JULY 2019

COVER LOOK

LETS GO, MARGOT!

Photographed by Inez & Vinoodh.

Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

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Fac ing Forward

THIS MONTH WE BRING YOU the stories of two very different women: our cover star, actress Margot Robbie, and Dr. Jill Biden, an English professor whose husband, Joe, currently leads the ever-more-crowded race for the Democratic nomination. Despite their dissimilarities, though, Margot and Jill are united by the fact that both are leading authentic and admirable lives while currently experiencing moments of profound—and, quite possibly, ongoing—change. This is hardly surprising, given the current realities of both politics and moviemaking.

Margot’s ascent in Hollywood comes at a time when an entire industry is being challenged on its past behaviors and attitudes, defying women on-screen while too often doing precious little (and worse) to enhance their experiences behind the camera—something brought into sharp and shocking relief by the #MeToo movement. As writer Irina Aleksander discovered, Margot is all too aware of the fraught landscape of today’s Hollywood—while also intent on taking charge of her own destiny.

In her early 20s—she’s now 28—Margot founded her own production company, LuckyChap Entertainment, which currently has an impressive 50 female-led projects in the offing. She has also chosen to work with a long-standing group of close friends and collaborators—some of whom, I was amused to read in Irina’s piece, once shared a hippie-ish communal-style living arrangement with Margot. Clearly she is as open and free-spirited as she is serious and thoughtful about forging an inclusive and empathetic Hollywood.

As for Jill Biden, it’s hard to imagine the pressures that she and her family are under right now, given that her husband has taken such a fast and ferocious lead for the nomination. Regardless, when writer Jonathan Van Meter met Dr. Biden at her summer house in Delaware in April, she was relatively relaxed and sanguine. That said, their conversations didn’t shy away from emotional—andorny—territory. Jonathan paints an admiring portrait of the former Second Lady even as he asks her about the recent allegations that several women have made of inappropriate behavior by Joe Biden, as well as his perceived lack of support for Anita Hill during the 1991 Clarence Thomas hearings—and her responses to those charges.

Of course, this raises the issue of women having to atone for their male partners, and one certainly might understand that doing so over and over again is exhausting. Nevertheless, it’s vitally important that allegations like those made against Biden—or anyone else, for that matter—be dealt with honestly and openly and not by suggesting, as Dr. Biden responded to one reporter, that it might be time to move on.

Even as Biden continues to maintain his formidable lead, he and his wife will have to find support across the different wings of the Democratic Party—and whether or not they can find a way to connect with a generation so engaged and enthralled with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Mayor Pete Buttigieg remains to be seen. And as to whether Joe Biden’s lead is ultimately sustainable, it’s anybody’s guess. The road to 2020 is long, and the route anything but clear.

Letter from the Editor
In the spring of 1983, I returned to my dorm room one day to find a note scribbled on the college message board: CALL THE WHITE HOUSE. At first I thought it was a joke. It was not unusual to get prank messages: MATT DILLON CALLED OF PRINCE WOULD DIE 4 U, left by the work-study receptionist who also happened to be my roommate. I ignored it until several days later, when I remembered the woman from the Reagan administration who had come to speak at my college the year before about professions for women in politics and her work as the head of the Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs. After her lecture, I had approached her to ask about a job.

At that time I was a sophomore at Goucher College, outside Baltimore, planning my junior year abroad in Ireland. I was also a Democrat who had voted for Jimmy Carter in the most recent election—the only one in which I’d ever cast a ballot. I knew nothing about the Republican Party and was only mildly interested in Washington. My defining character trait at that point was curiosity. I longed to get a glimpse of a world that extended beyond my suburban Virginia childhood and my closed-off college campus. I had not been fantasizing about cocktail parties at embassies or Sundays at the Smithsonian, but I figured a potential job at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was too good an opportunity to dismiss outright.

When I called back, they explained that they had been dealing with an unexpected departure and that they needed somebody to fill in over the summer while they searched for a permanent replacement. At the interview, in a dimly lit, wood-paneled restaurant near the White House, I was nervous; I wasn’t used to eating at places with starched linen tablecloths and elaborately folded napkins. At the tables around us, men in dark suits spoke in hushed tones. My future boss and I discussed mostly literature, and my love of the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges—a favorite of hers as well—won her over.

At the start of the summer, I took the train down to D.C. to begin my job, reading Barry Goldwater’s The Conscience of a Conservative on the way. Goldwater’s insistence on conservatism as the “laws of God” made me uncomfortable, but this feeling was not unfamiliar; as a minister’s daughter I was used to often feeling like a fraud.

I worked across from the president’s lobbyists in the East Wing, and I sat at the same desk. I’d find out later, that Monica Lewinsky would occupy during the Clinton administration. Our office received both letters written by congressmen and letters forwarded to us from their constituents. My job (like Monica’s) was to answer the lowest tier of correspondence sent to the president, turning down people who wanted to donate a giant blue spruce for the White House Christmas tree, and explaining to an irate conservative congressman why Jane Fonda had been invited to sit in the stands to watch the recent NASA liftoff. We also accepted gifts from Congress for the president: a bag of Vidalia onions; a giant box of peanut brittle; a red, white, and blue quilt.

Twice daily I was sent over to the West Wing, down the long hall underneath the private residence. Early in the day, I picked up the apple tarts left over from the president’s morning staff meetings. In the late afternoon, after my boss had read the letters from Congress and written short summaries for the presidential log, I walked over to the Oval Office and handed it to the president’s secretary. Though the door was usually open, I never saw President Reagan at his desk, but I did often hear the sound of the television coming from the side room where it was rumored he retreated for naps.

I was not a very good employee. I could neither type nor spell, and I spent a lot of time calling far-flung friends on the White House WATS line (a fixed-rate long-distance service), loading up on packs of free White House cigarettes—I loved the gold presidential seal—and sending auto-penned signed photos of Reagan in his cowboy outfit to everyone and their cat. Each day was an odd combination of tedium and enchantment, hours in front of a computer screen followed by Felliniesque scenes: the violinist Isaac Stern serenading ladies in wide-brimmed hats at the First Lady’s garden parties; the Beach Boys harmonizing on the South Lawn; and dozens of tables in the state dining room set for dinner with three-foot-tall candlesticks and gilded chairs.

Because of the shortage of women in senior staff positions, younger female employees were regularly invited to attend Rose Garden functions. We were instructed to sit in the first rows and to look both attentive and impressed. Afterward I would wander down the colonnade into the West Wing, where I’d peek into the Cabinet Room with its long wooden table and the Roosevelt Room with its painting of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback glaring at anyone who entered.
One day, I watched on the closed-circuit televisions as my boyfriend, an earnest do-gooder who was working that summer as a congressional intern, waited at the East Wing gate to deliver a letter signed by a number of fellow interns protesting government aid to the Contras in El Salvador. My boss decided not to accept the letter, and I watched—silently, feeling guilty for not speaking up to say that I knew this young man—as my boyfriend finally threw the letter on the ground in frustration and stormed away.

As the summer progressed, my life became even more surreal. When the First Lady rejected 200 bird-of-paradise flowers, a gift from a Hawaiian senator, I took them home to my un-air conditioned town house on Capitol Hill. My room had been a nursery, with
Nostalgia  The Clash

alphabet-block handles on the built-in dressers and a pastel mural of elephants and giraffes painted over the twin bed. I stuck the exotic flowers in any container I could find—vases, coffee cups, saucepans, even a casserole dish—until my room resembled a botanical hothouse.

And then there was the single time I saw President Reagan up close. The East Wing employees were having their pictures taken with him, an annual event in which all the departments participated. I stood with my office mates, and when our turn came, the photographer arranged us around the president. Afterward Reagan seemed confused. “What do these people do?” he said in a wobbly voice to no one in particular.

That summer I was fragile, even amorphous, unsure of what I wanted to do with myself. I’d been raised in Roanoke, Virginia, by my minister father and a volatile beauty-queen mother. Part of me wanted to strike out on my own and become a writer; the other part, trained by my mother, anticipated that I’d marry a powerful man and that act would be the defining moment in my life. Before I began at the White House, my mother bought me a linen blazer, silk blouses, fitted skirts, and a pair of black leather pumps. “You look like a member of that horsey set,” she said to me when I tried on the outfits. This was a genuine compliment; my mother came from a working-class background, and more than anything else, she hoped I would, by attaching myself to people who emanated prestige, raise myself to a position in society that superseded hers.

But the more time I spent in the White House, the more the protocols and procedures began to seem superficial and unreal. I felt out of sync with the sunny California disposition of the place, suffocated by bureaucratic intricacies, and itched for something different, a setting where I could exorcise the sense of disquiet I was beginning to feel.

As it happened, just a few blocks from the White House was a storied punk-rock venue, the 9:30 Club, and I went there one night, midway through my summer in D.C. Located on the ground floor of the Atlantic Building, next door to Ford’s Theater, where President Lincoln was shot, the club was a small, darkly lit space; the only light came from television monitors suspended from the ceiling and playing art films on a continuous loop. The neighborhood surrounding the 9:30 had not fully recovered from the 1968 riots that had followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and consisted mostly of boarded-up storefronts and peep shows. Drug dealers would solicit customers from concertgoers standing in line outside.

But none of this put me off. There I saw the Violent Femmes, the Dead Kenneds, the Fleststones—bands that played angry but intimate songs, filled with restlessness and longing. The first time I visited, I stood in the back drinking long-neck bottles of Rolling Rock and watching as a dozen people up front started to slam dance. It was frightening to see bodies so out of control but thrilling, too, that they were so free. Around them the crowd grew ecstatic and united.

Soon I was regularly slinking into the White House with a hangover and an ink stamp on the back of my hand. My boyfriend—himself in a kind of liminal space—would go with me to shows, but I could tell that he held himself outside of the gravitational pull of the counterculture. When my high school girlfriends came to visit I toured them around the White House, where they were impressed by the China Room, which stored the former First Ladies’ porcelain. But when I took them to the 9:30, they were disgusted by the graffiti-covered walls, beer-sticky floors, and filthy bathrooms. One night, when Gordon Gano, the lead singer of the Violent Femmes, appeared on stage wearing a towel wrapped around his head and declared, “We’re queer and we’re cool,” my girlfriends were horrified. After a few songs I sent them back to my room on Capitol Hill and stayed until the encore was over.

Something about this duality—days at the slickly formal White House and nights in the wild and unhinged punk scene—woke me up. I began my first real journal, describing both the White House barbershop, where the president got his weekly haircut, and the punk-rock girl crying on the curb, her stiff Mohawk bent over sideways in the rain. Somewhere, in those months, I began to learn about the contradictions and juxtapositions that make for the best kind of art.

