

Ideas of Order

Volume 5

THE CALIFORNIA CLOSETS MAGAZINE

THE BELONGING ISSUE



OUR DEEP CONNECTION TO WHERE WE LIVE





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MAKE ROOM FOR ALL OF YOU

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Contents

ESSAYS

- 9

HOME IS THE PLACE YOU BELONG

Every wall, every surface, and every object around you tells the story of your past and future.
- 57

OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

Eight things—from a teddy bear to fossilized shark’s teeth—that whisper the stories of a life.
- 69

BREATHING ROOM

A home that looks calm and feels calm lets you be the creative director of your life.
- 81

FAREWELL, FAMILY HOME

Remembering the rooms of your past as you enter new ones.



PROJECTS

- 60

THE HOME OFFICE IS HERE TO STAY

Four design pros unveil their own clever workspaces—just steps from home.
- 72

OF CLOTHES & CURIOSITIES

Go-to garments, big shoes, and showstopping lights and mirrors fill his, her, and his-and-her closets.
- 86

LOVE STORY

Reflections on the joys of our four-legged friends.

INTERVIEW

- 50

DESIGNING LIFE

Jeremiah Brent’s philosophy of home envisions spaces for small moments as well the momentous ones.



PORTFOLIO

- 12

WELCOME TO TUNISIANA

A rigorous mashup of styles—Tunisia meets Louisiana—fosters collaboration for one creative couple.
- 20

PALM SPRINGS PARADISE

One family gives up the city for the desert and builds a home around new priorities: music, friends, and fun.
- 28

A MODERN LOG CABIN

A retreat among the trees gets a sleek, modern makeover.
- 34

THE ROOMS ARE ALIVE

One prolific designer finds her work and herself in her creative refuge.
- 40

COOL, CALM & COASTAL

Early memories of a hidden beach draw one family north toward a second home.
- 46

A COTTAGE IN THE CITY

Antiques, textiles, and colors meet in a decorator’s one-of-a-kind townhome.



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HOME IS THE PLACE YOU BELONG

BY CLAUDIA GLENN DOWLING

Your past and future
come into sharper
focus. Your longings
and belongings evolve.
Along the way, your
home balances the
sacred DNA of you with
the busy world beyond.

Home is a box you keep your life in—people and pets and plants and history and dreams. A biosphere, a sanctuary, your place, your space. Your home may be no bigger than a breadbox or the size of a small nation. It’s where you are most fully yourself. The place you belong.

It’s where you keep your belongings. Even a single object can be a talisman representing safety and happiness. That’s why in Tim O’Brien’s story collection, *The Things They Carried*, a soldier fighting in Vietnam kept a girlfriend’s stocking with him in battle. It’s why Camilla, 12, still has Pinkie, her doll from babyhood, on her bed (and why her mother, 40, still has her teddy bear, although not on her bed). It’s why refugees carry a photograph, a religious icon, or an item of clothing that betokens home and can be transplanted to grow a new home in a new land.

When you create a home, you are designing a movie set in which you are the star. Your place is a personal narrative, an autobiography, a through line of you. Your style is as much you as your fingerprint, the retina of your eye, or the timbre of your voice, and your surroundings reveal your DNA as surely as 23andMe. I have a locket with my great-great-aunt Claudia Glenn’s baby hair—literally DNA I share, along with her name—that hangs from her portrait, both willed to me by my great-aunt Claudia Dowling. I also display a shaligram ammonite fossil I found while working in the Himalayas, a conch shell from my honeymoon in Jamaica, and a garland of my daughter’s toe shoes, including an aspirational one I was given at the Bolshoi

Ballet Academy in Moscow.

Your belongings can reveal your longings. Joan Didion’s signature Celine sunglasses and writing desk were auctioned for high prices not long ago—a kind of magical thinking, perhaps, on the part of the buyers, in hopes that some of the author’s talent and taste might rub off on them. Everything Didion touched evoked her personal style, what Marie Kondo calls *kurashi*, lifestyle, a style of living. As should yours.

Your home is not only a historical document. Current enthusiasms and needs are on display as well. During the pandemic, our homes became our offices, our schools, our restaurants, our gyms—our everything. A refuge from scary reality. Some of us liked it so well we fell prey to FOGO—fear of going out; others felt boxed in. But there was no room for dead storage. Closets were edited to become offices. The clothing museum had to go, as did the toys no one had played with in years. Calling Goodwill! Those old files? Shred. What about all the books that would never be read again? Okay, keep the copy of *Goodnight Moon*, but out with the rest. We needed to clear the decks, repurpose and reimagine our homes for our new lives.

Home is evolutionary. You move to another country or another town. Setting up housekeeping all over again is a great time to perfect and update. You change. Your household changes. Your surroundings reflect that. There’s a pandemic pup in the picture. You had a baby. The children are suddenly teenagers. You are working remotely. Mom had to move in. You need a guest bed, two offices, a Zoom background—quick!

And your space is not hermetically sealed. You are one of 8 billion people in the big biosphere beyond your bubble. Climate change becomes personal. You may grow produce and need somewhere to store the harvest. You’re turning down the thermostat to save energy, so winter ushers in candles and a cozy corner. You are using fewer plastic containers and more mason jars. You’re driving less—do you really need two cars?—and can stockpile staples in that extra garage space. Tastes change, too—yours along with those of the wider world. The fast-furniture bookcases and end tables of your youth have not worn well (neither have the landfills they were tossed into). Lately, people are thinking more holistically, rediscovering sturdy furniture and vintage clothing, belongings built for the long haul. Treasure the magic in everyday objects, and make them keepers rather than just keepsakes.

Let the box you live in expand and contract as needed, and continue to think outside it. Stay light on your feet, open to change so your home can continually surprise and delight you. It’s where you hang your hat, where your heart is. Your axis on this spinning earth, a place to center yourself. Sacred ground. Your private address in a crowded universe. The place you belong.

→ Decorative belongings with meaning adorn a New York City apartment: a child’s outgrown toe shoes (with one from the Bolshoi Ballet Academy thrown in), a portrait of a great-great-aunt as a toddler hung with a locket of her baby hair, and a conch shell harvested on a honeymoon in the Caribbean.





Welcome to Tunisiana



BY JENNY ALLEN

← The vivid blue of the doors at the entry was inspired by doorways Suleika saw in Tunisia. Built in 1899, the house “has given us the starting point of our family legacy together,” says Jon. “We sowed very important life seeds into it from the beginning.”

As much a state of mind as an actual place, this is where Emmy-winning journalist and author Suleika Jaouad lives with her husband, Grammy- and Oscar-winning musician Jon Batiste. Suleika says “Tunisiana” is their name for “our personal style and our interior design style,” a tribute to the couple’s roots—hers in Tunisia, his in Louisiana.



It was Suleika who found the 19th-century Brooklyn brownstone, clearly showing its age, and imagined its possibilities. “I walked into the house and I didn’t like it,” says Jon with a laugh. “I could not see the vision. But I trust Suleika. Suleika is the whole reason for everything good in life.”

What Suleika saw were period elements that echoed their backgrounds. “I saw the arches, which reminded me of Tunisia, where my dad is from,” she says (her father is a professor; her Swiss-born mother an artist). “And the high tin ceilings, and the moldings, reminded me of houses I’d seen in the Garden District in New Orleans,” the city where her husband grew up and where the extended Batiste family is music royalty.

Transforming the house into Tunisi-

young and reflective of the phase that we’re at in our lives.”

This phase has taken on an unexpectedly somber cast as well. “What we didn’t know when we embarked on this project is that we’d be moving into the house when I was recovering from a bone marrow transplant,” says Suleika. In November 2021, the leukemia diagnosed in her early twenties returned. She had chronicled that odyssey—and the bone-marrow transplant she’d undergone—in her best-selling book, *Between Two Kingdoms*.

With a decade of remission behind her, she thought she’d been cured. “When I got the biopsy results,” she wrote in *The Isolation Journals*, the popular blog she began three years ago, “it felt like a sinkhole

Every year we like to pick a theme for our year, and this year’s theme was family and freedom.

ana took three years of extensive renovations, with architect Ravi Raj, and careful choices, “from the tiles that were made by a friend of mine in Tunisia that grace the backsplash of our kitchen to the art to the presence of instruments everywhere,” Suleika says. “It really feels like a holistic embodiment of who we are.”

“We both grew up in places that were their own unique blend at the nexus of French, African, and other cultural influences, cultural origins,” says Jon. “Those influences come together in our taste, in our home.”

They also wanted “the blend of old and new,” adds his wife. “I think we have an appreciation of objects that tell stories. We wanted to fill our home with those, but we also wanted a space that felt fresh and

opened up and swallowed everything.” She started chemotherapy the day Jon received a record 11 Grammy nominations. “This is so much of life,” she has said of that moment, “holding the really beautiful things and the deeply cruel, profoundly hard things in the same palm.”

Although Suleika has been forthright with her readers about the grueling nature of recent treatments and complications, she has insisted on finding humor, optimism, and a measure of serenity through her ordeal. “Getting past the fear and stepping toward hope is what I have to do,” she writes. “I want to live a forward-looking life, anchoring myself in the things that are true and good.” She writes often about gratitude—for her readers, her friends, her parents, her brother, and, most of all, for

← The couple chose a John Derian by Cisco “tête-à-tête” chair for their dressing room, drawn to its antique, sensual New Orleans feel. The vintage Turkish wool rug adds its patterns and soft tones to the space. “We really wanted to make the dressing room more than just a functional space where we put on clothes and got ready for bed,” says Suleika. Styled by Hallie Goodman.



“my beloved,” her husband, “who’s been at my bedside around the clock.”

Enduring “semi-house arrest” was, in fact, “a great joy and blessing,” she says. “It feels like a wonderful way to embark on a first year of marriage and on a first year of owning a home. We’ve gotten to make so many memories here already, from holiday dinners to birthday jams and musical gatherings.” And a wedding: Although they hadn’t moved in yet, the couple—who first met in music camp as teenagers—were married in what Suleika has called “a tiny beautiful little ceremony” in front of close family in February 2022, the day before her bone marrow transplant. (The choice of date was impulsive—so much so that they used bread ties for rings—but they had talked about marriage the first week they started dating, eight years ago.)

