazilian rainforest. It was as if someone had hand-raised a grove of southern pines for the express purpose of being screwed to my house.

And screwed they shall remain, thanks to a set of robust LedgerLOK 5" lag screws that I would trust with my life. Throughout the project, new conceptions of faith entered my consciousness. Faith in engineered solutions is one thing, but a higher devotion to the precepts of geometry is nearly a spiritual experience. Once the ledger had been secured to the rim joist of the house, framing could begin, employing the carpenter's axiom of the 3-4-5 right angle, derived from the Pythagorean Theorem. Recalling a

slightly un-square deck my father had built, I submitted to the strictures of geometry, fastidiously measuring and double-measuring all four corners of the deck, slightly incredulous that the math of an English major worked out every time.

From there, the rest of the deck fell into place – even a nifty floating step, inspired by Etsy, but requiring an additional 20 hours of YouTubeing, flashbacks to high school physics, and trial and error to engineer. I even discovered strips of LED lighting that, when installed underneath the rim joist, could make it look like the control deck of the Death Star.

The decking itself was composite, delivered in 16-foot strips off the back of a Lowe's flatbed. Through dumb luck, the planned length of my deck worked out to almost the exact length of these boards, so with square framing, it was just a matter of installing a mitred "picture frame" perimeter for them and then laying them in, one after the other. Although these ended up measuring an inch shorter near the house, the difference is not noticeable to the naked eye. I am not sure if that means that my math was off, but my calculations about the amount of lumber I needed certainly were. I had nine surplus pieces after accounting for some spares to keep on hand, and I had to rent a flatbed myself to haul them back to Lowe's - an adventure that could be the subject of another

With each board, I knew that I was approaching the end of the project, just as I can now sense that I am getting to the end of this piece of writing. In the case of writing, dozens of similar essays have conditioned me to know exactly what I can say in about 1,500 words. But despite blowing past that number this time, I know that I have told the story of this deck, a process that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. I needed to lay some groundwork, explain some terms, include some necessary details, and communicate the arc of the process, much like writing. When the time came to drill that final screw into the last piece of decking against the house, I knew, viscerally, just like this article, that it was done.



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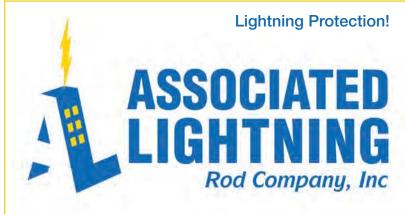


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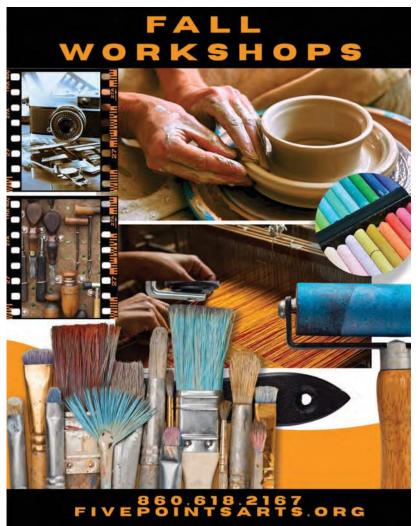
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Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

HELPS THE AREA'S FARMERS AND FOOD PRODUCERS FLOURISH WHILE BOLSTERING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM





By Lindsey Clark lindsey@mainstreetmag.com

We caught up with Berkshire Agricultural Ventures to find out more about their mission and offerings for food producers across the region. Read on to learn all about what makes BAV such a crucial support for the community's farmers and the local food system as a whole.

How was Berkshire Agricultural Ventures founded?

Berkshire Agricultural Ventures was launched as a community nonprofit in 2017. Our co-founders - Neil Chrisman and Joel Millonzi - were passionate about helping farmers and protecting farmland in the Berkshire-Taconic region. In the early years, they drove around our region talking with farmers about their needs, figuring out what the gaps were and how to fill them. From these conversations, BAV developed core services to support farmers and food producers in order to build a thriving local food economy. We continue this vital mission today.

Tell us a little bit about BAV's mission, values, and goals as an organization.

Our fundamental mission is to serve farmers and food producers. Our clients are the small- and medium-

scale farms that define our agricultural region. We provide services and support to help them solve business problems, access resources and relationships, increase their resilience, and grow sustainably. By valuing and supporting farmers, our work creates a stronger and more equitable local food system that builds farmer livelihoods, expands access to local food, and keeps local land in agriculture. Equity is an important value for BAV. We recognize the historical inequities and disparities in agriculture, and we energetically support farms led by farmers of color and other members of historically marginalized communi- flexible, low-cost loans that give our

What is your regional reach and service area?