As August came to an end, my boyfriend packed his bags for Boston, where he’d be attending Harvard Business School, and I packed my bags for Ireland. We didn’t break up, exactly, but it was clear, geographically at least, we were moving in different directions. We said our goodbyes sadly but not bitterly. I was over the idea that a man could save me. I slept through most of the overseas flight, until the plane began its descent, tipping sideways, the wing cutting through the gray clouds. Out the window I saw the lush iridescent island, the first of many worlds that I would make my own. □

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When Julie de Libran’s five-year run as artistic director at Sonia Rykiel ended in March, she wasted no time starting a new project: In Paris—a city chockablock with languishing creative directors in holding patterns between big jobs—de Libran is launching a label of her own. The project—a small collection of dresses, for starters—is not only right for de Libran; it jibes nicely with our current moment, in which the fashion industry has finally begun addressing its environmental impact.

The very first piece de Libran designed, at the age of fourteen, was a black velvet dress with a boatneck, tight long sleeves, and a bubble skirt for a school dance. (“It was the eighties!” she says, laughing.) And though later, during her days in the backrooms of Prada, Versace, and Louis Vuitton, she specialized in red-carpet pieces, de Libran is now committed to making her new line as
green as possible by following a made-to-order model to reduce waste and, in some cases, cutting her patterns from exclusive dead-stock materials sourced from a pair of mills in Italy and Switzerland to “give life to these exquisite fabrics that have long gone unused,” as she says. A this-close-to-one-of-a-kind dress that’s sustainable? It’s a seductive concept, made all the more so by de Libran’s trademark feminine flourishes—in this case ruffles and sparkle, both of which were also on display in the couture collection de Libran created in honor of Sonia Rykiel’s fiftieth anniversary last July.

This month, de Libran will be back on the Paris Couture Week schedule with a coming-out party for her new dresses—a cocktail-hour tableau vivant presentation in the garden of her Left Bank home. That sense of intimacy is key to her new venture. She’s leased a small atelier that’s within bicycling distance of her house—she rides a black three-speed with a brown leather seat—where she works and meets clients. She’s already had requests for made-to-measure wedding gowns, and when she took her first four event dresses to Los Angeles this spring, celebrity stylists were eager to secure them for their clients. But the foundation of the line will range from crisp cotton shirtdresses and printed silk tea dresses to cocktail numbers.

Her magic ingredients? First, a sense of ease. “She’s not in costume or dressing in something,” says de Libran of the sort of woman she designs for. Second: emotion, which she often sparks with some element of surprise, be it the voluminous sculptural sleeves of her Gilda dress—made from airy layers of organza stitched in black wool with silver sequins and fringes of antique gold—or the sheer black georgette poncho tossed over the shoulders of a silvery white, gold, and black sequined tulle negligee called Charly (opposite).

“I always say a piece of clothing is like a piece of music—there’s a memory to it,” says de Libran. “In the right dress, you’ll be remembered.” —NICOLE PHELPS

A.P.C. X SUZANNE KOLLER
INTERACTION #2

At some point in their lives, 89 percent of women have been actively engaged in trying to find the ne plus ultra khaki army parka. Actually, that statistic is entirely made up, yet the struggle to find the perfect utilitarian coat—or the sweater that’s as cozy as it is chic, or an impeccably tailored mannish striped poplin shirt—is real: After all, doesn’t what we buy now need to feel anything but superficial and disposable?

Some good news: The struggle is—news flash—over. That’s in no small part due to Paris-based stylist Suzanne Koller’s collaboration with A.P.C., the second of the French label’s new Interaction series. (The first was with rapper Kid Cudi; the next with art collective Brain Dead.) It has all of the above, plus the likes of an inky djjelaba dress, a camel poncho, and a flannel tote—wittily monogrammed with an S and a K—that’s capacious enough to carry the entire collection.

“They’re all obvious classics,” says Koller, a cofounder of Self Service magazine. “I’m not very extravagant. These are my favorite pieces, and I hope other people will like them too.” She was given total freedom by A.P.C. founder Jean Touitou to do as she wished—hardly surprising, given that they’ve been friends and collaborators for more than a decade. It was, as Touitou says, “nice to go deeper into Suzanne’s obsessions.”

Yet the element of trust goes further than that: Both Koller and Touitou believed that whatever they made had to have some real meaning both to people’s closets and to their lives. While the usual designer collaboration is intended to be an ephemeral flare on the landscape—shining brightly, then extinguished in a moment—this one is being eyed as something that might have more staying power. “It would be a great compliment,” Koller says, “if people saw it as something to wear longer than just one season.” —MARK HOLGATE
Supermodel-approved trainer Joe Holder gives a master class on long, lithe legs in five easy steps.

1. “Soft-tissue mobilization gets the body moving correctly, and that’s when great things happen,” says Holder, who starts every workout with clients such as Bella Hadid and Naomi Campbell with 5 to 10 minutes of foam-rolling to stretch quads, calves, hamstrings, and glutes.

2. Holder’s cardio warm-up of choice is a jumping-rope circuit of 30-second intervals, alternating between faster and slower paces, for at least 10 minutes, followed by a 10-minute run or brisk walk on the treadmill at an incline. This really increases muscle elasticity, he insists.

3. Once the blood is pumping, Holder focuses on a targeted trio of “butt-busting” mat moves in reps of 10: bird dogs (extending the opposite arm and leg in unison); fire hydrants (raising one leg at a right angle out to the side until your thigh is parallel to the floor); and single-leg elevated side planks, with the top foot placed on a bench to work the glutes and adductors as the body lifts.

4. For proper conditioning, Holder relies on resistance bands. “They activate the leg and posterior chain muscles,” he explains of the benefits of placing bands around the knees while lying on your back and driving the hips upward, holding the position for a few seconds in reps of 15 to 20.

5. A great workout ends with strength training, says Holder, whose go-to moves include “the step-up”—bring one foot onto a bench, and then bring up the other in reps of 8 to 15—and dead lifts. Bend at the hips with dumbbells in hand, and lift as you return to an upright position in 3 sets of 10. “Typical squats don’t work the butt nearly as much,” he reveals.—LAUREN VALENTI

Escape to Margheritaville

High in the Ravello mountains, overlooking the Amalfi Coast, lies the newly refurbished Villa Margherita, a secluded residence that recently opened as part of the nearby Belmond Hotel Caruso. Inside, a mix of antiques and meticulously scouted materials saturates the space with old-world style: nineteenth-century Neapolitan chairs draped in Fortuny damasks, a Matisse framed with wood from Venetian canal pilings, trompe l’oeil murals that lattice the ceilings with ivy. Interior designer Eric Egan scoured Milan, Madrid, and Copenhagen for the villa’s rare objets. “The beauty of using vintage pieces is that they are yours alone,” he says.—ELISE TAYLOR
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Fox in the Henhouse

The legendary, predatory career of Roger Ailes comes to light in a new Showtime series.

TELEVISION

Roger Ailes, the longtime chairman and CEO of FOX News, claimed to know the first three adjectives any journalist would reach for when they began to write about him: “paranoid, right-wing, fat.” After watching The Loudest Voice (Showtime), a dramatized adaptation of investigative reporter Gabriel Sherman’s exposé of Ailes’s rise—as well as the events that would lead to his eventual demise—we can confidently add “menacing” to that list.

Ailes (played by a jowly Russell Crowe) waddles into Rupert Murdoch’s office in the mid-’90s and takes command of FOX News. The Loudest Voice is concerned with FOX’s unexpected sway over political rhetoric during the past two decades—and Crowe owns the screen as the mercurial, foulmouthed, tantrum-prone executive presiding over it all. As a historical document, the show feels like a living one, using a range of inspired-by-the-truth (if not quite literal) plotlines to illustrate the varied nature of Ailes’s sins. In an interview with a beautiful, young on-air hopeful, he slides his hand up to adjust her necklace, stepping threateningly close. His abuse of female colleagues isn’t limited to nefarious touching; he fires the woman who ought to have been FOX’s premiere anchor simply because she disagrees with him. After his own future wife, Beth (Sienna Miller), refuses to work under him at FOX and is then fired from NBC, he hugs her, whispering, “You made such a dumb choice.” For Ailes, all intimacy is domination.

We’ve grown numb to revelations of these kinds of slithering encroachments, but The Loudest Voice still manages to stun with its collection of offenses. The most alarming part isn’t what Ailes gets away with in private, it’s how openly his behavior is tolerated or encouraged. If this is the man who shaped the politics of half the nation for two decades, is it any wonder we’ve ended up where we are?—HILLARY KELLY
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Lucia Pica’s newest makeup collection for Chanel is a tribute to the cinematic romance of Paris and one of the brand’s most iconic codes.

BEAUTY

Under the soaring ceilings of the Grand Palais, two Italian brunettes are chattering at warp speed. The 20-year-old model Vittoria Ceretti, a muse of the late Karl Lagerfeld, is having her makeup done for Chanel’s recent cruise show while Lucia Pica, the house’s global creative makeup and color designer, shares a few instructional words with her team: “Fresca. Leggera. Ordinata.” Fresher, lighter, neater. On top of a sheer, natural base, Pica is using a steady hand to deliver the runway’s unexpected statement: an intensely glossy black lip.

The collection is also Virginie Viard’s first solo outing as Chanel’s newly named creative director, and she is in the early stages of putting her own stamp on Karl’s and Coco’s legacies. But if her first and last looks—an easy jacket with cropped wide-leg pants, and a halter dress suspended from a stiff Edwardian collar, both in combinations of black and white—are any indication, certain soigné codes will always remain a part of the brand’s DNA, both on the runway and backstage. “Black and white are very Chanel,” Pica says of the inspiration behind Noir & Blanc, her new range out this month. “But I wanted to add a little more intensity, strength, and attitude,” she says, a twisting of tradition that has become her signature.

In her four years on the job, the Naples-born makeup artist, who spends most of her time in Paris these days, has mastered the art of steering treasured Chanel touchstones toward something more modern and cool. Her ability to place pigments where they’re least expected is the stuff of legend. Red for your eyelids? Bien sur! An emoji-yellow nail polish that can flatter every skin tone? Pourquoi non? But with its roots in the cinematic, often stark romanticism of her adopted hometown, Pica’s latest creation is something of a departure. “Paris is the most black-and-white city that you can imagine,” the 42-year-old says, staring onto the Miesian courtyard of Chanel HQ in Neuilly-sur-Seine, just 20 minutes outside of the city. Seemingly makeup-free, save for an intense burgundy lip, Pica taps a
One wipe removes 99% of even the most stubborn makeup. So keep those tutorials coming!

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pair of black over-the-knee boots as she continues to unpack this idea. “You can’t miss the graphic, modernist architecture—the Pompidou, La Défense, La Grande Arche—and the Art Deco ebony-and-ivory interiors,” she explains in a soft accent, adding the pre-Technicolor films of the Nouvelle Vague to her mental mood board. Pica’s challenge, as she explains it, was “to find the colors in the light beneath the black.”