The house is also a place for focusing, for work. Finding the “mental energy” to write has been difficult for Suleika during her illness, and she has started to paint “these weird little watercolors” because it “seemed like this thing I could do without any expectation of being any good at it.”

“Originally Jon wanted a piano in every room, which it turned out wasn’t feasible,” says Suleika. But he managed to get two grand pianos and many keyboards into the house so far, and even a wee piano of sorts—a Schiedmayer celesta, or bell piano—into

their dressing room. A plaque on the front of it reads “Family & Freedom,” with their wedding date below. “Every year we like to pick a theme for our year,” Suleika explains, “and this year’s theme was family and freedom. *Family* because we were individuated in creating our own family unit after getting married, and *freedom* because I think we’re always seeking all kinds of freedom—creative freedom, personal freedom.”

“The celesta creates this magical sound that takes you back to childhood or takes you to some wonderful fairyland,” says Jon. (That’s the celesta playing in the theme song to *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, he points out. “They picked the right instrument to capture that wonderful emotion.”) “I like playing Suleika to sleep when she’s stressed or whatever,” he says. His lullabies are definitely “a perk of the relationship,” says Suleika.

The dressing room is a special, intimate room for other reasons as well. “I like picking out clothes for Suleika,” says Jon, known for his imaginative, colorful wardrobe.

“And I have to fix and style his hair,” says Suleika. “So for us getting dressed is really a collaborative act.”

“Yeah,” says Jon. “Col-lab-or-a-tion!” Just like the creation of Tunisiana. ●

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **ALEXIS WILLIAMS**

THE ISOLATION JOURNALS

Suleika Jaouad began *The Isolation Journals* three years ago, in the beginning of the pandemic quarantine, as a way for readers to connect with others during those difficult days. She offered her own warm, candid reflections on life as well as prompts by other creative people.

“Journaling for me has been a lifelong practice since I was old enough to hold a pen,” she says, “especially important in times of sorrow or struggle or transition. I decided to try to share this practice that had been so valuable to me and that I hoped might be resonant to everyone else. And I invited my community of friends and artists and musicians and writers to offer up some words of inspiration.”

The Isolation Journals, which is free, now has 100,000 readers. Paid subscribers can also read Suleika’s advice column, “Dear Susu”; watch “studio visits” with writers and artists; and participate in the Hatch, a virtual writing group. “It’s grown into a really thriving community,” she says. Adds her proud husband, “It’s more than a newsletter; it’s an opportunity for people to express their innermost thoughts” in a virtual village that is “a safe space in a dark world. That’s really the accomplishment of it.”

PREVIOUS PAGE, LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT ← Jon wore the sparkling gold jacket (with matching pants) to premiere a new work at Carnegie Hall in 2022; sliding trays are for evening bags and other small items; the celesta, or bell piano, was made by a small family-owned company in Germany.

PREVIOUS PAGE, RIGHT ← The shared top of the side-by-side dressers holds one of Jon’s five Grammys, the Academy Award he shared with composers Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross for their original score to the Disney-Pixar film *Soul*, and Suleika’s Emmy, won for the video version of her *New York Times* column, “Life, Interrupted.”

OPPOSITE → A niche in the stairwell holds an early American ceramic vessel, found in an antiques shop in upstate New York. Styled by Hallie Goodman.





→ Matt Sorum and Ace Harper in front of their modern ranch home designed by famed mid-century architect Charles Du Bois and built by the Alexander Construction Company. Their classic convertible is a 1962 Ford Galaxie Sunliner.

PALM SPRINGS PARADISE



When drummer Matt Sorum left Los Angeles for the desert, he shifted more than locales; his priorities radically changed.

BY LILI WEIGERT

It's a big deal for a rock star to leave Los Angeles. A drummer for bands like Guns N' Roses, Velvet Revolver, and the Cult, Matt Sorum had lived there for 40 years—recording, touring, “all that rock 'n' roll stuff.” But in July 2020, everything changed.

Matt and his wife, fashion designer Adriane (Ace) Harper, were already splitting their time between L.A. and a second home they'd bought in Palm Springs when Ace gave birth to their daughter, Lou Ellington. “As soon as the baby came, it was a complete shift,” Matt says. “We loved L.A., but we didn't want to raise a family there.”

Matt and Ace sold their home that summer and spent the next five months transforming the Palm Springs ranch—a classic “Desert Modern” in a neighborhood full of iconic mid-century homes—into their ideal family-friendly home. “We decided to get it done while Lou was an infant,” Matt says. “We took everything out and gutted it completely.”

The house was originally designed as a family home, with the dining and living rooms together in the center, but the kitchen was closed off. “We opened it up so it's one big area,” Matt says. “You know, modern living.” A bar in the back of the house looks out through big sliding glass doors to the pool area, where they added a pizza oven, a fire pit, a movie theater—and two more bars. “With the mountains in the background, it's Shangri-la,” he says.

Also modernized: the closets. “These homes were not designed for people with a lot of clothes,” Matt says. “In the '60s, women owned only a few cocktail dresses and guys had two or three suits. The culture has changed. It's called consumerism.” Indeed, clothes are “a huge factor” for a performer and a clothing designer. “My wife has a lot of beautiful clothes,” Matt says. “I have a lot of stuff too. And the kid's got so many clothes, it's crazy!”

← Graffito wallpaper by Kelly Wearstler frames the doorway of the music room. On the far wall an abstract painting by local artist Mike Humphrey hangs over an orange Mario Bellini Camaleonda couch set by B&B Italia.



THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT ↑ In baby Lou's closet, colorful outfits are displayed on white velvet hangers.

TOP RIGHT ↑ Flowing hand-painted curtains from Porter Teleo hang behind the cozy white rocking chair in the nursery.

BOTTOM → In the home's original design, Matt's closet in the primary bedroom was shared by husband and wife.

OPPOSITE → Light wood and luxurious white terrazzo floors in Ace's spacious closet, which she designed within a preexisting addition behind the primary bedroom.



I used to feel like if I wasn’t in Hollywood, in the mix, that I’d be out of sight, out of mind. But now my friends come *here* to write and record music.

In keeping with the home’s mid-century aesthetic, Matt wanted the interiors to feel modern, simple, and clean: “A lot of people in Palm Springs do a kitschy 1960s interior. We wanted a retro feel, but we wanted to go more chic.” They decided on what he describes as “a ’60s influence with more of a ’70s vibe,” with lighter woods, parchment-white floors, and white walls. “The idea was to brighten everything up for the baby, and we just kept going lighter and lighter,” he says.

Matt and Ace were involved in every detail of the renovation, from every stone to every surface to every fixture. “We wanted to love everything around us and have the nicest things to share with our family and friends,” Matt says. “I’m a super-detailed guy.” It also made him appreciate their home that much more: “We’ll be sitting in our living room and my wife will say, ‘I love this house.’ It’s like our reward for being so hands-on.”

Since leaving Los Angeles, Matt also has found a creative hub in the desert. “I used to feel like if I wasn’t in Hollywood, in the mix, that I’d be out of sight, out of mind,” he says. “But now my friends come *here* to write and record music.”

It’s a refreshing change for Matt, who admits, “When I was younger, there were people in the industry you didn’t want to deal with, but you sort of had to. I don’t have time for that anymore. When I keep the slate clean and only have good people around me, better things happen. It’s important to create an environment that speaks to that; that’s what we’ve done here.” ●

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **PRESTON MITCHELL**

→ The resort-like backyard includes a movie theater with a 135-inch electric screen and surround sound, a firepit, and up-close views of the San Jacinto Mountains.





A Modern Log Cabin

For a country retreat in the woods, out came the chainsaw, down went the walls, and in went the fixtures and finishes that made this rough-hewn house a comfortable home.

A fixer-upper always presents an exciting opportunity. Walls can disappear, windows can grow, colors can change, rooms can brighten and move into a more modern era. Anthony D'Argenzio, designer with Zio and Sons, could sense the possibilities in one rural property: He could create a space specifically for his family, and he could showcase his own product lines and collections.

Drawn to older upstate New York homes, with period details and vintage charm, Anthony buys and renovates historic homes through the company he founded,

This Old Hudson. The 2,000-square-foot log cabin he acquired was on a peaceful five-acre lot just 20 minutes north of Hudson, New York. Sturdy and well constructed (if boxy), it had been built with salvaged wood that added warmth and character. Anthony also saw a chance to demonstrate his design range: "I wanted people to know that I'm not just about old homes."

Transforming the three-bedroom cabin began in earnest in October 2020, when Anthony and his wife, sommelier Hillary D'Argenzio, got to work brightening the interior. They hand-sanded the dark stain

← Anthony and his team stained the outside of the cabin black and added wider windows and a Dutch door to the front entrance.



off the logs and painted them with a white translucent finish. They enlarged and added windows and doors, cutting through the logs with a chainsaw. It was a crash course in log cabin construction for Anthony, who'd never worked on a home with no drywall. "You can't hide anything," he says.

Necessity invited invention. When he realized he couldn't run the electrical wiring and plumbing lines through the solid-wood walls, he decided to leave them exposed. On the ground floor, industrial metal conduits snake up the walls and across the exposed overhead beams, mingling with bright copper pipes that transfer water from the basement to the second floor through holes in the ceiling. Utility became industrial chic.

The designer, of course, took every opportunity to include things he loved. In the new kitchen, the range hood is clad in Mediterranean terra-cotta tile from artisanal brand Zio and Sons for Clé. The same tile in gray covers the floor and one wall in the adjacent powder room. Upstairs, two bedrooms sport wallpaper that Anthony designed for A-Street Prints: a striped flower print for his daughter Havana's room and a gray plaster texture in the room he and Hillary share.

To make room for a landing on the second floor, he tore out the only full bathroom. To replace it, he converted the third bedroom into a luxurious spa, complete with his-and-her sinks, a freestanding tub,

OPPOSITE ← They cleaned and resealed the original slate fireplace in the living room and added a new Vermont Castings wood-burning stove.

THIS PAGE ↑ Exposed beams were stripped to expose the marks and natural variation in the wood. "It was a lot of tedious hours," Anthony says. The original closets were redesigned to create a custom pantry and laundry room.