We work with farmers and food producers in Berkshire, Litchfield, Columbia, and Dutchess counties. Our organizational name is Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, but our service area has encompassed this wider region from the beginning. It's important to us to work beyond the borders of any one county or state in order to effectively strengthen our regional food system.

What offerings, services, and resources do you provide? In other words, how do you help farms and food businesses in the local

region thrive?

We offer several core tools – often in combination - to help farms and food businesses grow and thrive. These include one-on-one business assistance, flexible lending, and what we sometimes call "network weaving" - sharing resources and making connections across the local food system. BAV's business assistance includes grant-writing services, business planning, marketing support, and other professional services that BAV helps clients access at a small fraction of their cost.

Our lending work encompasses clients - typically small to mid-sized family farms – access to financing that they may not be able to obtain from traditional lenders. All our services are geared to meeting clients where they are and building strength and resilience into their businesses. We have many repeat clients and we love working with farmers as their businesses evolve!

Describe the kind of work that goes into organizing your programs and technical business assistance. Furthermore, what efforts contribute to the funding

Continued on next page ...

Above, L-R: Grazing tour in July 2024. Cows at Hawthorne Valley Farm.

All photos with this article are courtesy of Berkshire Agricultural



Above: Photo by Don Perdue.

Below, right: Gould Farm. Photo by Patrick Grego.

of your grants, loans, and other financing options?

BAV has several program managers who work directly with farmers and food producers using the core tools described above. Right now, we have three strategic program areas that address specific needs in our region – our Climate Smart Agriculture Program, Local Meat Processing Support Program, and our Market Match Fund. We bring expertise in these areas to our clients – for example, we might integrate business assistance and a low-cost loan to help a farm implement new strategies for climate resilience.

Underlying all our services is the support of individual donors, private foundations, and state and federal programs. We cannot do our work without the generosity of our community! As one example, we offer low-cost loans with a high impact to local farmers – and we can only do that because philanthropic support helps us cover costs.

How would you describe your impact in the local community on a practical level, as well as the relationships you've fostered with farmers and food producers in the area?

BAV helps farmers grow and thrive – that's the heart of our impact. And when farmers thrive, our whole community is healthier and more resilient. Some of the story of our work can be found in metrics – for example, BAV has made \$2.5 million in low-cost, flexible loans to farmers and food producers over the past eight years. Last year alone, we helped enable \$1.4 million in federal and state grants for farmers through our grant-writing

ervices

BAV also plays a pivotal role in supporting SNAP matching at Berkshire-area farmers' markets, with over \$100,000 in grantmaking each year to partner farmers markets. In addition to these and other tangible impacts, we are proud of our work as a connector, convener, and collaborator within the local food system. We have helped foster stronger relationships that benefit all of us!

Why is it significant that groups like yours play an active role in supporting and promoting local farms and food businesses as they develop and grow?

Farmers feed us. It doesn't get more fundamental than that! Farming is an extremely challenging business — and with federal funding shifts, local farmers are facing even greater hurdles. We feel lucky to be doing this work in a region that overall has a good awareness of the challenges and vital importance of local farmers. It is going to take dedication and effort from our communities to help local farmers and food businesses grow and thrive.

The significance of this work extends beyond individual farms and touches so many different aspects of our rural communities – job creation, economic growth, farmland preservation, expanding food access, and increasing the resilience and diversity of our farming community.

What do you find most rewarding about your work at BAV?

It is most rewarding to know that BAV makes a real difference to

farmers. We recently conducted a stakeholder survey about the impact of our services. One farmer said, "I would not have the farm I have today if it wasn't for BAV. They allow farms to grow and feed the community." We hear similar feedback again and again, and it's extremely heartening and inspiring to know that our work matters to individual farmers and the local food system.

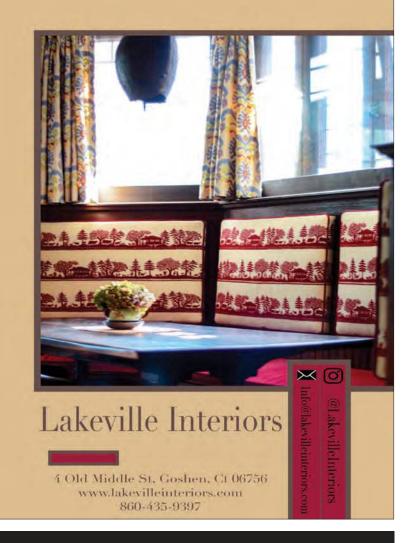
Are there any future developments or plans going forward at BAV that you'd like to discuss?