That light exists all over the French capital, in the symmetrical formal flower beds of the Jardin du Luxembourg and the cobbled alleys of Le Marais, which Pica carefully studied before conceptualizing a single eye-shadow palette. Her creative process relies on documenting her surroundings with an outsider’s eye—reflections on the Seine at night; a honeycomb shadow on naked flesh—in partnership with a different photographer every season. “Then I look at the colors, asking, ‘Which will make a good lipstick or eye shadow?’” Just as Coco surrounded herself with Picabia, Cocteau, Bakst, and Stravinsky, Pica moves in a creative clique that led her to Los Angeles–based photographer Max Farago and his wife, the director Clara Cullen. Over four days, the trio buccaneered around the Left Bank, capturing an abstract vision of the bohemian enclave, before rewarding themselves with a little organic wine and cheese at La Cremerie, Pica’s local.

“I like these morbid colors,” she says, flipping past an image of a wilted tulip that inspired the deep mauve of Rouge Obscur, one of two Velvet Extreme lipsticks in the line, which she layered on Ceretti underneath that high-shine licorice stick, aptly called Laque Noire. “I think this could look good on everyone,” she continues of the deceptively dark, black-cherry color.

Le Gel Pailleté, a bouncy transparent cream with a gold shimmer, has similarly universal appeal. It can be swept across cheekbones, dotted on lids, or used to create an allover twilight veil à la Romy Schneider’s shimmering turn in Henri-Georges Clouzot’s 1964 film Inferno. “If everybody puts makeup on the same way, we’re all going to look the same,” Pica insists, issuing an open invitation to experiment and underscoring a heritage that she is determined to make her own. “Coco was a rebel,” she says breezily of the woman who gave us the little black dress. But it’s Pica we have to thank for the little black lip gloss. —EMMA ELWICK-BATES
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In the Dark

Two movies question whether honesty is always the best policy.

MOVIES Opening with the brilliant line “based on an actual lie,” writer-director Lulu Wang’s The Farewell is a story about who the truth serves. Nai Nai (Shuzhen Zhou)—a Chinese matriarch whose two sons have emigrated to America and Japan—is diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer and given three months to live. To the shock of Billi (Awkwafina), the American-raised granddaughter, the family decides not to tell Nai Nai about her illness. (Wang’s relatives took a similar tack with the director’s own grandmother, which she described on This American Life.) “Chinese people have a saying,” Billi’s mother says. “When people get cancer, they die. It’s not the cancer that kills them, it’s the fear.” So the family stages a wedding—real or fake, it’s left ambiguous—for Nai Nai’s Japanese grandson as an excuse for everyone to gather. It’s a gift to Nai Nai—an opportunity for her to do what she loves most: boss everyone around. But Billi struggles with the lie. “In America, this would be illegal!” she says. Her Japanese uncle contends that it’s the family’s duty to “carry the emotional burden.” The movie makes mini-martyrs of those doing that carrying, but the performances give this tragicomic tale an offbeat charm. For a story about the benefit of fictions, the truth—that is, the premise—is the most powerful part.

In Share, a sixteen-year-old girl (Rhianne Barreto) wakes up on her front lawn. She has bruises on her arms. Later, in the locker room, her basketball teammates notice rug burn-like markings on her back. A cell-phone video circulates: Mandy passed out in the bathroom at a party. Several boys are behind her, laughing. In writer-director Pippa Bianco’s atmospheric feature-length debut, Mandy spends the rest of the movie puzzling out what happened to her and what to do about the uncertainty. This is a story without villains or heroes, steeped in empathy and the cringe-y awkwardness of adolescence. When Mandy’s mom (Poorna Jagannathan) discovers the video, she is persuaded that the worst has happened, and insists that Mandy report it. “You are lucky in all the ways you were unlucky,” she says, “because there is proof and people could see it.” But they can’t see it, there isn’t proof—and alcohol has eroded the hideous picture. That’s the important gray area this discomfiting movie courageously explores: the perils of coming forward in a world that still penalizes survivors of sexual assault in ways big and small.—FRANCESCA MARI

Blue in the Vase

“I put this vase by my bed this morning and filled it with white hydrangeas,” says J. J. Martin, eponymous founder of the made-in-Italy label La DoubleJ—beloved for summer dresses made from prints so dazzlingly maximalist, a spill of Aperol Spritz wouldn’t ruin your day. This season, she’s branching out into bedding and decorative pillows, and adding to her current offerings of china, created with Veronese porcelain-makers Ancap—“one of the last suppliers who does everything within Italy,” Martin says. And should you really fancy this vase’s Wildbird print, Martin has also splashed it onto sheets, bedcovers, and, yes, her dresses. It’s never been easier to double up on La DoubleJ.—LILAH RAMZI
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Spin Machine

In Mika Rottenberg’s new solo show, the artist presents a dizzyingly intelligent—and entertaining—vision of our technology-driven world.

To see the video installation *NoNoseKnows* by Mika Rottenberg—part of the Argentinean-born, New York–based artist’s solo show at Manhattan’s New Museum—you will need to pass through a claustrophobic space meant to evoke the factory-like settings where workers cultivate pearls by the thousands, using knitting needles to deposit particles of matter into bivalves. The ambience is meant to heighten what Rottenberg depicts on-screen: the meticulous, mind-numbing, and mechanistic work that goes into creating a thing of ostensibly organic beauty.

It’s difficult to describe a Rottenberg work without making her sound a bit didactic. She’s concerned with labor, the means of production, and the effects on women’s bodies—but in a funny way! (It’s no accident that the New Museum exhibition, which opened last month and runs through September, is titled “Easypieces.”) If she has a vision of geopolitics and capitalism, it’s a fluorescent, almost slapstick one: She sends viewers through an exuberant Rube Goldberg–ian contraption, a fun-house ride inflicted by Salvador Dali and Maurizio Cattelan and filled with glittery animation. In one 2018 piece, women smash brightly colored light bulbs, and the kaleidoscope-like fragments appear on screens suspended overhead, creating a fractured glass ceiling that’s part feminist protest, part disco celebration.

This immersive experience is also part of *Spaghetti Blockchain*, her latest video installation, which debuts here. The film links Mongolian throat singers, the CERN particle accelerator, a giant potato-harvesting machine called the Spudnik, and ASMR videos—each scene meant to point to the fact that “our relationship with materials is shifting,” as curator Margot Norton puts it. More and more, Norton says, “we experience things through our screens, without physical contact, without touch,” and it is this virtual reality that the work is commenting upon. The video also contains what Rottenberg describes as “a literal blockchain, made of spaghetti”—a phrase that doesn’t exactly clarify what you’ll see. But even if the concept remains a tad obscure, the piece is sure to inspire a sense of surprise and visceral delight. “I like the contrast of the words,” says Rottenberg. “Spaghetti is a soft, wobbly thing, and technology is the opposite.”—CHLOE SCAMA
Eat in peace.
For once.
Southern Discomfort

In her debut novel, Chanelle Benz ponders the legacy of racial inequality.

TALENT

Chanelle Benz is fond of the (probably misattributed) Faulkner quote “To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi.” It explains why she was drawn to the Delta for the setting of her first novel, The Gone Dead (Ecco/HarperCollins), out this summer. “There’s just a wounded quality about everything,” says Benz, who used to drive with her husband through the tiny towns in the region. “It’s just all out in the open in Mississippi.”

A gripping story tinged with Southern Gothic, The Gone Dead follows Billie James, a biracial woman from Philadelphia who moves into her late father’s tenant shack, nestled on decaying former plantation land. An obscure poet of the Black Arts era (modeled on Amiri Baraka), Billie’s father died in the seventies, under circumstances that come to seem increasingly murky. Billie’s investigation takes her through the legacies of trauma and poverty, racial tension and the search for justice. It’s a narrative that Benz, who was born in London and moved to America around the age of seven, is surprisingly well suited to craft. Benz herself identifies as mixed race—her mother is Irish and English, and her father is British-Antiguan—but it was only when she settled in very white Sunset, Utah, as a child that she understood the implications of her background. “My blackness is a newer thing for me,” she says. “It wasn’t until I got to America that I learned that people even thought of my father as black. And it was instantly communicated to me that it was a bad thing.” She studied drama at Boston University, then settled in New York to try to make it as an actress. “I think imaginary landscapes were always my kind of haven,” she says. Writing, however, was “way easier than being an actor. You don’t have to care about what you look like, or your weight, or being typecast.” Benz was commuting four hours a day to a temp job when she got a call from the novelist George Saunders, offering her a place in the MFA program at Syracuse.

The 39-year-old has now made her home in Memphis, where she teaches at Rhodes College. “It feels easier to write” in the South, she says, especially while balancing the demands of a three-year-old son. “Once you have a kid, they are the tyrant and the center of your life.” Benz has also recently reconnected with her father, with whom she had lost touch after leaving England—a fitting personal development for a writer who isn’t afraid to bring up old wounds and sensitive subjects. “There are a bunch of people who don’t want to hear a story like this, because it makes them uncomfortable, because it threatens their sense of self. But there’s a lot of us that do.” —BRIDGЕ RЕАD

Crystal Palaces

Millennials’ adoration of the houseplant is well documented, but photographers Magnus Edmondson and India Hobson have gone even further in their commemoration of interior plant life, publishing, this month, Glasshouse Greenhouse (Rizzoli), a survey of the world’s most wondrous conservatories—bulbous Victorian structures by Joseph Paxton; Singapore’s otherworldly Cloud Forest at Gardens by the Bay. “We don’t think we’ll ever tire of losing an afternoon under a glass roof,” says Edmondson. The same could be said of flipping through this book.—LILAH RAMZI
Surprising, breathtaking, and inspiring, vogueworld is a comprehensive, interactive, shoppable celebration of style around the globe, from pavement to premieres. This new offering from Vogue.com explores the wide range of choices we make to look dazzling on our own terms.
Taking Control

Margot Robbie is many things—a chameleonic actor, an up-and-coming producer, a bridge between old Hollywood and new. Just don’t call her a bombshell. By Irina Aleksander. Photographed by Inez & Vinoodh.

INTO THE BLUE
Robbie appears in Quentin Tarantino’s hotly awaited Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, out this month. Marc Jacobs ruffled bolero and dress. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.
Margot Robbie always thought that once she was a good enough actress, she would write Quentin Tarantino a letter. Just to get on his radar. Or at least to let him know how much his movies meant to her. She was sure people must tell him that all the time. But still. “I’ve always been a huge—huge—Tarantino fan,” she tells me one afternoon in Los Angeles. “I love his movies. Love them.” After Robbie watched the first cut of I, Tonya, the 2017 biopic about figure skater Tonya Harding, which Robbie produced and starred in, she decided she was finally good enough. (The performance would earn her an Oscar nomination.) “So I wrote him and said, ‘I adore your films, and I would love to work with you in some capacity. Or any capacity.’ ”

When Tarantino received Robbie’s letter, he’d recently finished the script for Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, a romp through the movie industry of the late 1960s, which opens this month. Friends who’d read the script had already asked if he’d be casting Robbie in the role of Sharon Tate, the actress, wife of Roman Polanski, and most famous victim of the Manson murders. Then Robbie’s letter arrived. The timing was spooky enough that Tarantino thought they should meet. Soon Robbie was sitting at the director’s kitchen table, reading the script. Robbie is a careful reader; it took her four hours. Tarantino would occasionally pop in to offer her food or a Victoria Bitter, an Australian beer. When I later ask Tarantino what made Robbie right for the role, he tells me, “Margot looks like Sharon Tate. … And she can convey Sharon’s innocence and purity—that those qualities are integral to the story.”