The designer, of course, took every opportunity to include things he loved.

and a separate shower. He added a skylight and vintage lighting fixtures, finishing the walls and floor in a warm mix of tiles and white Carrara marble. If losing a bedroom was a risk from a resale perspective, Anthony was happy to take it. “We lost a small guest room,” he admits, “but we gained a dream bathroom.”

Like most creative people, he’s never quite done. Along with prototyping new products, buying and selling real estate, and designing various projects, he has already started work on “phase two” of the cabin, turning unused space over the garage into a bedroom-bathroom suite. Because as much

as he and Hillary enjoy their quiet country life, they also want friends and family to visit. “In this post-Covid world, what everyone really wants is a whole separate guest quarters,” Anthony says. “No one wants to share a bathroom with another couple or your in-laws.”

As he looks to the future, Anthony stays firmly grounded in the present—and practical to a fault. “We’re going to stay a small family,” he says, “so we might as well be selfish and use the space how we want.” —L.W.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **ALICIA NOVAK**

THIS PAGE ↑ The primary bedroom features an iron bed frame and Anthony’s own wallpaper, designed to look like Venetian plaster. A new closet adds critical storage space to the odd-shaped bedroom, described by Anthony as “full of angles and lines.”

OPPOSITE → Unfinished pine creates a rustic country look in Havana’s room. The original closet (a tricky space with a slanted wall) was redesigned for maximum storage space.



The Rooms Are Alive

It was love at first sight for Justina Blakeney and the 1930s Spanish-style home she shares with her husband, writer Jason Rosencrantz, and their 11-year-old daughter, Ida. “I wanted a place to stretch out,” she says of the four-bedroom, three-bath home they bought in 2020 and named Jungalow by the Mountain—“a place to paint, to connect with nature, to swim naked.” Beyond the practical concerns, there was also an emotional connection. “I felt safe to be myself and express myself fully,” she says.

→ Justina’s open-concept dressing room was designed to showcase her colorful collections of clothing and textiles.





Justina's vibrant, approachable personality shows up in her many pursuits, including her wildly successful home decor brand, Jungalow, and her lifestyle brand, both of which celebrate creativity, rule breaking, and international influences. She credits her own blended ethnicity for what she calls her "eclectic bohemian vibe" (Justina's father is African American and Native American, and her mother is of Eastern European descent).

With Jungalow by the Mountain, Justina is taking the relationship slowly, getting to know the rhythms and energy of the house and how the environment changes throughout the day and the seasons. In the primary bedroom, dark tones and lush green walls create a soothing, inviting oceanic aura, evoking a subterranean sea world. The room was naturally chilly, ideal during their first hot summer in the house. But when winter came, the room turned uncomfortably dark and cold, so Justina found herself injecting warm colors and soft fabrics into the mix—cozy blankets,

throws, pillows. "It's like the rooms are alive," she says. "It's really fun to witness the evolution."

Justina does more than simply design rooms—her goal is to create experiences. When it came to her expansive walk-in dressing room, she wanted "a glam moment." With a window overlooking the yard and rich, "jungle-icious" wallpaper, the bright, airy space feels more like a chic treehouse than a closet. "I wanted to bring that Beverly Hills Hotel energy," she says.

Justina is also an avid and unapologetic collector. "I have a lot of stuff," she says, "and I love having a lot of stuff." Before moving in, she and Jason meticulously designed shelving and built-in bookcases to display a curated assortment of her collectibles (ceramics, textiles, folk art) from around the world. The bold, eclectic items feel organic to the design, seamlessly incorporated into the home's unorthodox aesthetic. "We thought a lot about the architecture," she says. "We wanted the shelving to mimic the natural feeling the space already had."

While Justina is hesitant to call Jungalow by the Mountain her forever home ("these days you never know what's going to happen"), she can definitely picture her future there. She had always wanted a home that reflected her family, where she could host holiday celebrations, big parties, and creative salons. "The minute I stepped into the very large living room, with the double glass doors leading out onto the courtyard," she says, "I was envisioning all the things I'd been dreaming about." —L.W.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **MISSY ALMESTER**

OPPOSITE, TOP ← Jungle-themed wallpaper adds a glamorous "Beverly Hills Hotel energy" to Justina's expansive walk-in closet.

BOTTOM ← Two smaller bathrooms were combined to make one spa-like primary bath.

THIS PAGE ↓ Moody blue washes and leafy plants transform the primary bedroom into a cool subterranean retreat. "The bed is like our island in the ocean," Justina says.

The bold, eclectic items feel organic to the design, seamlessly incorporated into the home's unorthodox aesthetic.





OPPOSITE ← Shades of green and terra-cotta create a feeling of earthiness in the living room, where custom-built shelving displays special pieces from Justina's eclectic ceramic collection.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT ↑ A "kitchen garden" has its own drip system that waters the plants automatically. ("As a plant mama, it brings a lot of joy," she says.) A wall of brass Moroccan mirrors and other treasures surround a niche in the entryway. In the powder room, Justina's wallpaper (Phoenix, in Jungle) features her original artwork.



COOL, CALM & COASTAL

Not far from Seattle and the Puget Sound, against a backdrop of the Olympic Mountains, one California couple created a waterfront Nordic refuge—near family and childhood memories—when they needed it most.



→ The open living room is enveloped in bright white, a Scandinavian-style trick to offset gray skies and dark winters.



In 2020, Erin Hiemstra, the founder of the style and design blog Apartment 34, was living in San Francisco with her husband, Chris, and their 4-year-old son, Carter. But when the pandemic effectively shuttered the city, they found themselves decamping to the Seattle area, where much of their respective families reside. “It felt like the whole world was turning upside down,” Erin says of their decision to be with their parents and extended family. “We had no idea what the future would hold.” Erin remembers “casually” scrolling through real estate listings one day when something caught her eye. The house—a basic three-bedroom, three-bath spec house from the late 1990s—didn’t really interest her, but the address did. Within an hour of Seattle, including an idyllic 30-minute ferry ride, the property was within spitting distance of a hidden beach she’d visited every summer as a girl. “The thought of getting to share such a special place with my son was thrilling,” she says. Real estate was in a frenzy when Erin and Chris visited the property. They were rushed through a tour in 20 minutes and had to make an offer the same day. “We kept asking ourselves, ‘Are we crazy?’” she says. But the spot was idyllic, and even

more appealing was its location: Remote and secluded, it offered a Covid-free haven for their entire family. Erin and Chris had always dreamed about buying a second home one day, and suddenly one day was now. “It was what we needed at that moment,” she says. Right before Erin started her three-month “spruce-up” to what they call the Hood Canal Cottage, water from a faulty dishwasher hookup damaged the floors and walls beyond repair, turning a few planned tweaks into a complete makeover. A symbol of the chaos of the time, the minor disaster also freed her to reimagine the house’s interior as a refuge from the storm. “I wanted each room to evoke a sense of security,” she says. Erin focused on a Scandinavian-inspired design, adding warm wood tones, wide plank floors, and a mix of natural materials and textures. “I was going for a Nordic vibe,” she says, embracing the history of the area, which was settled by Norwegians. “I love their elevated but minimal aesthetic.” That part of the United States also happens to fall at roughly the same latitude as Norway. One reason she painted the interior bright white (Benjamin Moore’s Simply White for walls, ceiling, and trim)

was to lighten the rooms during the darker winter months. In the main living space, Erin created an airy, open kitchen and living area, knocking down a wall to take advantage of the high vaulted ceilings and the spectacular views. “The house faces west,” she says, “and now that whole livable space is directed to the sunset and the Olympic Mountains”—a complete transformation. In the bedrooms and living spaces downstairs, Erin continued the pared-down, clean look, adding warm, luxurious fabrics and fixtures. “Our environment directly impacts us, both physically and mentally,” she says. “I wanted to create intentional spaces that will hold you, help you slow down, help you de-stress.” Erin and her family have technically moved back to San Francisco, but the cottage still provides a refuge. They spend holidays there with extended family, and in the summer, Carter plays in the tide pools with his grandma just as Erin once did with hers. It’s all part of what she describes as “flow design,” the idea that a house is constantly evolving with the people who inhabit it. “The cottage is in its infancy,” she says. “It’s going to grow as we do.” —L.W.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: MICHELLE GION

I was going for a Nordic vibe. I love their elevated but minimal aesthetic.



THIS PAGE ← Erin converted an odd-size closet in the basement into a larder, where she stores dry goods and seasonal items. **OPPOSITE** → The dining space is set off by a warm alabaster sconce and an original print by Canadian fine artist Anna Church. The multipurpose dining table is perfect for a big holiday meal or an intimate, leisurely breakfast.





THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT ↑ A bold Nordic-inspired checkered rug and a chunky Roly Poly chair by British designer Faye Toogood give the small second bedroom a punch of personality.

TOP RIGHT ↑ In the second bedroom, natural materials and organic textures create a sense of calm and serenity and complement the modern headboard.

BOTTOM → In the basement, the cozy great room is heated by a freestanding modern gas stove. An original print by California artist Skye Schuchman hangs over an oak cutter bench.

OPPOSITE → The walk-in closet in the primary bedroom was gutted and redesigned to optimize space.





In the mad, mad world of Manhattan, iconoclastic decorator Sasha Bikoff mixes colors, fabrics, and textiles in a house she still calls her haven.