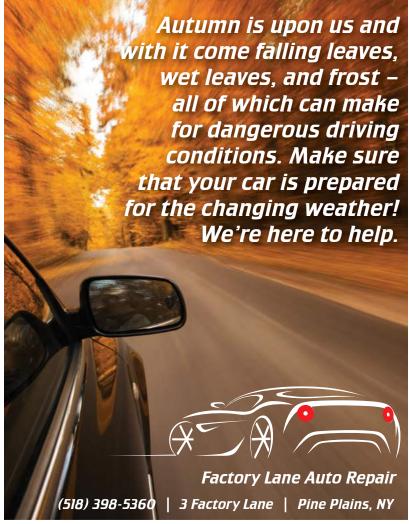
Yes! We are working to open up new market opportunities for farmers, especially in the area of farm-toinstitution relationships. These have the power to create new sales channels for farmers, incorporate more healthy food into local institutions such as K-12 schools and colleges, and keep food purchasing local - which in turn strengthens the local economy and reduces the environmental impacts of long-distance food transport. Farmto-institution work can deliver so many multiplier effects - job creation, strengthening the tax base, and more. This area is a great example of how BAV is working on a systems level to have a positive community impact. •

BAV invites farmers and community members to connect with them. To learn more about their work and how they support local farmers, as well as sign up for their monthly newsletter, please visit berkshireagventures. org. BAV is located at 4 Castle Street, Suite 215 in Great Barrington, MA. You can contact them by sending an email to info@berkshireagventures.org or calling (413) 645-3594.















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SIDELINED

By CB Wismar info@mainstreetmag.com

There's a wind coming off the Hudson. Frankly, it's got a real bite to it. After all, it's autumn in the tri-state area and along with leaves flaming into brilliant color, busloads of appreciative "leaf peepers" and end-of-season sales at local stores, it's time to stand on the sidelines of a soccer game, a football game, or a field hockey game and cheer for our children and grandchildren.

The sidelines. There are rules about being here - rules that didn't exist decades ago but became necessary when the emotions of the moment apparently overtook the "guard rails" of societal norms and the hooliganism began. Shouting and obscenities. Pushing and shoving. Charging on the field to confront the referee. Adults locked in combat over the outcome of noon, the game was soccer as we call a junior varsity soccer match.

And, it wasn't confined to one area of the country. All across America, the stories began to ripple through social media of sideliners behaving badly, games being forfeited and the flashing blue lights of squad cars trailing off into the distance as those with no self-restraint were escorted to the local constabulary.

So, things changed. Governing bodies – those distant organizations that create and control the boundaries of amateur sport, manage the recruiting and certification of referees and umpires, and hold the fate of athletic programs in their grasp created new rules. No longer could groups clustered on the sidelines descend into the antics of European football fans.

Shouts of encouragement were permitted. Shouts of angry derision were forbidden. Referees, players or opposing fans – it made no difference. Behave as mature adults ... or leave.

So, here we were, being polite and cordial and encouraging and ... cold.

Some of our compatriots had brought their collapsable camp chairs to make the spectating more comfortable. Someone had brought hot chocolate and styrofoam cups. There was a "snack bag" passed around with various treats of limited nutritional value but high sugar or salt content. We were set, ready for the game ... or

Standing close to midfield, we realized that mere steps away, another standing observer was heartily cheering on the opposition. All quite fair, without question. Free speech and all that. The detail that caught our attention was not the cheering, but the clear lack of understanding of the game unfolding in front of us.

On this particular autumn afterit in the states. High school game. Girl's varsity. My granddaughter had just made a lovely kick to "change the field" and spark an offensive move at the opposing goal.

"That's offsides!" my neighbor standing a few feet away on the other side of midfield shouted with gusto. "Not really," we suggested. "There are still two defensive players between the ball and the goal."

"Keep your mouth shut!"

It was the internal voice offering, a split second too late, the absolute best advice possible: "Be quiet." Cheer for the team or the players, but refrain from becoming "that guy" who feels compelled to chime in with needless and often insulting corrective trivia. No one cares if you played or coached or got up at 4am that morning to watch a Premier League match.

After all, the game had proceeded. The referee was well acquainted with the rules of the game and had let things advance without a whistle to stop the action. The opposing keeper

had managed to stop a rather weak effort at a shot on goal, and the game was moving forward with the ball safely in midfield.

"Who the hell are you?"

This time the voice was real, not imagined, and the inquirer was visibly

"Apologies," we offered and took a few steps back, "I didn't mean to offend."

Would it be enough? Would the ire created ease up and let the day proceed? Fingers figuratively crossed, we turned and took a few more steps away from the point of conflict.