Tarantino’s film is about the end of Hollywood’s Golden Age, but Robbie, who is 28, has come to represent so much of what’s new. As an Australian soap actress, she entered Hollywood being typecast. She played the bronzed, gold-digging beauty in Martin Scorsese’s The Wolf of Wall Street, the hot blonde explaining mortgage bonds from a bubble bath in 2015’s The Big Short, and Jane following Alexander Skarsgård’s Tarzan into the Congo. But it turned out Robbie wanted more than these roles. It turned out she wanted to put on a fat suit for I, Tonya and to cover her face in boils for Mary Queen of Scots and to produce female-driven projects via her production company, Lucky Chap Entertainment. Part of the charm in Robbie’s Tarantino story is that it—like the film itself—sounds very old Hollywood: An aspiring actress writes a fan letter to an auteur director in hopes of getting cast in one of his nostalgia-loving films. But Hollywood is changing, and while Robbie may have arrived at the end of an era, she is now among the women ushering in a new one.

Today we’re on the set of Birds of Prey, a spin-off of 2016’s Suicide Squad that Robbie developed and pitched to Warner Bros. as an R-rated, female-led superhero action film—a commercialized product of new Hollywood if ever there was one. “I think there’s a perception that a PG female-led action film is kind of considered a chick flick,” says Robbie. At $75 million, this is LuckyChap’s largest project to date, but Robbie seems unperturbed. “Well, we’re on schedule and on budget, which is a wonderful place to be.” In Birds, which is due out next year, Robbie will reprise her role as Harley Quinn, the Joker’s ex. But today she’s primarily a producer. Wandering the set in jeans and a smiley-face T-shirt with two hearts for eyes, her cell phone suspended from a rope in place of a purse, she introduces me to the women who work with her: Cathy (Yan), the director; Jody, the script supervisor; Sue, a producer. We run into Mary Elizabeth Winstead, who has spent the day performing stunts as Huntress, a crossbow-wielding vigilante. Winstead pulls down her track pants to reveal a bruise on her hip. “Shit,” Robbie says. “That looks legit.”

The day’s shoot is at a medieval-style stone abbey in Highland Park. “Sorry I’m not taking you to paint mugs or something,” Robbie says. She’s referring to the tropes of celebrity profiles, the skydiving or skateboarding or whatever else actresses are supposed to do to charm writers. When I say that it is nearly impossible to find a story in which she’s not described as a “bomshell,” Robbie suppresses an eye roll. “I hate that word. I hate it—so much. I feel like a brat saying that because there are worse things, but I’m not a bombshell.”

I’m not someone who walks in a room and the record stops and people turn like, ‘Look at that woman.’ That doesn’t happen. People who know me, if they had to sum me up in one word I don’t know what that word would be, but I’m certain it would not be bomshell.”

Glamorous movie star isn’t really Robbie’s vibe. She laughs easily, curses liberally, and is more likely to opt for a shared trailer if it means making room in the budget for something else. Here she is on the outlandish demands (or so she’s heard) of certain actors to have their bathtubs filled with Evian water: “They must have massive insecurities they’re compensating for.” And on the tribulations of life in New York, a city she has only sampled in stretches: “Fucking A—shit show!” Sophia Kerr, Robbie’s childhood friend and now—business partner, who met her as a braces-wearing, emo metal—listening pre-tween in Australia, describes Robbie as someone who “likes a good time,” whether it’s taking belly-dancing lessons in Marrakech, going to see Celine Dion in London, or trudging through mud at Glastonbury. Nicole Kidman, her costar in director Jay Roach’s forthcoming (and still untitled) Roger Ailes film, about sexual harassment at Fox News, calls Robbie a “powerhouse.” “She’s just got incredible ease,” Kidman says. “She seems to be unbelievably mature, and she’s managed to kind of float with everything. She doesn’t seem to have resistance. She’s very powerful in how she approaches her life and her work.” When I ask Kidman, a fellow Aussie, if she sees a difference between her own path in the industry and Robbie’s, she says, “I didn’t have the opportunity to produce my own things or control my destiny like that. So that is definitely different.”

A lot of actors want to be producers, but Robbie seems to actually think like one. On I, Tonya, it was common for
PLEATS, PLEASE

WELL SUITED

Robbie got her start in acting at seventeen, in the Australian soap Neighbours. Dolce & Gabbana suit, shirt, and tie.
BEYOND THE FRINGE
her to skate off the ice to go over locations or to discuss budgets from the makeup chair. When Robbie landed her first American TV gig, on ABC’s short-lived Pan Am, she asked the cinematographer so many questions that one day he handed her a copy of The Five C’s of Cinematography. At home, in her bedroom closet, Robbie has written the classical structure of a screenplay on large swaths of butcher paper, so that she can give thoughtful notes while on calls with writers. Roach recalls their first meeting for the Ailes film, when Robbie nudged him to add layers to her character, a fictional Fox News associate producer. “She just sort of said, ‘I’m not great at playing naive,’” Roach says. “I thought, That’s excellent because a green newbie wouldn’t be nearly as interesting.”

Harley Quinn, Suicide Squad’s baby-voiced psycho schoolgirl on roller skates, is not exactly a mascot for the emancipation of women in Hollywood. But when we drop by the wardrobe trailer so that Robbie can try on a costume intended for the next day’s shoot—a sequined blazer, sports bra, and orange track shorts—I notice that this Harley seems more Sporty Spice than male fantasy. “That’s what happens when you have a female producer, director, writer,” says the film’s costume designer, Erin Benach, who previously worked on A Star Is Born.

“Yeah, it’s definitely less male gaze-y,” Robbie says.

Benach tells me that Robbie “has an uncanny ability to focus on what’s happening in the moment, and when she needs to shift, she can so perfectly shift.” She turns to Robbie: “You kind of have a business mind.”

“God, I hope so,” Robbie says. “Or else this movie is going to fail!”

Birds is just one of some 50 projects on LuckyChap’s current slate. There’s also Promising Young Woman, a rape-revenge thriller starring Carey Mulligan, directed by actress Emerald Fennell (soon to play Camilla Parker Bowles on The Crown); Dollface, a Hulu comedy created by the 25-year-old writer Jordan Weiss; and a film adaptation of Ottessa Moshfegh’s novel My Year of Rest and Relaxation. Though LuckyChap’s overarching mission is promoting projects by women, Kerr sums up the company ethos thusly: “Margot once said to me, ‘Whenever we’re reading things, if your immediate reaction isn’t Fuck yes, then it’s no.’”

The company has just moved its offices to an industrial complex near downtown L.A. Inside there is a pink neon sign bearing the company name, Haim playing at a low volume, and Tom Ackerley, Robbie’s husband and LuckyChap cofounder, a bearded, easygoing Brit in a T-shirt and jeans, perched at the marble island of a pristine tiled kitchen. “This kitchen has been dubbed a Nancy Meyers kitchen,” Ackerley tells me.

“Oh, it is so a Nancy Meyers kitchen,” Robbie says.

Ackerley makes us coffee on the new espresso machine that Robbie hasn’t mastered yet and retreats to his office (“See ya!”). Press isn’t Ackerley’s thing, Robbie later tells me. “He’s usually a very loud and friendly person, but he’s definitely behind the cam,” she says.

The story of how Robbie and Ackerley got together is also the story of LuckyChap. It all began in 2014, when Robbie was in London promoting The Wolf of Wall Street and she invited Kerr, as well as Ackerley and Josey McNamara, a couple of assistant directors she’d just met on the set of the film Suite Française, to the premiere. They ended up partying until the wee hours in her hotel room. In the morning, Robbie had to catch a flight to the Golden Globes. “I was like, ‘Ugh, wouldn’t it be fun if we all lived together?’” she recalls. Three days later, the foursome signed a lease on a house in London. That same year, they founded LuckyChap in their kitchen, and Robbie and Ackerley became a couple. (They married in 2016.)

It’s nice working with your spouse, Robbie says. “We can talk about work all the time. And then work feels like fun. And fun stuff can involve work.” Fun stuff has recently included a weekend glamping in Big Sur and a Boogie Nights–themed party with friends, where Robbie dressed up as Roller Girl (naturally) and Ackerley was the silk robe–wearing drug dealer played by Alfred Molina. “We just get along,” she says. “I think it’s crazy that not all couples get along.”

If Robbie likes a full house, it’s because she grew up in one—as the second youngest of four—on Australia’s Gold Coast, a beachy, surfy region along the country’s western edge. (“It’s kind of like Miami,” she says. “Lots of canals and tacky people.”) Her mother is a physiotherapist. She doesn’t love talking about her father, who left when she was five. “Just because it’s hard to briefly mention without it sounding like ‘My dad’s awful and...’ That whole thing. But yes, Mum and Dad split up.” At seventeen, she moved to Melbourne, to work on a soap called Neighbours, followed by brief periods in Los Angeles and New York, before settling in London with Ackerley, Kerr, and McNamara. The story behind the name LuckyChap? Something to do with Charlie Chaplin. “We were drunk, and no one remembers,” Robbie says. “So it’s kind of like a shit tattoo. I have only shit tattoos.”

When they moved to Los Angeles, Robbie and Ackerley settled on their own, though currently they have Robbie’s older brother living with them, as well as her cousin and her cousin’s husband. “It’s a common theme, isn’t it?” she says. “I hate—hate—being alone.”

I don’t ask her about children. It was Robbie, after all, who made headlines in January by reminding everyone that such questions are not just tired but also sexist. (“I got married, and the first question in almost every interview is ‘ Babies? When are you having one?’” she told a British weekly.) Lately she and Ackerley have been talking about forming a little commune with Kerr and McNamara, and touring double plots around the city. “We’ll be like a cult!” says Robbie. When they looked at one property, Robbie asked if she could have a slide built connecting her bedroom to the pool. “I think that just sums up the person that she is,”
peaking of cults, we are now en route to Musso & Frank’s, significant not just for its status as a Hollywood landmark but also as a pivotal setting in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. The film follows a Western TV actor (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stunt double (Brad Pitt), who live next door to Sharon Tate (Robbie). There are also takes on Bruce Lee, Steve McQueen, and a wild-eyed Charles Manson. And that’s pretty much all I can say. The project was shrouded in so much secrecy that even after signing an ironclad NDA, I was allowed to watch only a portion. Mostly, the film just feels like an incredibly fun party that you know is about to come to a terrible end.