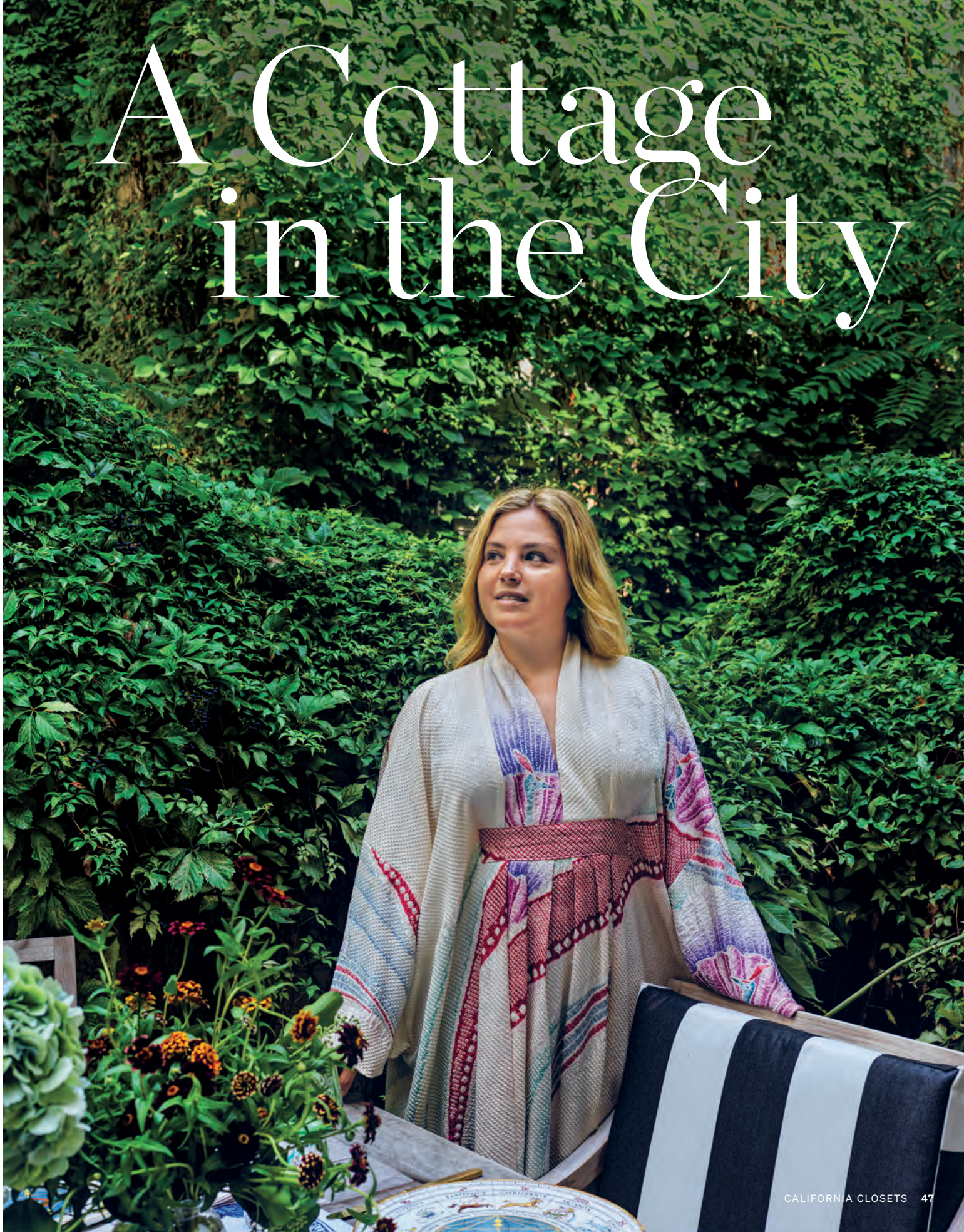
When you ask decorator Sasha Bikoff to identify her favorite possession in the 21-foot-wide, Federal-style townhouse she owns in Greenwich Village in New York City, she doesn't skip a beat: her Persian rugs. "I find great joy in living with heirlooms," she says. "It's an exciting way to honor your family. The rugs have lived so many lives." Indeed they have. They belonged to her maternal grandparents, "who ate kebabs and drank tea from samovars" in Tehran, Iran, where they were born. Sasha's mother proudly displayed them in their apartment in the Dakota, an 1884 building on the Upper West Side. Now the carpets keep company with Sasha and her husband, Adam, a venture capitalist, in the house and garden on a quiet corner away "from the hustle and bustle."

Sasha has been called the decorator to jet-setting millennials—she prefers *decorator* to *interior designer*—more than once in her 10-year design career. Her house has a decidedly European feel, and the confirmed Francophile admits to favoring French, English, and Venetian touches with "a little Victorian" thrown in. The couple, who went to school together, fell in love during the pandemic and were married at Sasha's neutral modern barn with a Japanese touch in East Hampton, New York. They moved into the townhome in 2021. "I live in two worlds," she says. "I practice restraint in the

THIS PAGE ↑ The living room is a riot of patterns stabilized by bursts of color; the yellow chair from Pierre Paulin is a long-coveted item she found at auction.

OPPOSITE → Sasha in her lush English-style garden.

A Cottage in the City





Hamptons, but I am a maximalist at heart.”

“I’m a Gemini rising,” she explains. “Your rising sign indicates how you perceive yourself. I live in duality; I have the best of both worlds.” If her beach-house style is peaceful and serene, her city aesthetic is much more glamorous and lively: a profusion of colors, patterns, and textures. Asked to name adjectives that describe both herself and her tiny jewel box of a house, she rolls off in rapid succession: “exciting, unique, luxurious, and worldly—and maybe a little eccentric.”

Sasha has always known her personal style. As a teenager, she went to a paint store for three tones of pink and painted the walls of the bedroom in the white and chrome apartment where she grew up. For a finishing touch, she inscribed quotes about love on the walls around the room. Following college, she studied fine art at American University in Paris for two years and then worked at the famed Gagosian Gallery in New York. “I learned about the business side there,” she says. “It was not about creativity. It was all about sales.” Her love of art, architecture, nature, and “definitely couture fashion,” coupled with her business mind, has ensured success and laudatory reviews for Sasha Bikoff Interior Design, the company she started 10 years ago. She credits her own work as a painter with her approach to a new project: She addresses the surfaces—the walls, the ceilings, the floors—the way a painter would prep canvas.

But her grandmother is her major muse: “My favorite thing is

Sasha credits her own work as a painter with her approach to a new project.

fabric,” Sasha says. “When three generations of my family would go shopping on Madison Avenue or in Bal Harbour, Florida, my grandmother would encourage me to touch and feel the fabric, and then she would point out the craftsmanship.” When she turned the third bedroom into a walk-in closet, it was fabric that inspired her: clothes from the ’90s catwalk in Dolce & Gabbana. She also painted the closet walls pink.

“I was in the forefront of the whole millennial pink movement,” says Sasha, who once had a client specifically request a “Barbie Dreamhouse” look for her home. “I love pink. I love the power of pink. It represents the power of women and their femininity. The color can be soft, exciting, happy, and fun, but also soothing. It checks all the boxes.” Still, she acknowledges, its popularity may be waning.

“Tangerine is my new favorite.” —C.T.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: ALEXIS WILLIAMS



THIS PAGE ↑ Sasha designed the Beating Heart stair runner inspired by 1960s Danish graphics.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT → Rose Cummins carpet in the closet; a swag of fabric that suggests the Sistine Chapel as window covering; Pierre Frey animal wallpaper in the bedroom; in the living room, a Tabriz Persian rug.



Designing Life

Present, consistent, and grateful are the three words Jeremiah Brent uses to describe his state of mind. The interior designer, TV personality, author, and soon-to-be Ideas of Order podcast host lives with his husband, Nate Berkus, and their two children in a prewar triplex apartment in New York City. Together, the couple have been shaping American tastes in interior design. His approach? Jeremiah says he doesn't so much decorate rooms as make space for people's most intimate moments. He and IOO editorial director Carrie Tuhy discussed his philosophy of home and some of his favorite things.

← Jeremiah always asks his home-design clients to identify their favorite moment of the day. His is the predawn hours of reflection before his family awakens.



CARRIE TUHY: I read that as a child you and your mother went to open houses near Modesto, California, where your family lived. Do you think that influenced your decision to be an interior designer?

JEREMIAH BRENT: It really was the impetus for everything for me. I used to walk in and dream of the moments the people would have in those houses and how I could craft those moments for them. I still do it. That's what I love about what I do.

CT: Do you remember something in the house you grew up in that is dear to you that you might like to claim as your family heirloom?

JB: There are two things. It's more a sense memory. On the weekends, my mother always played Nina Simone on the stereo, and there were always fresh flowers on the dining table. That was my mother's thing. She still owns the dining room table.

CT: Tell me more about the table.

JB: She worked really hard and we moved into the worst house in the best neighborhood. She got a decorator to come in. It was a big deal, the one and only time she did it. This dining table, I think, symbolizes a lot to her. It's like everything she is, stylistically, in one piece. The table is the one thing I'd like to inherit.

CT: You left home and moved to L.A. in your 20s. Did you start working in design then?

JB: I did lots of things in my early 20s. I bounced around. I took on every job I could. I was struggling with figuring

out who I was. At one point, I was living in my car.

CT: How did you get interested in design?

JB: The design came only because I had no money and I finally got my first apartment in Hollywood across from Covenant House. So I went to Goodwill and I would buy things and I would fix them and change them and add to them. I'm very handy, believe it or not. I'd build all my own furniture. I started selling it, and then people asked me to do a living room or a bedroom and it just snowballed. I was working in nightclubs at the front door as a doorman, so I was well connected. I knew people in town because of that business. It was really organic. I never thought I was going to end up becoming a decorator.

CT: Where do you live now? Do you have more than one house?

JB: We live in a triplex apartment on lower Fifth Avenue. We also have a farmhouse we are slowly renovating in Portugal and a beach house in Montauk, New York.

CT: What is your New York City apartment like?

JB: It was built in 1913. It's got really beautiful ornate architecture, really classic. We replaced all the fireplace mantels with ones from the 17th and 18th centuries. We really tried to restore the physical space and bring it back to what it could have been. Then there's the really nice juxtaposition with the more contemporary furniture that is obviously my influence.

← This painting by artist Michael Hainey has followed Jeremiah from home to home. Previously it sat above his desk in his L.A. home office, but it has since migrated to his daughter's bedroom in New York City.



JEREMIAH'S INSPIRATION BOARD IN HIS DESIGN FIRM OFFICE

1. I love surrounding myself with the wise words of artists. It fuels my creativity.
2. This sketch by Alberto Giacometti was the first real piece of art I ever purchased.
3. Constantin Brancusi's studio is a constant source of inspiration.
4. It's my fantasy to own one of Lucio Fontana's pieces one day.
5. Layering texture and material is important in design. I love the imperfection of this wood.
6. I always save notes from loved ones to celebrate and remind me of particular moments in time.
7. I often source inspiration from old forms and silhouettes that celebrate the fluidity of design.
8. This piece, one of my favorites, reminds me of Portugal.