His parting word was not an honorific. It was shouted above the natural din of the game and clearly meant to be heard by fans on either side of the imaginary dividing line.

Duly castigated, we attempted to blend into the group of like-minded fans, went aimlessly searching through the snack bag to see if there might be some chocolate covered crow, and ended up far enough away to no longer be the subject of a verbal harangue.

toward the parking lot. Players from both sides made their way across the pitch to touch base with family and friends before heading home. With commendable restraint, we held back, awaiting the arrival of our granddaughter who was greeted with the standard "Great game!" which automatically opened the floodgates of reciting errors, frustrations, and

personal critique.

My verbal combatant was walking, yards ahead, toward a car on the opposite side of the parking area from where we were situated. No further confrontation appeared on the horizon. I don't recall the final score - I believe we won - but I do recall the bolt of lightning that flashed and the life lesson seared into the subcon-

Opinions are fine. It might be wise to keep them to oneself ... unless invited to share, at which point they remain opinions, not pronouncements to be etched in granite for all to see, admire, and applaud. •

Lesson learned

It hadn't come to pushing and shoving or, worse yet, a fist fight. If it had, we'd have been at a great disadvantage. The age gap was significant, and we had proved, once again, that the mouth is bigger than the biceps and "keeping our own company" is not only a quaint way of saying "shut up," but good advice, in general.

Game ended, the faithful collected lawn chairs, bags, and assorted water bottles and moved, en masse,



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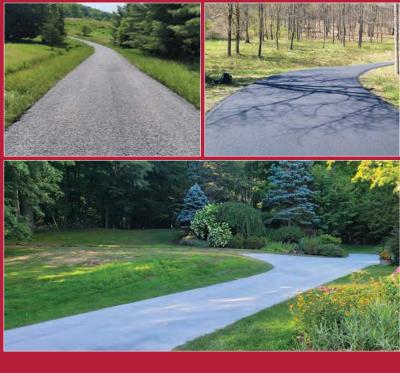
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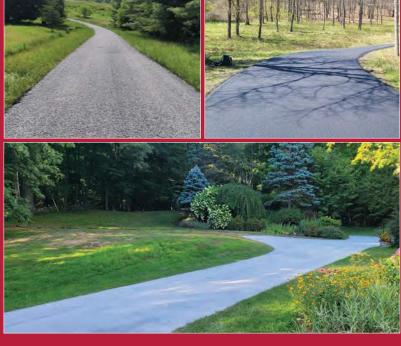
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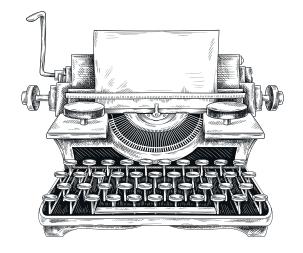


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Writers writing

By Jesse DeGroodt info@mainstreetmag.com

"Writing is like prostitution. First you do it for love, and then for a few close friends, and then for money.

Molière

The doggies need fresh water. Was that a hummingbird? It was a hummingbird! Time to check the mail. Time to check the email. The dishes need washing. The dehumidifier in the basement could stand to be emptied. Why is it so windy? One/both of the doggies need (more) attention. Better check the weather again. Am I out of coffee? What was that weird noise I heard out on the road? Why is that deer staring at me through the window? Maybe I should fold the clothes that are hanging out in the dryer.

Okay, ready, set, carcass in chair, grey matter engaged, anddddd action!

Or not. Hmmmmm. Chances are, I didn't do it right. Let's see. Barometric pressure under control? Will smoke from some much-removed wildfire infiltrate my abode today? I know - let's go check the icebox to ensure all's well inside there, a process with which at least one, if not both, doggies will join in to verify there are no boo-boos in the all-important refrigeration department. There are times I find myself

circling the work like a hunter zeroing in on its prey, and this would surely be one of those occasions.

The most important part...

Yes, it does happen occasionally that I arrive at the computer with an entire story nearly fully formed and firmly held in place by a vise inside my head, but that's far from an everyday occurrence, although it is not an unwelcomed phenomena provided I can reach my keyboard before it all just as suddenly evaporates. More often, however, the issue is made far murkier by too many ideas/half-formed ideas/ things-that-think-they're-ideas simultaneously attempting to squeeze into the marketplace, all of which require relatively instant triaging, otherwise, we'd be stuck here all day. At times, particularly those times when two or three separate stories feel the need to get themselves going at one time, the sticky note farm proliferates beyond all boundaries.