Robbie’s Tate (like her Tonya Harding) is less imitation than an interpretation. Whereas Tate has always seemed ethereal and elusive, like someone in an old photograph, Robbie’s performance is exuberant and in full color, like a match that’s just been lit. Her prep for roles is often physical. In addition to Robbie’s usual Pilates routine, her stunt training ends up being her default workout. For Tonya, she learned to ice-skate. For Harley, it was roller-skating and fight-training. Becoming Tate was more complicated, with Robbie working with a movement coach doing something called “animal work” to accomplish Tate’s lightness and brightness; in one scene, she levitates midair. “It was such a strange challenge,” Robbie says. “I find it much easier to go dark and angry. With Tonya, I wanted to go really heavy, almost like she had weights on her feet. This time I was trying to do the reverse.”

We’re outside the restaurant now, and the air smells of grilled steak, which Robbie inhales like a scented candle. “I’m such a carnivore,” she says. “I’m trying so hard to do meatless Mondays, for, like, environment reasons, but fuck, it’s hard.” Today is Thursday, so we order two filets and get back to the business of working with Tarantino. We haven’t talked about it yet, but *Once Upon a Time* is the first of Tarantino’s films not produced by Harvey Weinstein. It is also the director’s first release since the #MeToo movement and since… here Robbie finishes my thought: “The Uma Thurman thing?”

Early last year, Thurman told *The New York Times* that she, too, had been assaulted by Weinstein, and that her relationship with Tarantino had suffered as a result. She held Weinstein’s studio, Miramax, responsible for injuries she sustained in a car crash on the set of 2003’s *Kill Bill*, and for suppressing footage of the accident that she ultimately released herself. According to Thurman, she’d asked Tarantino for a stunt double to drive the car, but Tarantino insisted that Thurman do it. And there were further details of the director’s quest for authenticity on that film—spitting on Thurman in one scene, choking her with a chain in another.

Robbie is answering this question because I asked, and it shouldn’t really fall to actresses to right the wrongs of Hollywood. The fact is that old power structures haven’t gone away, even as new ones are still emerging. “It would be easier, and so much more unfulfilling, not to have a production company,” Robbie says. “To not hire first- and second-time female directors, and stake millions of other people’s money, and put my name to it and everything I’ve worked for, but I’ve made the choice to do it, and I don’t regret it. On the flip side—and it doesn’t even feel like a flip side—it was my lifelong dream [to work with Tarantino], and I got to do it, and it makes me sad if people might hold that against me despite everything else I’m doing.”

It’s difficult to parse out all the layers here. Tarantino’s film (which will premiere at Cannes several weeks after Robbie and I speak) is about a power shift in Hollywood’s history, one that ended the studio system and eventually created the space for indie masterpieces like *Pulp Fiction*. It also serves as a reminder of the best of what Hollywood can still do—assemble major movie stars for a film by a director with a singular vision, who can shut down Hollywood Boulevard in the middle of a weekday if he wants to. “Quentin told me, ‘You will never have more fun on a movie set.’ And he was right. I had the greatest experience of my life,” Robbie says. “There are some aspects of old Hollywood that are really wonderful and important and should be carried over. Do you erase history because there were some bad parts? Maybe it’s important for us at this juncture to acknowledge the good parts as well.”

It is not 9:00 P.M. yet, but Robbie has to rush home to watch dailies from several Lucky Chap projects currently in production. The next morning she’ll be on set at 4:30 A.M. to perform stunts as Harley, and at the office by 5:00 P.M., for what she calls a “half-day.” Though she spends her workdays watching films by female directors and reading scripts by female writers, when she goes home at night, Robbie tells me, she still likes to watch films like *Snatch* and *Braveheart*. “My love and passion for female filmmakers doesn’t mean I suddenly don’t like male-driven films,” she says. “And that’s an important argument to make—so that men go see films about women, by women. If it’s a good film, they’ll be able to relate.”

Tarantino has never been accused of sexual misconduct or harassment. He called the car crash “one of the biggest regrets of my life.” Robbie tells me she was reassured by this and by the fact that Tarantino had helped make the footage public. “But the thought definitely crossed my mind,” Robbie says, “like, Will people view this decision as conflicting with what I’m doing on the producing side?” “I don’t know,” she continues. “I don’t know how to say what I feel about it, because I’m so grateful to be in a position of power and to have more creative control when that is embraced and encouraged now. At the same time, I grew up adoring movies that were the result of the previous version of Hollywood, and aspiring to be a part of it, so to have those dreams come true also feels incredibly satisfying. I don’t know. Maybe I’m having my cake and eating it too…”

“I’m so grateful to be in a position of power and to have more creative control,” she says. “That is embraced and encouraged now”}

Kerr says. “She will buy a compound on a whim, so that her close friends could live near her and so that she can wake up and slide into the pool.”
SHIMMER AND SHINE

Robbie’s production company, LuckyChap Entertainment, has some 50 projects in the works—including the all-female superhero film *Birds of Prey*, due next year. Chanel top, pants, earrings, necklace, and belt.
GOLD STANDARD

Robbie and her husband, Tom Ackerley, collaborate as producers. "We can talk about work all the time. And then work feels like fun." Versace dress. Couplet rings.
CHECKING TWICE
Celine cardigan, blouse, and skirt. Lizzie Fortunato earrings. Van Cleef & Arpels ring. In this story: hair, Christiaan; makeup, Pati Dubroff. Details, see In This Issue.
NATURAL SELECTION

The fluid lines of this summer’s softest dresses leave lots of room for unfussy sophistication. Photographed by Ethan James Green.
TRAIL MIX

Joined by strips of lace, charmingly mismatched patterns pick up the scramble of textures in the underbrush. Model Imaan Hammam wears a Longchamp dress, $1,165; longchamp.com.
OUT ON A LIMB

Checked jackets evoking the hardy flannel shirt lend a tailored heft to two very feminine frocks. Hammam wears a Dior jacket; Dior stores. Akris dress, $4,990; select Akris stores. Jimmy Choo bag. Alexander McQueen boots.

Zimmermann wears an Agnona jacket ($3,990) and dress; agnona.com. Gucci boots.
SHIFTING THE BALANCE
Zimmermann strikes out on a path all her own in a patchwork blazer, a voluminous skirt of white lace and crepe georgette, and patterned platform boots that can weather the call of wanderlust. JW Anderson jacket ($1,690), shirt ($1,250), and skirt ($1,250). jwanderson.com. R13 boots.
MEASURE FOR MEASURE
Here, a lesson in mixing and moderation: Hammam’s robust florals are offset with somber knife pleats—and finished by rock star–worthy studded boots. Junya Watanabe jacket ($1,420) and skirt ($1,310); Comme des Garçons, NYC.
Just as a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, a printed column dress from Dries Van Noten ($1,775; bergdorfgoodman.com) will always be irrevocably romantic. Giuseppe Zanotti boots.
THERE'S A CATCH
Fringed and finished with lace, a ribbed white turtleneck sheath is the very picture of ethereal poise. Escada dress, $1,680, Escada stores.
SWEATER SET
This scene is all bark, no bite: Nubby cardigans and diaphanous dresses enforce a soft focus. Zimmermann wears a Miu Miu cardigan, $1,200; miu.miu.com. Chanel dress; select Chanel stores. Hammam wears a French Connection cardigan, $178; frenchconnection.com. Michael Kors Collection dress, $1,950; select Michael Kors stores.
SURFACE MATTER
The artfully abstracted floral motif puts this dress firmly in the here and now—while its sinuous silhouette calls to mind days of yore. Alexander McQueen dress and belt: Alexander McQueen, NYC.

BEAUTY NOTE
Give summer texture a hydrating boost. Kérastase Soleil Crème UV Sublime’s nourishing formula keeps curls soft, defined, and protected from the elements.
AROUND THE BEND

With fluted sleeves and a gathered A-line skirt in embroidered tulle, Hammam assumes the guise of a woodland sprite. Giambattista Valli dress; Saks Fifth Avenue, NYC. In this story: hair, Dick Page; makeup, Jimmy Paul. Details, see In This Issue.
Ready for Anything

Dr. Jill Biden is many things: a writing professor, a grandmother, a former Second Lady, and a stalwart defender of her husband, Joe. She’s also facing the hardest campaign of her life. Jonathan Van Meter reports.

Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.
It’s the day after Joe Biden finally announces he’s running for president, and I am with Dr. Jill Biden and her grandkids at their summer home: a rambling, three-story Colonial painted the color of just-washed denim. Nestled among scrubby pines on a tony cul-de-sac in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, it’s a relatively new house, but designed to look like it’s been there for decades—just like the Bidens’ home in Wilmington, which Joe designed himself and which has a kind of low-key, baronial splendor. (“Looks old, works like new!” could very well be the theme of Biden’s campaign—if slogans were brutally honest.) Two very mellow and very large German shepherds, Champ and Major, are asleep on the floor. Naomé, Finnegyn, Maisy, Natalie, and Hunter (25, 20, 18, 14, and 13 respectively), still toweling off from a downpour they all just got caught in on the beach, are tearing into a pile of cheesesteaks. Amid this tableau—one that has all the markers of a Ralph Lauren ad—stands Jill, in black slacks and sandals, with a sweater pulled over a navy button-down. She, too, got drenched and is fussing with her hair. When I tell her she looks great, she says, “You should’ve seen me an hour ago,” and cracks up.

Finnegyn hands Jill a cell phone. “It’s Pop,” she says. Joe is on Amtrak, heading home from D.C., calling with news that his campaign has just raised $6.3 million in 24 hours, more money than anyone else who’s running thus far, and with nearly all of the online donations from individual donors. This gives lie to one of the raps on Biden—that, unlike Elizabeth Warren or Beto or Bernie, he hasn’t cultivated a grassroots donor base, today’s must-have political commodity that signals you are not a swamp creature, beholden to lobbyists, bankers, and corporate bigwigs. Joe is ecstatic, and I can hear him from halfway across the room. Jill walks toward me and holds out the phone, with her husband now on speaker. “Hey, pal!” he shouts to me, and then he reiterates the news. Jill pipes up. “Even I made a contribution!” There is a long, baffled pause on the other end. “I’m kidding!” says Jill, laughing. “I’m your contribution!”

People can argue endlessly over Joe Biden’s electability—whether he’s too old, not sufficiently progressive, or the wrong kind of white man for this political moment—but let’s get one thing settled. Dr. Biden, 68, an English professor with four degrees and five grandchildren, would be not only the most intriguingly reluctant First Lady—with a career she has no intention of giving up—but also the most surprisingly fun-loving person ever to hold that title. Jeremy Bernard, President Obama’s social secretary, describes her as “a gem—my favorite person” from his time in Washington. “She is consistently warm and wonderful, never seems to have a bad day. Joe is a great retail politician, but she is probably his biggest asset.” Mary Doody, a former assistant dean at Delaware Technical Community College, where Jill taught for many years, says, “She’s a practical joker. And so funny and irreverent.” Indeed, Dr. Biden’s eyes are lit with mischief, like she’s constantly searching for something to make sport of. You find yourself hoping she’ll get punchy just so you can hear her laugh some more.