(Editor’s note: Jeremiah and Nate bought the apartment initially 10 years ago, then added bedrooms downstairs to make it a duplex. The couple returned to L.A. and purchased a house where they started their family. In 2013 they returned to Manhattan—to a tiny 17-foot-wide brownstone in Greenwich Village—while Jeremiah negotiated to buy back their original Fifth Avenue apartment. When they did, in 2021, they added another floor, “like a little birdhouse that you put on top of an apartment building.”)

CT: What does this house mean to you?

JB: This house is home for us. There was much more thought in this design because the truth is, the house meant more. Everything we brought into the house had to be special enough to be there. It had nothing to do with expense. Things just had to be thoughtful.

CT: Your book, which comes out this fall, includes your own home as well as others in the U.S., Europe, and Mexico. You visited

all of them. What merited their inclusion?

JB: They’re all friends and people I’ve met over the past 10-plus years. The reason they are included in the book is that their owners never left. The house that they bought, they stayed in. The book is really just a love story: what it takes to fall in love with your home. Nate and I have moved so many times, and I long for the connections where a house has the echoes of your memories and the stories. So it was this full exploration over the course of two years where I really tried to understand what these people found in these homes.

CT: Did you figure it out?

JB: I did. There were a lot of radical realizations, and it changed who I am as a creative and definitely the way that I look at things. It fortified things I believed in before. It brought me back to myself in so many ways and where I started in this whole design journey.

CT: Can you share one of those radical realizations?

JB: The truth is, with every home you have to address and acknowledge your past in some way, and then your present, and also leave room for your future. I really believe it is so important to have those three ingredients because “turquoise sofa this, drapes here”—it’s all fine, but that stuff doesn’t keep you there. It just doesn’t.

CT: So what do you think is the power of the home?

JB: It’s the power of connection. Home is really the birthplace of the opportunity to connect not only with yourself but also with others. At the end of day, every species values its den, its nest, its cave. Home is the most important place to every creature. We get to create that for people and there’s a huge power in that work and what these spaces hold. I’ve always been humbled at what we get to do. ●

OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

An old bottle kindles a new relationship, a battered bracelet recalls a traveling father, a lover’s dictionary bridges cultures: a few things that tell the stories of our lives.

BY LAURA CHÁVEZ SILVERMAN

A pair of tattered brown suede Birkenstocks worn by Steve Jobs in the ’70s and ’80s—the salad days of Apple—recently sold at auction for \$218,750. The person who bought them was not planning to wear them, of course, but rather to own a piece of history, to touch the hem of the cape, as it were, of one of the superheroes of our time. How can something of such little intrinsic value be worth so much? Because objects of desire are priceless repositories of our hopes and dreams, intimate riddles of identity. It turns out that our most treasured possessions actually possess us, holding us captive with the silken bonds of memory. In the way that Rosebud embodied Charles Foster Kane’s longed-for childhood innocence, the things we cherish most are freighted with deep-seated meaning. They provide a grounding sense of self, a tangible feeling of belonging we can hold in our hands.

Who we are is inextricably intertwined with what we keep. “Between what a man calls ‘me’ and what he simply calls ‘mine,’ the line is difficult to draw,” wrote the eminent psychologist William James. Among the signifiers we accrue—designer shoes, status watches, rare books—there is always some mundane interloper, quirky and ephemeral, whose humble origins mean more to us than the grandest provenance. These are the belongings that reveal the essential truths; they tell the story of us.



↑ Jeremiah never takes off his bracelets, each of which has special meaning. Mixed in with the more expected gold variety is one with the evil eye he bought on his travels to Turkey and a sentimental favorite made from alphabet beads by his daughter, Poppy.



↑ “The intimacy of having a table lamp on your kitchen island or counter is something that feels good to me. It just brings joy,” says Jeremiah. The Albano Poli lamp was a gift from his husband. “Nate loves to give me lamps. That’s our language.”



↑ This ottoman sits in the living room among the high-style contemporary furniture. “We bought it for \$30 at a flea market and I had to stitch it up where it was torn. I have no problem mixing high and low,” says Jeremiah.

1. GOLD BRACELET

A father who traveled around the world for work. “It was hard not to have him at home,” she recalls. This piece of jewelry he brought her from India a quarter century ago has encircled her wrist like a steady hand. She wore it to college, while running through city streets and woodlands, on her own trips to distant lands, when making her wedding vows, during the birth of her son. Through it all, the bracelet collected the inevitable dings and dents, acquiring character and patina. She had a few small pieces of gold from her jewelry collection melted down and used to reinforce the delicate patterned frame. A small diamond stone was added as a reminder of what matters most. Devotion to family. Love everlasting. The circle of life, softly gleaming.

2. VINTAGE BOTTLE

Filled with wildflowers and left on a doorstep. “I was single for many years and totally fine with that because I’m independent and introverted,” she insists. “I always figured I’d meet my person when the time was right.” When she needed some work done on her property, he appeared as if on cue, hauling his backhoe. Big and burly, sweet and shy. He dug up that old bottle, washed the dirt, and arranged some flowers from her yard in it, oblivious to the teasing remarks of his coworkers. The humble bouquet was presented without a note because none was needed: She already knew who he was. The romance bloomed. To this day, the little bottle still holds fresh flowers he picks for her.

3. PAIR OF DALECARLIAN HORSES

Painted and carved in the classic folk style. A tribute to family and culture of origin. “These belonged to my Swedish American partner of almost two decades,” he says. “We lost him to cancer last year.” The little wooden statues always had pride of place in their home. In his absence, they still do, conjuring his sweet, gentle spirit. The horses themselves evoke freedom of movement, a heroic journey. When a life of togetherness is cut short, the survivor becomes the steward of memories and tra-

ditions. He must take the reins and ride on, adopted homeland always on the horizon.

4. GREEK-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Two lovers on opposite sides of the world. Theirs was an epistolary courtship. “This is a daily reminder to me of my parents’ courage,” she proclaims, “and of the many opportunities they have given me.” Her mother was a Greek immigrant. Her father fled communist Bulgaria for a refugee camp and was recruited by the U.S. Army. While living in Germany, he fell in love with her picture, shown to him by a multilingual friend, who acted as interpreter for their transatlantic correspondence. After two years, his proposal arrived by mail. She sent this dictionary along with her acceptance. They both used it to learn the common language of their future, transcending borders and obstacles to build a life of possibility.

5. BRAZILIAN JIUJITSU BELT

Fought for and hard-won. Developed in the 1920s as a variation on the Japanese self-defense martial art, Brazilian jiu-jitsu allows a smaller, weaker person to fend off bigger, stronger opponents, taking the fight to the ground and using techniques that force them into submission. The white belt represents the first level, an introduction to the rigor and resilience required even of novices. “I’m a better designer, better salesman, better athlete, and all-around better human because of this practice,” he says, having progressed to the blue belt. An actual school of hard knocks, this combat sport teaches lessons in discipline, self-respect, and perseverance and invites practitioners into a community of noble warriors that live by their code on and off the mat.

6. TEDDY BEAR

A sacred talisman. A piece of her heart. “I’ve always had a fear of moving away from my family—of something happening to them and not being there to say goodbye,” she says. For years, it was a crippling thought that became reality the day Peepaw, the grandfather who raised her, passed away unexpectedly when she was far from home.

She was inconsolable, truly at a loss, until a friend presented her with this homemade bear crafted from the very shirt Peepaw wore to her high school graduation. The hind paws are appliquéd with lyrics from the Doris Day song “A Bushel and a Peck,” which Peepaw used to sing to her at bedtime. The bear has become a tool for strength, a badge of courage dressed in a ray of sunshine. It goes wherever she does and makes all those places home.

7. NATIVE AMERICAN WEDDING VASE

Reclaiming Indigenous identity with love. “I feel like my story is special, in part because I did not marry a Native American man, like my mother wanted.” Although she did not grow up on the reservation or learn about her heritage from her parents, she is now a registered tribal member of the Seminole nation of Oklahoma and an unregistered member of the Cherokee nation. She was the first one in her family to powwow-dance and create beaded tribal jewelry. When it came time to marry her German American boyfriend, she used the traditional Native American wedding vase. During the ceremony, drinking from the double spouts represents two becoming one. Her intention is to pass this heirloom to her children when they marry, along with the knowledge and stories of their shared culture.

8. FOSSILIZED SHARK TEETH

Adventures in wonderland. Curiouser and curiouser. While beachcombing in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, she was approached by a local gentleman who inquired about the hole she was digging in the sand. When she confessed to be on the hunt for shark teeth, he smiled at her tenacity and led her down to the waterline, where he taught her how to look for the identifying glimmer, shape, and color. She persisted, honing her eye, and was rewarded. Each discovery felt like a triumph. “I was hooked for the rest of the afternoon,” she recalls. In fact, she’s joined the ranks of passionate lifelong naturalists who dream of finding the tooth of a megalodon, an extinct species of mackerel shark that lived about 23 million years ago. ●



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THE HOME OFFICE IS HERE TO STAY...

...but not always in the home. Some liberated workers have taken their workspace to the backyard, the garage, and other creative choices.

BY SALLY SCHULTHEISS

You need only look at your own workspace to know that home offices have experienced a whole lot of love over the past few years. Whether you upgraded your desk, decorated your Zoom background, or renovated your guest room, chances are you took a new approach to your office away from the office. According to a survey performed by CraftJack, the largest online service connecting professional contractors to clients, 91 percent of respondents “did something to improve their workspace” in 2021.

With a rocket launch of an assist by the pandemic (and, often, dollars provided by employers for remote work), home offices have hit the mainstream. They’ve also experienced quite the glow-up. Today a home office not only provides a space to block out family chaos while you work; it also represents your professional work ethic, your personal aesthetic, your aura. Using a little wallpaper, intentional organizing (need a built-in for your paperclips? You got it!), and well-chosen artwork, your office can be you in four walls. A room of one’s own that would make Virginia Woolf fall off her desk chair.

These four professionals each created a space that embodies all sectors of their identity, where all parts of themselves belong. They are “offices” where you can mix and match personal with professional, home and office, family and clients—where utility and frivolity live in harmony along with productivity and relaxation. The result is that, whenever you’re at work, you always feel at home.