There is no question in my mind that there are those for whom words spill out onto the page/screen with the greatest of ease. Bully for them. But then there are the rest of us. In 99.44% of the cases, it's all about the first sentence/first paragraph, which has a nasty habit of appearing in the middle of the night, or in the shower, or in whatever other inconvenient bit of time and space one can dream up.

Last I knew, it was Plato who observed, "The beginning is the most important part of the work." I'd imagine that applies equally to bricklaying and lawn mowing as it does to dropping words onto a page.

Here's where you start...

Whatever is going to happen, it all flows from the specter of a deadline, from which, in turn, all adrenaline springs. A looming line of death is critical to my operation, a condition I discovered early on in this life. I mean, c'mon, let's introduce some element of sport into this operation. Focus! Sadly, at least sadly for those of who've been at this a few minutes, to hear a young-un (one that's not caved to the bizarre lazy ridiculousness of artificial intelligence) kvetching over such things as a word limit, which I'm told destroys their spirit, or a deadline, clearly a fascistic tool, when the truth is these are freeing obstacles, much in the way the haiku form frees.

If anyone came here seeking advice, aka about the last thing I've ever been interested in doing, this is the best I can do: Don't. But should you insist, first, run right out and pick up the latest edition of Strunk & White's The Elements of Style. I know, I know, it's stodgy, based on fundamentals, not built for social media sparkle, but it is handy when one of your goals might

Continued on next page ...

be to prefer not sounding like a royal jerk when committing characters to paper. This is all part of a personal philosophy to learn the rules so you can enjoy breaking them.

Second, read, read, and read some more. Next, apply that same method to writing, even if you have to sequester yourself in the attic in the middle of the night to do it. As noted jazz drummer Ed Blackwell once said, "Neglect your art for one day and it will neglect you for two." Truer words have never been spoken. The lesson here? Write something every day, even if it seems vapid beyond belief, and gradually that drivel may well give way to something worth reading. (Want to have some real fun? If you're lucky/unlucky, you'll stumble across a journal you kept during your 16th year on this planet, and the resultant astonishment that someone that lame made it to 17. Good thing we don't remain 16 forever.)

Or else!

Eventually, when some bit of competency has been achieved, put yourself in a position where you have to write or else, as in, or else the paychecks cease. Personally, my newsroom days taught me that no, I don't have all day and all night to pop out a bunch of words, but instead to write fast and lean and get on with it. This would specifically include after you've been glued to your seat through a sluggish three-hour school board meeting the

night before Thanksgiving and then need to hotfoot it back to the office in a snowstorm to pump out some kind of story. Meanwhile, to not get married to a sentence you've written that you're convinced is simply the best thing to see print since Shakespeare was Shakespearing is a solid policy, and one quickly learned in a newsroom setting.

Just do it - writer's edition

It doesn't matter via which medium you choose to communicate your thoughts. I repeat: it does not matter. Just do it. For instance, early on, a manual typewriter approximately the weight of a midsize Buick was my companion, followed by the day my dad fetched home a manual electric, an act of mercy that nearly sent me doing cartwheels down the street. It saw me through my college years, including my final semester, when my history professor lost my term paper and I wound up needing to return that fall for the three credits required to graduate because that jerk fine, fine man wouldn't give me an overnight to redo what he'd lost.

That machine sufficed until the need to have two young boys fall asleep at a decent hour also involved a modicum of quiet, at which point springing for a laptop became the best solution. Since, I've shied far away from any voice-to-text schemes for the simple reason that, if prompted, I could babble all day without giving

a single second's worth of thought to what it was I was composing, ergo, nothing less than shredder-worthy babble is likely to appear. The Infinite Monkey Theorem, which holds that an infinite number of monkeys typing on an infinite number of typewriters could reproduce the works of Shakespeare, has as much chance of success.

In the early days of this personal adventure, some loud music and perhaps an adult beverage at my elbow helped lubricate the process. Then came the move into a newsroom, with the constant hubbub of clickety-clacking word processors (remember those?), telephones ringing and being answered, reporters coming and going, advertising folks traipsing through, and a police scanner squawking in the corner, all of which was fantastic training in later years to do this at home at the vortex of two busy, young lads. These days, music with words is verboten, leaving me with jazz fusion, a style I truly enjoy, or classical, which ain't so bad, that is, unless it threatens to induce sleep. While we're at it, here's a far-flung illusion for you: That the outside world doesn't somehow manage to intrude after you'd thought you had managed to hermetically seal yourself against such an eventuality, but it's going to happen, so there.