Unfortunately for Dr. Biden, there hasn’t been much to laugh about lately. Just a week after my time with her in Delaware, the Biden campaign cracked into full swing while Jill launched a book tour for her just-released memoir, Where the Light Enters: Building a Family, Discovering Myself. The title alone gives you a sense of how gentle and earnest this book is—the work of someone who has been teaching writing, mostly at community colleges, for 30 years. But the book is also threaded through with sadness—the deaths of Joe’s first wife, Neilia, and their infant daughter, Naomé, in a car accident in 1972; the death of Joe’s son Beau Biden in 2015 from brain cancer—which Jill has to relive in every interview and at every reading. Like most wife-of-a-politician memoirs, it is meant to burnish, not tarnish. But because Joe instantly became the clear front-runner at the very moment her book tour began, and because his complicated record as a senator is suddenly under a microscope, otherwise cheerful
morning-show interviews with the author turned into interrogations—the wife expected to atone for the sins of the husband—and Jill sometimes looked unprepared. In one week she was interviewed by Robin Roberts, the ladies of *The View,* and the roundtable on CBS This Morning. Each time she was asked to defend her husband against difficult accusations both old and new, from the recent reports of Joe touching women in ways that made them uncomfortable to his bungled handling of the Anita Hill hearings 27 years ago. As the week neared the end, Jill Biden said to NPR’s Rachel Martin, “I watched the hearings like most other Americans, and so I mean, Joe said, as I did, we believed Anita Hill. He voted against Clarence Thomas. I mean, he’s called Anita Hill, they’ve spoken. He apologized for the way the hearings were run. And so now it’s—it’s time to move on.”

That last bit set the activist left aflame with outrage and ensured exactly the opposite: No one wants to move on, least of all Anita Hill. Three days later, *The New York Times* published an editorial by Hill. “If the Senate Judiciary Committee, led then by Mr. Biden, had done its job and held a hearing that showed that its members understood the seriousness of sexual harassment . . . the cultural shift we saw in 2017 after #MeToo might have begun in 1991—with the support of the government,” wrote Hill. “Sexual violence is a national crisis that requires a national solution. We miss that point if we end the discussion at whether I should forgive Mr. Biden.”

Hill has said publicly that she did not hear an apology in an April phone call from Joe Biden, and she clearly has not forgiven him.

And yet Biden emerged from his campaign’s launch with a vigorous lead. The huge post-announcement bump in the polls could be attributed to the anyone-but-Trump fervor among a huge swath of the electorate—but also, as Jill says to me, “People know Joe Biden. They’ve seen the strong parts of his character and how resilient he is.” His appeal was summed up by David Brooks in a column in *The New York Times* the day after Biden announced: “Some candidates will run promising transformational change. Biden offers a restoration of the values that bind us as a collective.” He is, of course, a beloved figure in Washington, and many Obama advisers will attest to his decency and tireless devotion to the president, from the way he oversaw the withdrawal from Iraq to his ability to work with Republicans in Congress to get a stimulus deal done in 2009.

(Even so, many can’t fully commit to his candidacy. Of the 53 former Obama aides interviewed by *The Washington Post,* only eight were committed to Biden, while eleven have committed to other candidates; 34 said they were still waiting to decide.) This promises to be the most difficult election of our lifetimes, and it’s far too early to know whether Biden will fade, Jeb Bush-style, or ride a wave of deep, anguished yearning for things to return to normal in Washington—even if that means turning back the clock to the establishment-moderate era of politics that he personifies.

Indeed, watching Biden struggle with not-quite-apologies while his wife struggles to defend him puts many people in mind of the Clinton ’90s. You might say this is a strategy that looks old and doesn’t work like new. Spend ten minutes on Twitter, and it becomes clear that if Joe does eventually emerge as the nominee, there will be those who see Biden as everything that has been wrong with the Democratic Party—and what led us to Trump. As the prominent feminist writer Rebecca Traister put it to me, “He has represented everything I have disliked about my party over the past five decades.” She then enumerated his failures: mismanaging the Anita Hill hearings, backtracking on school desegregation, helping to write the 1994 crime bill, voting for welfare reform, objecting to the Freedom of Choice Act, describing Obama as “clean and articulate.” “He’s not a bad person. It’s just this comfy white paternalism.”

There’s also this fuzzy perception that Biden has been running for president since the Nixon years, when, in fact, he ran twice, 20 years apart—in 1988 and 2008. He got out early both times—first because of evidence that he plagiarized speeches and then, in ’08, because he came in fifth in the Iowa caucuses, getting less than 1 percent of the vote, just as the Clinton/Obama juggernaut obliterated everyone in its path. When I first sit down with Jill in late April, she seems to intuit that things could get ugly. “I definitely know that there’s going to be pressure on the family,” she says as her grandchildren all settle on the screen porch, entanced by phones and laptops. “They know it—this isn’t new to us. There has been pressure before. We know what we’re getting into . . . .” Here a look of concern crosses her face, as if to acknowledge how radically the norms and rules have changed (or have ceased to matter) in the Trump era—borne out most ominously with the revelation that Trump thinks it’s perfectly appropriate to have the Department of Justice investigate Joe Biden’s son Hunter, who was a board member of a gas company in Ukraine while his father was vice president. “We also don’t know what we’re getting into.” She pauses.

“We don’t know what’s to come. And so because Joe is the front-runner he’s going to be attacked from now until the primaries and caucuses. I don’t know that you can ever be ready for it. I think Joe and I are used to the criticism, maybe, but I’m hoping that they don’t criticize my kids. I hope that people are decent about that. I know Joe will be decent. He will not be bad-mouthing other Democrats.”
I bring up the miraculously diverse field of Democratic presidential candidates. “I think it’s great,” says Jill. “I think maybe now more people will get involved in politics. Because if you have to think of a positive effect of Trump, that could be one of them: that more people have said, ‘Hey, we’re not going to put up with this.’ And thank God more women are running. And they’re interesting and they’re doing it for the right reasons. If you have to find the silver lining, that’s it.”

But, I say, these primaries can be—”

“Vicious,” she says. “Yes, they are. We’ve had a bite of that apple.”

The next morning, I head back to the house at 9:00 a.m. and notice a plaque hanging above the front door that I missed the day before in my rush to get out of the rain. It reads a promise kept, and I assume it must have a political connotation, given that keeping promises is pretty much your life’s work if you’re the longest-serving U.S. senator in the history of Delaware. “The promise kept was actually this house!” says Jill, laughing. Joe put up that plaque, she says, “because he kept saying, ‘When I write my book, I’ll buy you a beach house.’” (The Bidens signed a reported $8 million three-book deal at the end of the Obama administration, making such a thing possible.)

This morning, Jill’s wearing pale-blue skinny jeans that match her eyes, a clingy cream-colored cashmere sweater, and platform wedge sandals that lace up her ankles. She is tan and blonde, with a tangle of fine gold chains around her neck. She tells me this was the first house they looked at, and she knew instantly it was the one. But Joe thought it was too expensive and wanted to see more. “He loves to look at houses,” says Jill. “It’s one of his things.” They checked out two dozen more, and each time, Jill leveled him with a look: “Joe . . . you already know the house I like.” Finally someone on his staff said, “For God’s sake, just buy her the house she wants!” and he did. “I wanted it to be the kind of place where you can come in in your wet bathing suit and bare feet and I can just take the broom and brush out the sand. And that’s what this is. Everything’s easy.”

The downpour of yesterday has turned into gale-force winds, and they are rattling windows and whistling through the pines as we sit in the living room. We’ve been talking about whether Jill is ready for the grind of the campaign trail and then, teasing her, I say, “Do you have all your outfits together?” She shrinks with a combination of disbelief and delight: “Oh, my God! My outfits!” And then she plays along. “I’m going to Pittsburgh on Monday for Joe’s first rally, so I have to have an outfit for that, and then tonight I’m giving a speech in Miami and have to have a fancy outfit.” She bats her eyelashes. “I have a pretty pink dress with sequins at the bottom.” It’s easy to see how Jill Biden might not be so easily restrained by protocol were she to become First Lady.

On the other hand, maybe there’s never been anyone who’s been so close to the Sturm und Drang—the sacrifices and drudgery—of the highest offices in the land for so long. For eight years, she lived in the Naval Observatory, the vice president’s residence, just three miles from the White House, where Joe Biden had breakfast with then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton every week. She describes her relationship with Michelle Obama, with whom she worked very closely supporting military families, in glowing terms. “We leaned on one another. Michelle and I traveled together with our Joining Forces initiative. It was like no other administration, and I think Americans felt that—they felt the love, they felt like, Hey, this is solid.” Jeremy Bernard agrees. “It was so clear—it was real. I remember one day the Bidens were already in the Blue Room for something, no cameras around, and Michelle came in and they were laughing and talking, and then the president walked in, and Jill is facing the other way, and he put his arms around Jill and she didn’t even look up—she knew it was him, and they’re all joking. And I remember thinking. Nothing like this ever happened with Reagan and Bush.”

I first interviewed Jill Biden ten years ago, in September 2008, just two months before Obama’s historic election. I spent several hours hanging around the Biden house in Wilmington, with the whole clan wandering in and out, the grandkids (then 2 to 14 years old) playing on the verdant lawn that slopes down toward the pond. That day, Jill recounted my favorite political anecdote of all time. We were talking about how her enthusiasm over Joe’s running for president has waxed and waned over the years. She told me that when George W. Bush won reelection in 2004, she wore black for a week because she was “so despondent about the fact that things would be the same for the next four years” and that when she came out of mourning she told Joe he had to run in 2008. “I said, ‘You’ve got to change this. I was the one who pushed him in—of all people! Because, believe me, he wanted to run before this, many times, and it was . . . no, absolutely not! No. And in 2004, you don’t know how many people tried to get him to run. And I can remember one day, there was a group of people here, and they kept pushing and pushing and pushing. And finally, I was so mad. I was sitting out at the pool in a bikini and got a Magic Marker and I wrote no on my stomach, and I walked into the library. That got his attention. I won’t tell you who was sitting in that room, but they got the message.”