ARIEL GORDON MAFFEI

JEWELRY DESIGNER, PIEDMONT, CA



It's no surprise that jewelry designer Ariel Gordon Maffei—who creates casual, elegant, and personalized pendants, key chains, bracelets, charms, and necklaces—should describe her office/guest house as a “garden gem box.” Nestled among flowers and blooming vines in her backyard, it feels as though you’ve happened upon something out of a fairy tale.

The surprise, however, comes in the structure’s origins: part prefab, part custom. This charming house is quite basic in its bones, and filled with hyper-functionality. A hobbit’s dream meets executive retreat.

Like Ariel’s creations—which are meant to be worn in assortment, curated by the wearer—this gem box is highly personalized. While the structure itself was picked from a selection of base models, shipped in wall-size pieces, and “snapped together,” Ariel says, in less than two days, this space is distinctively hers, reflecting her keen sense of hospitality for overnight guests.

Enter as a client and it’s all business, the 15-by-17-foot room welcoming you into an office with bookshelves, a banquette for chatting or talking shop, and a large desk that doubles as a studio work surface.

Enter as a weekend guest and it’s a commodious bedroom—one of the “cabins” has been opened to accommodate a full-size wall bed. The banquette is perfect for coffee in the morning or tea at night, all while remaining perfectly private. “There’s room to spread out, walk around,” says Ariel. “And when the sun is shining, we open up the double doors. It’s really so open and lovely.”

Enter as one of Ariel’s children, ages 5 and 8, and it’s a magical playhouse, the ceiling and walls bathed in wallpaper like a grown-up fort (“It’s an installer’s nightmare, having to wrap around all those planes,” she says). The banquette is now for crafts and drawing.

Last but not least, enter as Ariel and it’s instant calm—a cozy oasis in the backyard, separate from the brewing housework and chaos of the main home. A mix of floral, striped, and plaid patterns in the curtains, scalloped fabric of the chandelier, and wallpaper adds whimsy and warmth, much like her gold treasures—and, like her jewelry, is designed to be versatile and used every day.

“I wanted the storage to be efficient,” says Ariel. “I wanted an L-shaped desk to maximize the small footprint of the space and balance out the L of the banquette diagonally across the room.” There is room to spread out on either surface—notes, designs, snacks—and storage within. Desk drawers have felt interiors for jewelry samples, and banquette benches hold pillows and comforters for the bed. —s.s.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: KATY MILTON



PREVIOUS PAGE ← Ariel chose a bright yellow desk chair to anchor the room with a pop of color; drawers and cabinets left and right keep supplies at her fingertips.

THIS PAGE ↑ A table diagonally across the room from the desk provided the symmetry Ariel was looking for; bedding is tucked into the banquette seating.

OPPOSITE → “My kids think it’s a special place to escape to,” says Ariel, here with her family. “My son likes to pull the bed out.”

DEE MURPHY

INTERIOR DESIGNER, LOS ANGELES

Where else do you see surfboards and fabric squares coexist harmoniously? Bike helmets and a wallpaper backsplash? Landscape paintings and skateboards?

Interior designer Dee Murphy was asking a lot of her turn-of-the-20th-century, one-car garage: Could it house her family’s sporting equipment and serve as a creative sanctuary?

“We needed to make it a functional space, a space to store outdoor gear,” she says of the garage. “It was this scary, dark, cobwebby cave where we just dumped unnecessary items when we moved.” With two

children (ages 8 and 11), a home business, and the compounding effects of being cooped up during the pandemic, the family lived in every inch of their home in the historic West Adams district of Los Angeles. Dee worked out of the dining room, with fabric samples and interior design notebooks stacked up behind the table, and had already exhausted every one of the house’s nooks and crannies. “I was longing for a space to call my own,” she says.

This garage area was small, but she saw potential, and with a mandate to “get everything up off the floor,” the space married two



OPPOSITE, LEFT ◀ “I love wallpaper and use it everywhere,” says Dee. “It makes me feel creative.” Art on the shelves adds more inspiration. **RIGHT** ◀ Dee’s favorite feature of her office is the drawers system, with dividers. “Having a special place to put everything brings me so much joy,” she says. **THIS PAGE** ↑ Getting everything up and off the ground was a priority. “It makes me happy,” she says. Wire baskets hold helmets and gear; boards and bikes hang on hooks. A painted checkerboard floor brings the main house’s vintage vibe into the space.



unlikely bedfellows. The fusion track wall was a natural fit for the outdoor gear—surfboards, skateboards, bikes, wetsuits, and helmets would all find a happy home in the versatile organizational system of hooks, baskets, and brackets. Dee put her own craft to work on the opposing wall’s home office.

In fact, the whole room would end up looking and feeling like a design office, with the outdoorsy gear playing the role of pop-art backdrop. On the office side, a wallpaper backsplash gives the whole room style. “I use it everywhere,” says Dee of wallpaper. “A great pattern always encourages creativity.” As does the color yellow, which she calls “happy and inspiring.” A painted checkerboard floor in gray and white adds a design element and resembles the traditional feel of the main house. Opposite her desk, the fusion track mounts colorful surfboards, skateboards, and two graphic boards for playing cornhole.

Like many artists, Dee says, “An orderly

space allows for clarity in my design.” The drawers are filled with fabric swatches, organized in dividers by size. Still more swatches hang on hooks above the counter. In the nearby cabinet, vases, bowls, and books used as props for photo shoots are displayed—safely hidden and arranged beautifully, ready to inspire. “I love for interesting pieces to be visible,” she says of the most effective way to access her wares.

And the landscape painting that hangs near the surfboards is an elegant, pastoral touch, reminding kids and clients alike that they are not in a mudroom or shed but simply in an extension of the home. Dee’s husband questioned the art placement, but she responded, “Just the way an open garage door allows the daylight to flood in, the painting simultaneously calls the outdoors in, evoking travel, adventure, and spontaneity. I want art anywhere I can justify it.” —s.s.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: ALICE KEMPTON

ALY MORFORD

INTERIOR DESIGNER, NEWPORT BEACH, CA



How is it that everything in Aly Morford’s home office looks as though it washed ashore or was scavenged from the forest? How does it all come together and appear organized and civilized? That’s the aesthetic—natural, rustic, calm—that Aly creates in all her work, through her interior design firm, Pure Salt Interiors. The most exquisite fibers, woods, and metals in nature seem to have been given a scrubbing and put to use.

And her office doesn’t lack for uses. “I couldn’t take an entire room and dedicate it to only one role,” Aly says. “It needed to be multipurpose. This space isn’t just an office; it’s my ‘mom command center.’ It’s where I work, stock the girls’ school supplies, organize and wrap gifts. It’s where I come to find my Zen.”

The room manages to do all that and more, organizing everything while showcasing beautiful finishes. Built-ins store necessities, and shelves display a rotating collection of inspiring coffee-table books. Comfortable seating adds to the overall serenity.

Aly’s gift-wrapping station is a dream for anyone who has wrestled with a tangle of ribbon and wrapping paper in a hall

closet, yards from the requisite tape and scissors. Here, wrapping tools and supplies—everything from gift bags to gift tags—are an arm’s length away. A healthy supply of gifts themselves—Aly’s go-tos are wine and candles—is also tucked away, “so I’m never caught empty-handed or relying on a sudden trip to the store,” she says.

Aly’s three daughters—ages 3, 8, and 12—also spend a lot of time here, and the side-by-side desk chairs are great for tandem homework, or for when her business partner comes to visit. The second desk chair “adds visual symmetry to the space,” she says.

“A core belief for us at Pure Salt is to clear away the clutter and keep things simple,” she says. “This is a space that feels intentional—curated rather than cluttered—and brings a sense of peace and calm.”

Pinboard lines the wall and does the quiet work of organizing and decluttering, corralling ideas, calendars, and important to-dos. All supplies are labeled in cabinets and bins. “There’s a place for everything, and that helps keep everything in place,” she says. —s.s.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **HEATHER RECORDS**



THIS PAGE ↑ Aly brought the natural palette of her aesthetic into her office—right down to the selection of finishes, accessories, and books.
OPPOSITE → Clear bins show contents (and regular stocking ensures nothing runs out) and a desk for two guarantees the option for collaboration or quiet company.

ANNIE SELKE

ENTREPRENEUR, PALM SPRINGS, CA



Annie Selke, founder and chief vision officer of the Annie Selke Companies—a top name in elegant, cozy home furnishings based in western Massachusetts—knows interiors. So when she set out to design a multipurpose office/guest room/sitting room in her California home, creating a cocoon of belonging was key.

Because this third bedroom needed to serve a variety of needs depending on her mood and desires, function was also key. Annie and her husband wanted two desks and storage for books and their favorite objects. “We also wanted a cozier sitting space for the two of us, as our living room is really lovely but it’s big and not particularly intimate,” she says. “And we could have a second television for the days when our viewing desires diverged.”

Whether it’s the holidays or a bevy of guests, there’s also a sleep option: a Murphy bed that pulls down from the wall. The California Closets version of this space-saver is Annie’s favorite element in the room. “It’s really a marvel,” she says. —s.s.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANTS: **PRESTON MITCHELL & KENDALL CONNERS**

↑ Touch latch technology eliminated the need for what Annie calls “distracting” hardware, while light wood and patterns of pinky soft pastels completes the warm yet clean Palm Springs look.

BREATHING ROOM

Seek out those special spaces that invite a moment of exhalation—and perhaps even exhilaration.



ART BY JENNIFER ORKIN LEWIS



Few have understood the power of a perfectly orchestrated moment more than Diana Vreeland, the revered and eminently quotable fashion editor known for her irrepressible joie de vivre. The title of a documentary about this wholly original character sums up her guiding philosophy: the eye has to travel. She urged us not to merely observe but to truly see the world around us and to allow grand vistas and small details alike to send us on a fantastic voyage. She decreed we should place an elk-hide trunk in the back of the car, tie black tulle bows on our wrists, and paint

a map of the world on the nursery walls so the kids would dream of adventure. Vreeland wanted us to transform our ordinary existences into something extraordinary by becoming the wildly creative directors of our own lives.