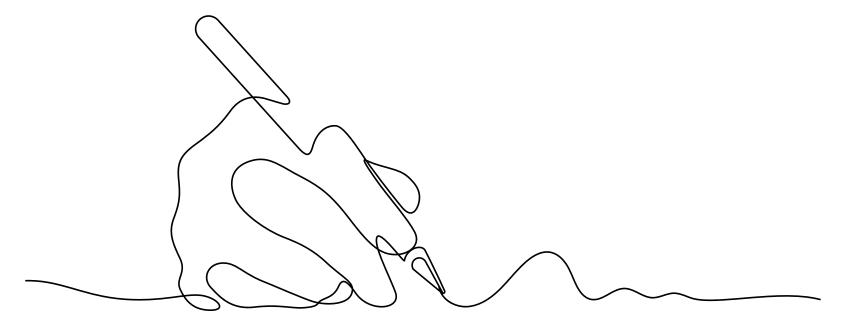
Find the groove

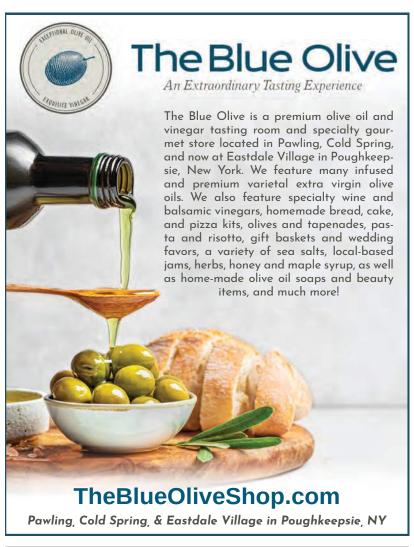
A major key is recognizing that, after all the foolishness and thrashing

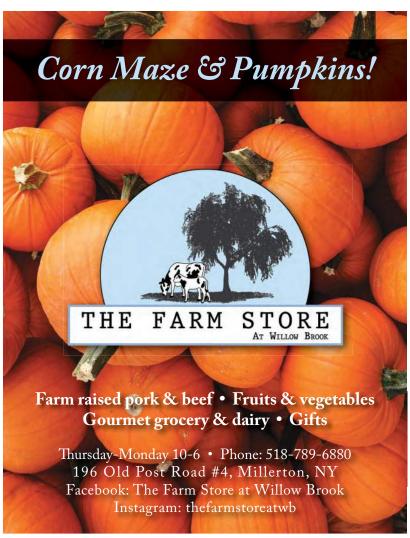
about, you've suddenly arrived in the groove and as such, you'd best grab onto its tail and ride it until you're plumb outta gas. The best works work when it feels as though I've grabbed 'hold of something floating by and committed it to the page or screen. The dumbest thing possible, and I will readily throw myself in here, comes when you're cruising and decide, no, wait, this would work even better with an extremely large, black coffee, and get up, drive downtown, fetch your java, and return home with all the majesty of a returning hero, only to discover that magic groove you'd been riding remained back at the coffee shop and now you're plumb out of luck, or whatever it was that led you to that dream spot in the first place.

And then, there's the percolation factor. When the story is done, it's not done. I bet you guessed that already. Ideally, it needs to spend the night in the oven, thinking about what's it done and begin to make amends. Or, it, and you, will awake the next day with something that's reasonably decent and ready to be fired off to The Boss.

When all else fails? Take solace in Dilbert cartoonist Scott Adams' observation that "there are very few personal problems that cannot be solved through a suitable application of high explosives." In this case, there's no harm in tossing your latest work into the fireplace, refreshing the dogs' water, and starting over.









OCTOBER













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Outdoor sculpture spaces

By Barbara Peduzzi info@mainstreetmag.com

Art Omi grows contemporary work in former farm fields

It would be blasphemy to talk about outdoor sculpture exhibits in this area without including Art Omi in Ghent, NY, where modest to massive contemporary works become part of the landscape, owning hilltops, filling fields, and tucking into hedge-rows of a one-time 120-acre dairy farm.

Francis J. Greenberger founded Art Omi as a residency program, on land he purchased after working at one. The park 'organically grew' as the art collector placed his own pieces into the landscape, and trails now lead through dozens of creations in the sculpture and architecture parks.

Their curation process has evolved over the years, following goals of displaying stimulating contemporary pieces appealing to a large audience and interacting with the nature they live in. In the past few years, emphasis has been on new commissions, as Art Omi becomes a place for artists to do their 'wildest dreams' projects. Artists from marginal communities are especially considered.

Greenberger's collection is permanent; some other works are on loan. At least one new piece is added to each park every year. Their setting depends upon the artist's vision for the work, how it fits with the surroundings and relates to nearby pieces, as well as where it will make the most sense to visitors.