Joe Biden had every reason to think he should run for president in 2016, but many people thought it was Clinton’s turn—including Obama himself. As late as October 2015, Joe was still wrestling with the decision, partly because, as we learned from Maureen Dowd, it was Beau Biden’s dying wish for his father to be president, at long last. Beau died in May after being sick for close to two years. “He kept going for chemotherapy and radiation, and we kept waiting for him to turn the corner and get better,” Jill says. Her eyes well up with tears. Presidential campaigns are tough because you’re attacked by your opponents, of course, but they can be excruciating for someone like Jill, an admitted introvert, who must excavate her pain on a daily basis. “It’s still taking me out,” she says.
“There’s not a day that I don’t think about him. And I think Joe felt like he lost a part of his soul. You have to remember, when Neilia and Naomi were killed, Joe pulled the boys in even tighter because they survived the accident. When I came into that relationship, I saw how strong that bond was and how dependent the three of them were on one another. It was like this tight little circle. And they let me in.”

Jill says Biden eventually decided that a father in such acute grief was in no shape to run for president, a decision, she tells me, he doesn’t regret in the slightest. Ironically enough, it was at a funeral last December when he finally admitted he wanted to launch a campaign for 2020. “He was really hesitant,” Jill says. “And there was a lot of pressure. Fund-raisers were calling. People were calling him from all over the world, not just in the U.S. At one point, I said, ‘Joe, you have to make up your mind.’ Because otherwise, I thought it would damage him; people were getting their hopes up. And so we went to George [H.W.] Bush’s funeral in D.C., and afterward I said, ‘Joe, let’s just go out and have a nice lunch.’ We went to BlackSalt, and I said, ‘It’s getting too close, people are thinking about announcing; you’ve got to make up your mind.’ And he looked at me and he said, ‘I want to be president.’ And that was the first time he said so and that I actually knew. It’s one of those things where you put your foot into a stream that is moving so quickly.”

Bush’s funeral in December was, among other things, a bipartisan cavalcade of old, establishment Washington, and all of that somber camaraderie had the unintended effect of making even some of the staunchest liberals long for a gentler past. Did it affect Joe that way? I ask. Is that what made him finally decide? “I don’t know,” says Jill, and then ponders the thought. “Maybe being there with former presidents? Maybe just seeing the decorum of it, the respect, the dignity afforded the former president? So I think . . . maybe . . . what it used to be, what it used to feel like, when there was decency in politics. . . .”

She trails off, and then suddenly one of her staffers comes into the room and hands her a cell phone: “It’s Joe.” They talk for a minute, and I take the opportunity to quickly eat the small bowl of fruit salad that Jill made and that has been sitting untouched in front of me for over an hour. “Mmm-hmm . . . all right . . . love you . . . bye-bye.” She hangs up, and stares at me for a second and then starts to laugh. “My God, you’re shoveling it in! Eat slowly. Before you choke. Just take your time.” She’s laughing harder. “Joe does the same: eats too fast while he’s standing! I say, ‘Siiiit dooown. This is a meal.’” What was Joe calling about? I ask. “He just wanted to say he loved me before I get on the plane to Miami today.”

There’s lots of cheerful, contemporary art on the walls, including an enormous photograph of what looks like a shimmering blue pool, and a huge white frame hanging in the dining room with two vintage women’s bathing suits—one red, one blue—floating under the glass. There are also lots of enlarged family photographs, including one of Jill and her sister-in-law, Valerie Biden Owens, that has an eighties vibe. They both have numbers pinned to their chests, huffing it to the finish line of a race. Jill has been running since her 40s as a way to stay focused and centered. When I ask about the picture, she tells me that she can no longer run because “standing around in high heels for eight years destroyed the pads on the balls of my feet.” She is not one to complain, but this does convey how difficult it must have been for her to maintain a full-time career as Second Lady. “Most nights we had receptions,” she says, “so I would come home from school and I would take a half an hour down, and sometimes I would just be”—she starts to laugh and then flops back on the cushion of the sofa—“flat on my back on the bed getting my head together. And then I’d get up and go downstairs and do a receiving line.”

Jill Biden knows it’s jinx-y to talk about what she would do as First Lady—not just yet. But she does say this: “The beauty of it is that you can define continued on page 116
The otherworldly paintings of Sanya Kantarovsky are influenced by surrealism and symbolism, folktales and cartoons. Dodie Kazanjian charts his singular, searching journey.

SANYA KANTAROVSKY HAS JUST finished a painting. When I visit him in his Brooklyn studio, he tells me that the night before, he had been struggling with a piece he’d been working on for two weeks, and then, all of a sudden, around 4:00 A.M., he had a breakthrough. He painted over it and made a new one. It’s called Bud 5, and it shows a distressed man—one oversize hand held out in a “stop” gesture, the other pointing a pistol at the ceiling. “Bud” is R. Budd Dwyer, Pennsylvania’s state treasurer in the 1980s, who was convicted on bribery charges and shot himself in the mouth at a televised news conference. Kantarovsky, 37, was too young to be aware of the news at the time, but a friend later told him about the incident, and he watched the suicide on YouTube. His painting is based on a photograph of Budd that became famous in the aftermath of this death, in which he is reaching out to calm the bystanders who panicked when he pulled out the gun. “I love the contradiction of this guarding, tender, safekeeping gesture,” he says, “while he wields an instrument of death.”

Bud 5 is not in the show that opened this spring at New York’s Luhring Augustine—Kantarovsky’s first with the gallery—but it is indicative of the kind of contradictions at the center of his recent work. In one painting, a group of adults looks down on a naked, headless baby who is dancing and playing the accordion. “They’re mesmerized by and indifferent to this decapitated future,” Kantarovsky says. In another, called On Them (also the title of the show), a man with a ski-jump nose, wearing an orange shirt and standing in a pool of water, looks skyward as he twists the neck of a ghostly victim.

Kantarovsky, black-haired and soft-spoken, is a storyteller whose stories resonate with dark humor and unearthly
situations. A wild patchwork of influences runs through his work—surrealism and symbolism; Gauguin, Chagall, Ensor, Matisse, and Blue Period Picasso; also folktales and cartoons and children’s books; figuration and abstraction. The offbeat comedy of his work does not resemble what you find in Roy Lichtenstein and Philip Guston, or in Carroll Dunham, George Condo, Lisa Yuskavage, or any number of other contemporary artists. Kantarovsky’s humor doesn’t make you laugh out loud. It’s rooted in Russian and Eastern Euro-

Platelets, 2019.

pean aesthetics, the corrosive, embarrassing, upside-down, melancholy strain that you find in Kafka, Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita (Kantarovsky’s favorite novel), and, for that matter, in the early—twentieth century Soviet satirical magazine Krokodil. “Humor is central to my work,” he says. (The title of the only monograph on his work so far is No Joke.) “Art has never been about morality or about the pure and clean and correct. It’s always been about the grime and pain and totally unfair contradictions of being alive—and humor, very much so, is a kind of pressure valve.”

Born in Moscow in 1982, Kantarovsky was raised by his single mother (who was 22 when she had him) and her parents, whom he adored. They lived in a book- and object-filled apartment next to a medieval monastery not far from the center of Moscow; his grandmother had resided there since she was two years old. His mother and his grandmother taught literature—both beginning their careers when they were just nineteen—and his grandfather was an engineer. “My grandma and my grandpa were like my second parents,” he says. “They were intellectuals, but with no pretension or social ambition. They were really magnetic, and a lot of wonderful people crossed their path and would come over for dinner or just to drink tea and smoke cigarettes in the kitchen.” (Kantarovsky gave up cigarettes when his daughter was born, but he’s a cartridge-a-day vaper.) His mother promised him that if he read unabridged translations of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, she would take him to the first McDonald’s to open in Moscow. He did, and even though he stood in line for six or seven hours, it was a “totally sublime and magical experience.” By the time he was eight, he was reading Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, and Tolstoy.

In 1992, a few months after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ten-year-old Kantarovsky moved to Providence, Rhode Island, with his mother, stepfather, and younger brother. (His mother’s best friend had left Russia much earlier to study at Brown University.) Leaving Moscow, his grandparents, and his friends was a “huge rupture, and still the central trauma of my life,” he says. “So I go to a fancy Jewish school because I’m a Jewish refugee,” he remembers, “and it’s a really intense experience. We have no money, we’re on welfare and food stamps, and I wear hand-me-downs from kids in my class.” His English was virtually nonexistent. In Russia he’d been a ham, and when he learned enough English to be able to make people laugh, it was a “moment of triumph,” he says. “You know you’ve mastered a language when you can make somebody laugh, not at you but with you.”

In high school he sat in on art classes at the Rhode Island School of Design and literature classes at Brown and, afterward, ended up going to RISD. As soon as he graduated, in 2004, he headed straight for New York. There he worked for a woman, Vicki Khuizami, who painted covers for romance novels and made Venetian plaster murals for apartments. Off-hours, she gave him a corner in her midtown studio to work on his own paintings, which at that point were leaning toward illustration. This led to freelance jobs at advertising agencies, well-paid work that he could do with the back of his hand. In 2008 he returned to school—the graduate art program at UCLA. He’d been rejected by Yale, Columbia, and the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. “I only get into places where they don’t have to see me,” he says, chuckling. “No one interviewed me for UCLA.”

Now Kantarovsky and his wife, the performance artist Liz Magic Laser (her real name), live with their two-year-old daughter, Vera, in a Brooklyn town house. He’s the cook and the decorator, the one who does “all the things that women usually do.” They go 50-50 on child-care duties. He also gave Vera her name (with Liz’s approval)—partly after the Russian social-realist sculptor Vera Mukhina, who made what Kantarovsky describes as Moscow’s version of the Statue of Liberty: a huge man and woman, holding aloft a hammer, that have stood, with a few interruptions, at the center of Moscow for close to a century. “Having kids teaches you how to be selfless,” he says, “but ultimately it’s the most selfish thing you can do, right? To procreate. It was quite difficult for both of us to manage time in the beginning, but we’re getting the hang of it.” Having a nanny helps, and Vera is already in preschool. “Vera was far more interesting to me than painting, and she still is in many ways,” he says. “And now I have all these weird Jewish-proletariat CONTINUED ON PAGE 117
Wet Hands. 2015.
PORTRAIT OF A LADY


Remembering Jayne

When Jayne Wrightsman died in April at the age of 99, it didn’t just mark an end to her tastemaking talents and philanthropic prowess. It marked the end of an era. Hamish Bowles looks back at her outsize life.
J

JAYNE WRIGHTSMAN FIRST SAT FOR VOGUE in 1946, arriving at the studio where Cecil Beaton was working only to discover the exquisite actress Vivien Leigh “coming out in this bower of lilac,” as she recalled. “She was so beautiful.” So beautiful, in fact, that Jayne was taken aback when she learned that she was expected to sit on the same set. “Mr. Beaton, I’m not staying here to be photographed,” she declared. “Oh, yes you are!” he said.

Jayne was known as Little Egypt for her dark, bobbed hair (daughter added the quirky y to plain “Jane”). In high school, Jayne was known as Little Egypt for her dark, bobbed hair and sophisticated use of eyeliner—and was already noted for her immaculate clothes.