She was really onto something. As the world becomes increasingly chaotic and work seems to follow us everywhere, it's more essential than ever that we find opportunities for escape, inspiration, and reverie. Think of them as breathing room. Brief as they may be, moments when everything slows down have a profound effect. Quiet contemplation is a kind of meditation and we've all heard about the many benefits of that. The eye has to travel, but when it alights on anything that ignites the imagination—beauty, memory, artistry—there is the sudden, pervasive stillness of recognition. You are home. A familiar sensation, a feeling of belonging, elicited by the flicker of candlelight on a raku vase, the soft embrace of a well-worn armchair, a carved souvenir from a long-ago trip to the islands. Transported to another reality, you are also grounded in the here and now, rooted in the realm of the senses.

This convergence of emotion and space is the special purview of interior designers. Manipulating light and proportion, they build a mood, then populate it with colors, textures, and objects that express deeply personal narratives. These are the kinds of resonant places we long to inhabit, where every nook, hallway, closet, and

corner is a reflection of our history and sensibilities. With even a few of these spots amidst the clutter and cacophony of daily life, we can consider ourselves lucky. Heide Hendricks, a designer known for composing richly layered, supremely comfortable homes, noticed how the afternoon sun warmed a corner of her dining room and placed a plush down sofa there. She hung a beloved portrait of her son nearby and now this cozy nook is a destination for reading, daydreaming, and napping (and not just for the cat).

It may seem like an indulgence to create these moments at home—and it is, in the best possible way. For those with limited room, or challenged by a lack of privacy, rethink what might at first be considered incidental, or interstitial, spaces. An entryway. A closet. Even a drawer. Instead of opening the front door to a jumbled pile of boots, dog leashes, and discarded jackets, imagine being greeted by order and visual calm. There is a place for your keys, another where your mail awaits. A bunch of lilies wafts a soothing fragrance through the air. A brief pause like this can change the tenor of your day, offer you a sense of well-being that extends far beyond the moment.

Create some space for yourself. Cultivate a place (or three) where you can come back to what matters most. When the weight of the world is on your shoulders, when you can't shake off a bad day—or want to prolong a good one. Sink into that window

seat with a view of the pond, recline on the chintz chaise in your dressing room, stroll down memory lane with every pair of shoes in your cherished collection, or simply cast a passing glance at the artful vignette of objects you've assembled on the hall table. Just being aware of the small, precious details allows us to perceive the larger truths: Life is beautiful and, to quote Keats, "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." Organizing these occasions for gratitude requires intention and a little practical magic. What you're left with is plenty of breathing room. —L.C.S.



OF CLOTHES & CURIOSITIES

A closet is a personal archive. It can house your newly expanded work-from-home yoga pants collection. Or pay ongoing homage to your world-beater suit-and-tie days. Even Western artifacts can hang out comfortably beside the jeans of an urban cowboy.

Antlers? In your closet? Absolutely, if that is your heart's desire. The brass buck in John Rankin's manly closet reflects his love of all things Western, and holds a place of honor. In closets as in life, to each their own.

Every closet in the following pages is as unique as its owner, as distinctive as a handprint. Some are enviably large—big enough to qualify as actual rooms—whereas others are more modest. But it's not square footage alone that defines them. What makes them special is how they celebrate the singular spirit of their owners—their tastes, their passions, their priorities.

The hallway closet at the home of Antoni Porowski, food expert on *Queer Eye*, does clever double duty as a place to store his many kitchen appliances and a space for his clothes. High-end real estate agent Ryan Serhant is more of a maximalist, with a dandy's wardrobe; slick slide-in, slide-out tie racks display his vast array of ties—arranged by color, of course. TV host Nev Schulman transformed an unusually large bathroom into a spacious showcase for his shoes.

Each choice is elegant in its own way, each a reflection of its owner. Whether it's a beloved collection of vintage handbags to rival a costume institute or a playful piece of modern art or even a small arboretum, your closet can be your own museum of clothes and curiosities. You need only think inside the box. —J.A.





PREVIOUS PAGE ← Meritt and John pose in his closet.

THIS PAGE ↑ Meritt and designer Esther Ellmore worked with an installation artist to drape the flowing cotton chandelier. “It’s an art piece,” she says. The LED bulbs were sourced from a specialty lighting store.

MERITT ELLIOTT

DESIGNER, LOS ANGELES

When designer Meritt Elliott and her husband, restaurateur and chef John Rankin, renovated their Los Angeles home, they started with the closets. “I wanted them to feel like rooms rather than a place for clothes,” Meritt says.

A fashion designer and an accomplished Hollywood stylist, Meritt cofounded the popular brand The Great with her best friend from college. These days, she often finds herself in her closet, a light and airy space with a view over the trees of Laurel Canyon. “I’ll have a friend over,” she says, “and after a glass of wine, we’ll meander up there.” Her bright closet reflects her crisp, feminine aesthetic: white walls and cabinetry, gold hardware, and natural fabrics. The dreamy floating light fixture was inspired by her signature soft cotton designs. “I wanted my closet to be a place where everything feels beautiful,” she says, “like walking into a store I would shop at.”

The couple share a love of vintage clothing and flea market shopping. “We have the same stacks of sweatshirts, and we collect cowboy boots,” she says. While both closets were designed with extra drawers because they wear so many T-shirts and sweatsuits, the similarities end there. John’s closet, in shades of black with masculine leather hardware and a bright vintage rug, feels like a sophisticated cigar lounge inside a country and western bar. “He wanted it to feel very contrasty to mine,” says Meritt.

You can tell a lot about the couple from their bespoke side-by-side dressing rooms. “He’s more social, the wild guy, and I’m more clean and airy fairy,” Meritt says. “It’s like snapshots of our personalities.” —L.W.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **CARI HOWE**



LEFT ↑ John’s closet celebrates his affinity for the American West; the buck bust in the window, a gift from Meritt, is from a vintage fair in Texas.

RIGHT ↑ A leaf print and wildflowers in Meritt’s closet honor her Northern California roots. In his, black-and-white landscape photography reflects John’s love of hiking and the outdoors.



ANTONI POROWSKI

TV PERSONALITY, NEW YORK CITY



So many appliances, so little space. The kitchen in Antoni Porowski's new Greenwich Village home is generous. But Antoni, the food and wine expert on Netflix's *Queer Eye* series and the host and executive producer of Netflix's newest cooking competition series, *Easy-Bake Battle*, cheerfully admits to "borderline hoarding" of kitchen tools and appliances, all of which needed a place to live.

The apartment had another shortcoming: There was only one modest closet in the primary bedroom—not nearly big enough to hold all of Antoni's clothes.

The ingenious solution? Creating a closet that runs the length of the hallway between the kitchen and primary bedroom, giving the closet two different functions. On the right, just outside the kitchen and within easy grabbing distance, the storage space serves as a pantry, with shelving designed to fit everyday items as well as things "I wanted on hand but don't use as much."

THIS PAGE ↑ Half the space in the long hallway closet is for keeping extra clothes, and half serves as a pantry. Antoni's bedroom closet includes a pullout garment rack to hang outfits for the next day, and three sliding trays coddle his many sunglasses.

OPPOSITE → Foodstuffs and small appliances are stored close to the kitchen.

Just as the pantry side of the long closet feels like an extension of the kitchen, the other side feels like an extension of the bedroom. "I love that it's seamlessly divided," Antoni says. On this side, he keeps the clothes he can't fit into the bedroom closet.

The design helped Antoni maximize the limited square footage in the bedroom closet, adding floor-to-ceiling shelving and two tiers of hanging rods. LED strips embedded in the rods illuminate each shirt and pair of pants. Another cool feature: three sliding trays that hold his sunglasses collection. "I can't tell you how many pairs I've ruined because the lenses would get all scratched up, or how much time it took looking into each sunglasses case when I was looking for a specific pair," he says.

So how are those trays working out?

"I'm obsessed." —J.A.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **KEITH JOHNSON**





RYAN SERHANT

REAL ESTATE AGENT & TV PERSONALITY, BROOKLYN



Ryan Serhant isn't kidding when he says that he planned the second floor of his Brooklyn townhouse around the closet for the primary suite. The brownstone, which he and wife, Emilia Bechrakis, renovated top to bottom before they moved in last year, has six stories, "so we had room for a killer closet," says the luxury-home real estate agent and star of Bravo's *Sell it Like Serhant*.

The couple turned the entire second floor into the primary suite (daughter Zena,

4, has the third floor), replacing lots of little closets with one enormous one—260 square feet. And all that space gets used. Ryan is known for his wardrobe of sharp suits—"My suits are my costume," says the onetime actor—something he and the designer kept firmly in mind when laying out the space. Ryan noted that he needed room not only for his existing suits, but also for those he would likely buy in the future. He readily admits to having more clothes than his wife, but Emilia's side of

the closet is actually slightly larger than his, and it includes a clever mirror that lets her see how she looks from the front and the back. Most important, says Ryan, it's a communal space. "I always wanted a primary closet space that you could hang out in," he says. "My wife and I can be getting dressed together, and we can sit down and talk about the day. It's a space for getting dressed, it's a space for conversation." —J.A.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **DEBRA RUSSO**

OPPOSITE ← Ryan is so pleased with the LED lighting that he prefers it to using the overhead fixtures. "It's nice, ambient lighting; it's pretty; it works well. And it helps you see all my suits."

THIS PAGE ↑ The closet has two entrances: one from the primary suite and one from the couple's bathroom. A hallway closet holds shoes. Sliding tie racks display a multitude of ties.

NEV
SCHULMAN
TV PERSONALITY, BROOKLYN



Nev Schulman and Laura Perlongo were thrilled when they found their four-bedroom duplex in a new Brooklyn high-rise two years ago. The host of MTV’s *Catfish*; his freelance writer/creative director wife; and their three young children—Cleo, 6; Beau, 4; and Cy, 1—would finally have plenty of room, and then some. But the apartment had one peculiar feature: a bathroom “so wildly oversized,” says Nev with a laugh, that “it felt like a family restroom at an airport.” The couple decided to put that weird, wasted space to real use. Their bed-

room had a skimpy closet, but the bathroom was right there. They moved the door so it opened into their bedroom and created the closet they wanted. Although sprawling as a bathroom, the space isn’t huge as a walk-in closet for two. Lots of hanging space was a priority, not only for Laura’s dresses and blouses but also for Nev’s wardrobe. “When clothes are stacked or piled, I’m much less likely to use them,” he says. Double hanging rows keep his T-shirts, button-downs, and pants where he can readily see and access them. And a

floor-length mirror at the back of the closet is actually a set of doors that open onto shoe storage. LED lighting and orderly shelves show every pair. “I was definitely passionate about making a large shoe storage section,” he says. “Whether you mean to or not, you end up with lots of shoes.” The couple are delighted with the results. “As far as walk-in closets go, it’s not that large,” Nev says. “But for a New York City apartment, it’s luxurious.” —J.A.