The works are kept as the artist desired, with nature's interactions ongoing. A team constantly checks for damage, which is mainly from weather; sun exposure requires re-staining wood, for example. There is very little

vandalism, but there is ongoing bird

Everyone at the venue has a different favorite piece. For one, that is a recent actual old-fashioned community-involved barn raising for the new piece, "Barn Raising-Part 2." Another's favorite is "Outcasts from the Underground," a tower of sewer pipes, catch basins, and more, standing on the highest hill and climbable for views of the whole park.

There is no 'A to B to C' route to the trails, so visitors should bring a spirit of adventure and let their senses lead the way. Many pieces have signs prohibiting touching or climbing, but others are meant to be interactive, explored, touched. A brightly colored maze invites kids to run through.

Art Omi welcomes everyone and very much appreciates being part of the community. Open year-round, there's no best time to visit. Spring's soft green new leaves on bare branches create their own artistry. In summer, bees buzz, butterflies flit through goldenrod (we know, allergies!), and blue cornflowers brighten trailside vistas. Fall's blazing leaves lend warmth and color, and winter's starkness and snow redefine each piece's shape. The two-mile walk is an easy, enjoyable way to get your steps for the day. Having grown up just a couple of miles away, I cannot help but wonder what the old Polish dairy farmer would think of what now sprouts up in his pastures and hay fields.

Visit Art Omi at 1405 Co Rte 22, Ghent, NY, or find out more at artomi.org.

Classic sculptures accent Wethersfield Estate's Italian Renaissance garden

Wethersfield Estate in Amenia, NY, is off the beaten track. Way off. That





does not mean you should not beat a track to its gate. Ignore the fact that the dirt road makes you think you'll end up in a cow pasture. You won't.

Where you will end up is at a country estate created on idle farmlands Chauncey Devereaux Stillman discovered while riding with the Millbrook Hunt in 1938. With forward-thinking use of contour farming to maximize crop yield and retention ponds to catch rainwater for irrigation, Stillman turned the land from barren to fruitful. The name Wethersfield was chosen as a reminder of Wethersfield, CT, where his family had first settled.

Sweeping views show farmlands surrounding the comfortably elegant brick home and a stable and carriage house. Stillman's collection of carriages, plus his art and furniture, all reflect his high regard of classicism.

That extends to the Italian Renaissance gardens, which alone are stunning, and made more so with statuary pieces complementing and enhancing the plantings. Paths looping through them lead past the Cupid and Naiad fountains, Our Lady Immaculata, Japanese-style horses, Grecian-influenced human figures, urns, and obelisks. Most are classic, with bits of whimsy here and there. Between all are walls of stones from the property, courtyards with cobblestones from old New York City streets, pools, and peacocks (yes, live white peacocks).

Stillman worked with several artists to create his visions, among them sculptor Josef Stachura and landscape architect Evelyn Poehler, whose husband George Frederick Poehler designed the Palladian arch, which mirrors brick work on the wall below Stillman's bedroom.

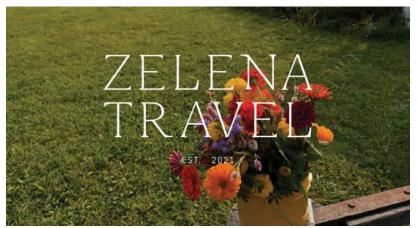
Our guide enthusiastically encouraged exploring beyond the formal areas, "to see the wilderness gardens, experience mature trees and plantings interspersed with Greek and Roman statues, culminating with the centaur."

The statuary was created in the latter half of the 20th century. The pieces are covered with Tyvek for the winter, when the gardens are closed. Two were cleaned, but it was decided to leave others as they are, with natural aging showing. A veteran 'master of the craft' does necessary repairs.

Stillman is described as 'a renaissance man,' who created a wonderful garden and wanted to share the land and the hillside with his community. Children's programs teach the importance of conservation and growing plants that help wildlife. Concerts with musicians from Bard College are held during the summer.

The home and carriage house are also open to visitation, and there are miles of hiking and horseback riding trails to explore. A return trip is already on our list. The gardens, home, and carriage house are open June through mid-October, Friday to Sunday; trails are open January to mid-November all week.

Wethersfield Estate's Italian Renaissance garden is located at 257 Pugsley Hill Road, Amenia, NY, or visit their website at wethersfield.org.



Zelena Travel

310 Gallis Hill Road, Kingston, NY. michelle.zelena@fora.travel. @michellezelena. zelenatravel.com

In 2021, Zelena Travel launched as the result of Michelle Zelena's years of experience in digital marketing and her lifelong passion for travel and hospitality. She explains, "What started as helping friends book trips grew into a boutique advisory specializing in luxury and design-focused experiences." Indeed, from luxury and boutique hotels, to curated itineraries and exclusive perks, Michelle creates bespoke travel experiences all around the globe. Whether it's a weekend getaway or a multi-country adventure, Zelena Travel is all about personalized experiences that uniquely blend "insider access, upgrades, and thoughtful touches that make every trip seamless, stylish, and memorable," Michelle describes. The approach at Zelena Travel strikes a balance between big-picture strategy and personal detail, luxury and authenticity, style and character. "The most rewarding part is helping people create beautiful memories," shares Michelle. "Travel isn't just logistics – it's the joy of a family trip, a first parents' getaway, or a dream adventure fulfilled. Knowing my work shapes moments clients will cherish forever makes every detail worth it." Going forward, Michelle hopes to keep growing the business, not only as a trusted global luxury travel brand, but also as a local Catskills resource - strengthening partnerships with hotels and developing relationships with clients while expanding curated offerings and continuing to design inspiring, unforgettable trips.



Baker Addiction

Route 295, East Chatham, NY. bakeraddiction@gmail.com.bakeraddiction.com

Bonnie Davis started Baker Addiction after a 20-year career ended in 2019. Davis previously worked for a friend in her restaurant, where she baked and cultivated her own recipes. When the pandemic hit, Davis began working as a wholesale baker, supplying small shops, and has been growing and expanding ever since. "I strive to make uniquely delicious bakery necessities with a focus on dietary preferences," Davis shares. Some of her most popular creations are orange-ricotta chocolate chip cookies, jam thumbprints in both fig and blackberry, and flourless brownies. She also creates custom cakes and cupcakes for events. "I love flavor, and I bake with that in mind," she says. "The most rewarding part of being in business is people loving my products. Seeing people's faces when I show them the cake I've created for them, or when people are just excited to meet me at pop-ups – that just makes it all worth it." In the future, Baker Addiction is looking forward to taking on more wholesale accounts, increasing the number of custom orders for special events, and expanding the overall capacity of the business.



W. Rhythm Fitness

25 N Main Street, Unit 13A, Kent, CT. wanrhythmfitness@gmail.com. @wrhythmstudio. wanessajanderson.com

Founded in 2015 as Litchfield County's first barre studio, W. Rhythm Fitness has been voted "Best Fitness Studio" for two years in a row. Founded by fitness instructor Wanessa Anderson, W. Rhythm Fitness offers private and duo sessions in Pilates, yoga, yoga trapeze, barre, fascia reset, and reiki. In-home training and specialty workshops are also available by request. "Our sanctuary blends strength, balance, and alignment into a transformative movement experience," Wanessa says. With over 30 years of movement expertise, each session at W. Rhythm Fitness is personalized, empowering and transforming not just bodies, but lives. "At the studio, the greatest reward is knowing I am fulfilling my mission – giving clients the knowledge and resources to thrive. By combining movement and energy balancing, I help transform the body in ways that uplift the mind, spirit, and every area of life." Going forward, the studio will continue to grow as a sanctuary where movement, alignment, and energy healing meet. "We envision expanding our reach and offering transformative experiences that empower clients to thrive. With every session, we aim to inspire balance, vitality, and a deeper connection to self."



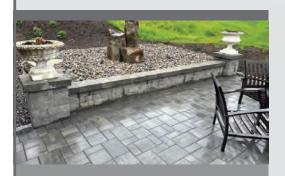
Marton & Davis

33 Main Street, Chatham, NY. martonanddavis@gmail.com. @martonanddavis. martonanddavis.com

Melissa Davis and Sherri Marton met on the board of the Columbia County Historical Society, for which Melissa created a popular shop. When they both left the board in late 2024, they decided to open a home goods and mercantile shop together in the village of Chatham, NY. Marton & Davis sells home goods, gifts, bath and body products, candy, and a smattering of antiques. Brands they carry include John Derian, Bordallo Pinheiro, Mary Maguire, Heather Taylor Home, Tensira, and John Robshaw – to name a few. Marton & Davis also stocks many exclusive items that cannot be found anywhere else, including Hudson Valley-based Kinrove perfume and hand-calligraphed gift tags. Their Marton & Davis Sweets program is a customer favorite and consists of a selection of hard-to-find Swedish candies. "I bought back-to-school shoes for my kids here back when this space was Brown's Shoe Emporium, so we are honored to be carrying on the retail legacy in this historic space," explains Sherri Marton. "Marton & Davis is all about the in-store experience, but for those who can't make it in person, we have just launched an e-commerce site, selling our popular exclusive items, including Kinrove and Marton & Davis Sweets," says Melissa Davis.



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