CC DESIGN CONSULTANT: **KIM VAN WOESIK**

↑ Smart design made the most of modest square footage in the couple’s narrow bedroom closet, with space for both hanging and folded clothes, a dresser for each of them, and a well-lit rear wall of shoes.

FAREWELL, FAMILY HOME

As she remembers where she was raised and where later she raised her sons, the author makes sense of houses and history, of memories and moving on.

BY JEANNIE RALSTON

Mom was sad about the daffodils. That’s what made me start thinking about the sale of my childhood home. My father died in autumn, and the daffodils he’d always nurtured started blooming the following spring. My mother, approaching 90, was feeling down because he wasn’t there to see them. In a group text to his five siblings, my younger brother wrote, “She was worried that if she has to leave the house for a retirement home she would lose the flowers.” And that meant she would lose a connection to my dad. Those were the words that made me freeze: “Leave the house for a retirement home.” Leave. The. House.

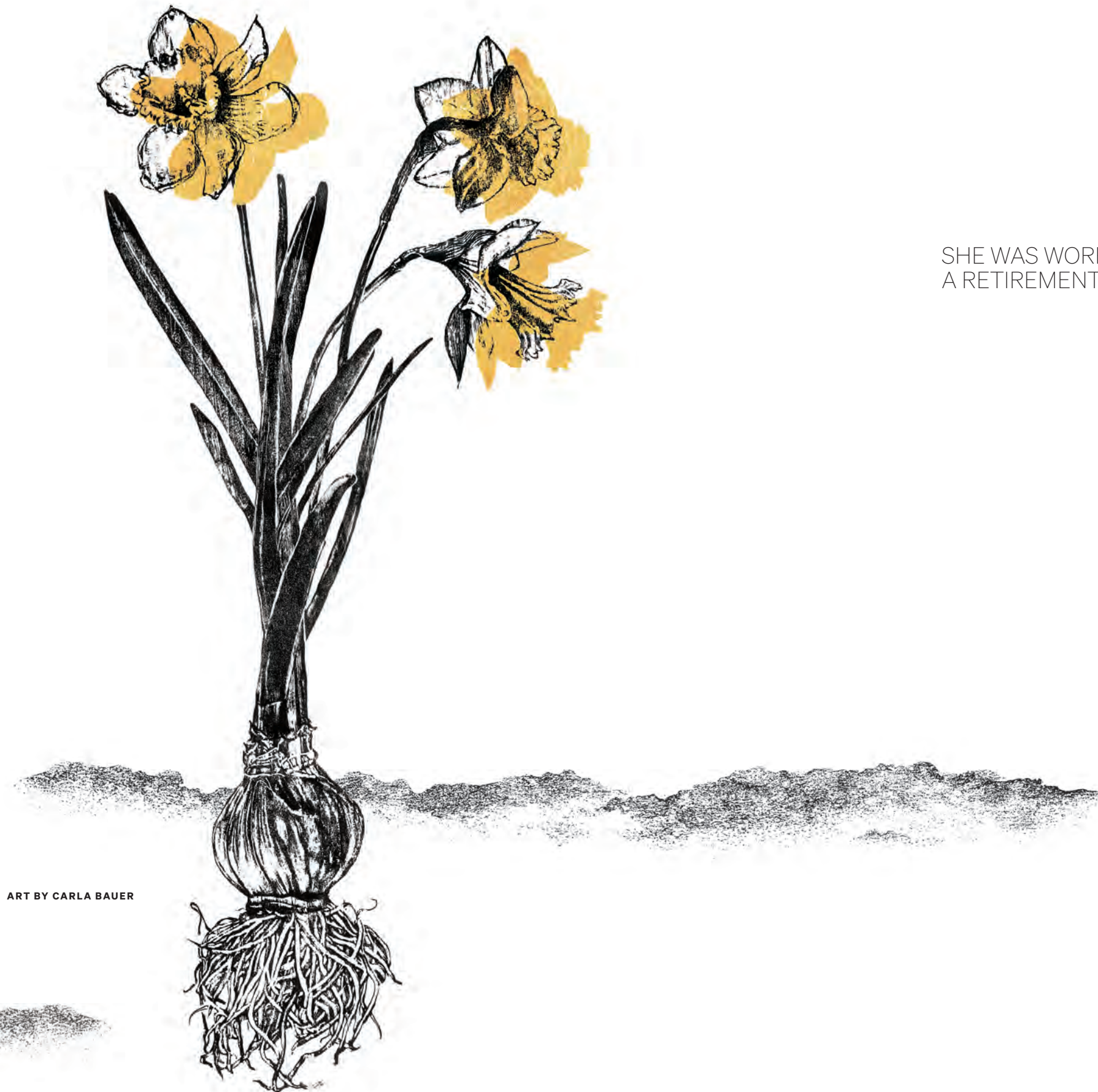
MY CHILDHOOD HOME

The House is a mocha brown split-level on a large wooded lot in eastern Tennessee. Four bedrooms, two and a half baths. A large kitchen where we spent most of our time, a formal living room where the kids rarely ventured, and a recreation room downstairs where we lounged around, watching a black-and-white television. Eight of us managed to fit into The House, with six kids fighting to use one bathroom in the mornings, especially when one of us (me) liked to pose in the bathroom mirror,

trying out expressions and smiles. The marble entryway is where Daddy and I always danced; the top of the stairway is where we waited on Christmas morning for him to get his movie camera ready before we ran to the tree in the living room. Talking about letting it go was salt in the fresh wound of my dad’s death. Would my memories of The House disappear if I couldn’t visit? Would I still be able to see all of us gathered around the kitchen table, eating my mom’s pizza or arguing about which TV show to watch after dinner? Now that we’re on the other side of our young journeys and missing half our leadership team, The House seemed more important than ever.

RECALLING MY OWN MOVES

I reminded myself that my restless husband and I moved six times over our three decades together. The hardest was leaving the glorious two-story stone barn we had renovated in rural Texas. I had been the point person on the construction while my husband traveled, so I knew every nail, every floor joist, every plumbing joint. When our sons were born, it was the home we’d brought them to. When they were 5 and 7, my husband started talking about living somewhere else. As freelancers, we had a



SHE WAS WORRIED THAT IF SHE HAS TO LEAVE THE HOUSE FOR A RETIREMENT HOME THAT SHE WOULD LOSE THE FLOWERS.

lot of freedom, but I thought we'd stay in that house for a lifetime—just as my parents had remained in my childhood home. In my mind, that was the natural order of things. But after 10 years in the house, my husband became serious. And so did I. I put my foot down and refused to sell. In the arguments that followed, the word *divorce* came up several times.

If we did split, my mother said, I could always come home to Tennessee with the kids. But I would lose the house anyway, so where would that get me? I remember touching the stone walls and telling myself that the house was just a thing—just sticks and rocks and concrete. It's the people, the memories, that make a home. As long as we were together as a family, that's what was really important. A cliché, maybe, but it didn't feel like one at that gut-wrenching moment.

This epiphany allowed me to sell the stone barn—I still had a massive, nose-dripping cry when we left—and go on to new homes. A couple of them in Mexico, where we lived for four years. More back in Texas. Whenever we sold a house, people would ask if I was upset, and I would always give the same answer: I'm not allowing myself to get attached to a house again. It's just a thing.

BUT WHAT ABOUT MY PARENTS' PLACE?

With the sale of my childhood home on the table, could my cool detachment hold? Could I see it, too, as just a thing? I mean, we're talking about the home

from which all sense of home, for me, has sprung.

Soon after the daffodil exchange, I texted my siblings to ask how they'd feel when The House was sold. A lot of anguish and sentimentality popped up in little bubbles on my phone—about the potential loss of The House and about the homes where they'd raised their own kids. "I have a lot of emotional attachment to places," my older brother wrote. I'm the only one of the six who has moved often. The other five are all still in homes where their toddlers once roamed. Maybe all the practice I'd had leaving homes I've loved could prepare me for the inevitable day of selling the big one.

When I left the barn with my husband and kids, at least we were still together as a family, but the six siblings live all over the country. I thought of our text group. How one of my older brothers will just check in randomly: "How's everyone today?" Or how we'll share photos we came across of Daddy. Or observations on Mom's mood. Or reports on vacations. Or songs we've heard from our childhood. I'm starting to think that when we don't have the mocha brown split-level on the heavily wooded lot in eastern Tennessee, one way we can stoke the home fires will be our flat screens—glowing with memories of long-ago moments in The House where we all became who we are. ●

MAKE ROOM FOR ALL OF YOU

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LOVE STORY



Everyone knows I don’t allow dogs on the bed. No exceptions. But when Molly presses her cold, spongy nose against my neck, it’s a shot across the bow. She all but looks at her watch as she waits for me to shove over, and a moment later she is stretched against me.

Molly has accumulated more stuff than a college freshman: treats (dry, chewy, dry with chewy center), leashes (regular and hands-free), bowls (portable and porcelain). Jackets and booties. Baggies and bones. Enough tennis balls to fill a pro’s launcher machine. She has a designated cabinet where I organize her toys and stash her sweaters, and I’ve annexed a snuggery or two in hidden corners.

She’s my comfort, my companion, my protector. She deserves the best I have to offer—including a nightly disregard for my sacrosanct rule. We both know she’s going to end up on the bed. And we both know that when she’s nestled next to me, she’s right where she belongs. —SARAH RUTLEDGE

CC DESIGN CONSULTANTS: **WHITNEY HAHN** (MAN);
STEPH POLLARD (TOYS); **REECE SCHULTE** (SITTING)

*I am he
As you are he
As you are me
And we are all together.*

— John Lennon, “I Am the Walrus”



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— TADAO ANDO



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