After high school, she sold gloves in a department store and modeled swimsuits. Her fine-boned elegance and lipsticked glamour caught the eye of playboys and young actors and led to invitations to William Randolph Hearst’s castle in San Simeon. Style icon Slim Hawks (on whom Lauren Bacall based her on-screen persona) described Jayne at the time as “the only extra girl who was respectable.”

It was apparently at a dinner party that she caught the eye of the canny, Oklahoma-born Charles B. Wrightsmen, the president of Standard Oil Company of Kansas and a recently divorced father of two daughters. At the time, Wrightsmen was dating socialite Martha Kemp, but when he was hospitalized for lip cancer, Kemp was off gallivanting while Jayne maintained a bedside vigil throughout his illness. Wrightsmen was evidently moved by her attentions, for when he recovered, they married. Jayne was 24. As a young wife, Jayne burnished her voice into a patrician, Edith Wharton–esque quaver, acquired elegant French, and set about to teach herself all there was to know about eighteenth-century French art by “listening, looking, reading, and traveling,” as she put it.

Wrightsmen was a complicated and difficult man whose first wife and both daughters effectively ended their own lives. When Nancy Mitford met him, she wrote to Evelyn Waugh that “he is the 7th richest man & about the 4th nastiest but I love him, he makes me scream with laughter.” His money-making instincts, however, were remarkable: He taught himself to speak Cajun English in order to acquire vast tracts of Louisiana swamp land for oil prospecting and ventured into Soviet Russia in 1921 for Standard Oil when other American companies did not dare. Wrightsmen overcame childhood illness to become a World War I aviator, a crack polo player, and an avaricious but discriminating collector.

Their 28-room Palm Beach mansion (which formerly showcased the legendary beauty of socialite Mona Harrison Williams) fed his social ambitions. The salt water in their pool was changed daily and permanently heated to 90 degrees—something their neighbor and friend President John F. Kennedy found to be a boon for his bad back. Jayne was the consummate hostess—one who discreetly asked her guests about their favorite flowers, which would soon miraculously materialize in their rooms. Wrightsmen had determined that the only sure way to secure a place in society was through art or horses—happily for us all, he decided on the former. As The Metropolitan Museum’s former director Philippe de Montebello has noted, Jayne’s contribution to the museum was “colossal.”

In less than a decade, she and her husband accumulated such wonders as Louis XV’s red lacquer desk; Houdon’s bust of Diderot; a 1680 royal Savonnerie carpet designed by Charles Le Brun for the Grand Galerie of the Louvre; a brace of chairs signed by Georges Jacob for the royal Palace of Fontainebleau; and Madame du Barry’s rock-crystal toilet bottles, which sat on Jayne’s dressing table. (The Wrightsmans also owned Vermeer’s Study of a Young Woman and Georges de La Tour’s magisterial The Penitent Magdalen, both now at The Metropolitan Museum. There were four Canalettos, an El Greco, and works by Oudry, Renoir, and Monet.)

As the decorator Henri Samuel, of the great French house of Jansen, worked on the decor of the Palm Beach house, the previous interior by Syrie Maugham was transformed—with original parquet de Versailles flooring and eighteenth-century
paneling installed in the rooms—into a Louis Seize mansion framing views of palm trees and tropical flora. (Later, Vincent Fourcade added an almost Orientalist layer of splendor to the scheme with Indian furniture, ottomans, paisley upholstery fabrics, and a seventeenth-century Persian carpet underfoot.)

This elegant, reed-slim chatelaine, meanwhile, was taking her style cues from automotive heiress Thelma Chrysler Foy, another aficionado of eighteenth-century French taste. (In turn, Jayne later mentored ambitious society mavens, including Mercedes Bass and Susan Gutfreund, and inspired a younger generation, including Lauren Santo Domingo and Sabine Getty.) As Vogue’s Horst and Beaton bore witness, Jayne showcased both her figure and her romantic tastes in the prettiest dresses from Christian Dior and Jacques Fath. (She would later dress with Balenciaga and Givenchy and Saint Laurent, with her beloved friend Oscar de la Renta, and with her admirer Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel.) Many of these masterworks—now in the Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art—show that her choices were not always stately: The whimsical 1965 Balenciaga haute couture gown trimmed with translucent fronds of ostrich feather, for instance, is included in this year’s exhibition “Camp: Notes on Fashion.”

In New York, the Wrightsmans moved from an apartment at the Pierre Hotel to eighteenth-century furniture guru Baroness Renée de Becker’s sumptuous apartment at 820 Fifth Avenue, where Maison Jansen’s fabled Stéphane Boudin set the scene. Through Jayne’s offices, Boudin would also covertly help her friend, the First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, redecorate the public reception rooms of the White House with chic and impeccably executed historicism. (Jayne would later work with Rachel “Bunny” Mellon, the First Lady’s other White House style mentor, to visually orchestrate Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis’s funeral service.)

Charles Wrightsman was made a trustee of The Met in 1956, and when he became trustee emeritus in 1975, his wife was elected to the board. The couple created a public showcase at the museum for their nonpareil collections in the Wrightsman Galleries for French Decorative Arts, a series of twelve regal and intimate spaces mostly created from contemporary paneling and an original storefront. In recent years, Jayne, who had been delighted by opera director and designer Patrick Kinmonth’s evocative mise-en-scenes for the Costume Institute’s 2004 “Dangerous Liaisons” exhibitions in these rooms, oversaw with Kinmonth a large-scale renovation of the galleries. As part of the project, Jayne endowed a bursary to allow scholars to research the period’s upholstery techniques and recover the furnishings accordingly.

The Wrightsmans also organized elaborate cruises where visits to historic sites were prioritized. Itineraries were delivered in red leather dossiers, and the schedule, as Debra Blair recalls, was unforgiving, with time slots for swimming precisely indicated. (Lee Radziwill remembered, of a cruise of the Adriatic, that their host would not let them swim in waters off Tito’s Yugoslavia that he deemed “Communist.”)

After Wrightsman died in 1986, his widow blossomed. Jayne’s entertaining was legendary, her guest lists mixing society beauties with scholars, curators young and old, and, more often than not, the dashing scion of a storied English country house. Dinners were served on eighteenth-century porcelain, accompanied by vermeil flatware, and the menus were of an Edwardian refinement and splendor. (At one such feast, I was surprised to see the flotilla of waiters arrive with humble slices of watermelon for dessert. I soon discovered that the fruit’s flesh was an airy watermelon sorbet that had been carefully arranged in a watermelon husk, and that the pips were in fact molded from chocolate.)

I first visited the Wrightsman apartment on Fifth Avenue in 2001. To my great joy, she gave me a tour, and I was astonished by every exquisite thing in it—not least by the embarrassment of Ingres drawings in her private sitting room and bedroom (lately redone by decorator François Catroux), which were propped up on consoles and against mirrors in the manner in which some of us might arrange favorite postcards. (Philippe de Montebello, as The New York Times noted, once looked at an intriguing notebook on a table in the entrance gallery. He asked his hostess what it was. “Marie Antoinette’s last diary,” she told him coolly.)

In 2012 I returned to 820 to discuss an upcoming sale at Sotheby’s of some of Jayne’s legendary jewels. She was perched in her library beneath a portrait of Charles I’s queen, Henrietta Maria. “I love jewelry. Period. Per-i-od,” she told me, and indeed the great jewelers of the age, from Verdura and Schlumberger to Joel Arthur Rosenthal of JAR, created remarkable pieces for her; while her historic jewels included examples that had once belonged to Princess Marina (great-granddaughter of Czar Alexander II) and Helena Rubinstein. “I love all the old photos of the royals in Europe with diamonds going like that,” she explained, using her attenuated fingers to indicate swathes of jeweled rivières and dog collars.

She could be mischievous, too. Bidden to escort her to a London party, I couldn’t bear to wait in the entrance gallery of her flat—glamorously appointed as it was, with a superb Louis Seize commode attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener and a battalion of Georgian Blue John urns on the mantel—and had wandered into an adjacent drawing room, where I was lost in admiration of a Tissot painting of indolent ladies in a high Victorian conservatory. Jayne came noiselessly into the room in blush-pink Chanel couture chiffon. “Snooping?” she queried with a glint in her eye—before telling me everything about the picture and many other nearby wonders.

Having grown up in a disordered household, Jayne ran hers with a fastidious rigor. Her antebellum standards were giddingly high—and she expected her intimate circle of friends to live up to them.
BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Alex Timbers reimagines Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* for the stage and—with songs by Lady Gaga, Sia, and Outkast, among others—a new generation.

By Adam Green. Photographed by Baz Luhrmann.
Baz Luhrmann was born to reinvent the movie musical for a new generation—which is exactly what he did in 2001 with *Moulin Rouge!*, his deliriously romantic mash-up, set in 1890s Paris, of *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*, and the Orpheus myth, with a soundtrack that exploded with modern-day pop songs, lavish Technicolor sets and costumes (by his wife, Catherine Martin), and a hyperkinetic cinematic style that drew on MGM musicals, MTV videos, and Bollywood spectacles.

The motto of this blatantly artificial world, served with a knowing wink (which nevertheless swept us up in its very real, very breathless emotions), could be borrowed from William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “Enough! Or too much.”

In his own way, the brilliant theater director Alex Timbers—whose work includes *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, Here Lies Love*, and, most recently, *Beetlejuice*—was born to reinvent *Moulin Rouge!* for the stage, as another generation of New York audiences will discover when his electrifying, eye-popping, and blissfully over-the-top adaptation of Luhrmann’s masterpiece opens on Broadway, after a smash run in Boston, this month.

“I’ve spent my life taking classics and interpreting them in radical ways,” Luhrmann says, “so how could I not applaud someone taking a work of mine and interpreting it in a radical way? You have to interpret things for the time and place you’re in. In the end, it’s still a tragic opera, but Alex applies himself to it in such a dexterous way that there’s irony and fun and music and emotion.”

Luhrmann grew up in Herons Creek, a tiny, remote Australian town with
a total of seven houses in it, where, he says, “if you didn’t have a good imagination and an ability to create worlds in your mind, you were lost.” Fortunately his family, which ran a gas station and a pig farm, also ran the local movie theater and had a black-and-white TV set (which showed exactly one channel), and Luhrmann devoured a steady diet of old movies, including musicals, with which he fell in love. His mother was a ballroom-named Christian, played by Ewan McGregor—to metaphorically enchant the very rocks and stones to follow him because of his voice: “When our poet opens his mouth, ‘The hills are alive with the sound of music’ comes out of it,” he says. “Whether you like The Sound of Music or not, it’s a giant hit that’s got artistic cred—so it’s a funny, concise way of saying ‘The guy has magic.’” Preposterous or not, the conceit turned the love story between

McGregor’s Christian and Nicole Kidman’s doomed Satine, a nightclub star and courtesan, into a pop fantasia, giving the music its audience had grown up with—from “Your Song” to “Lady Marmalade”—an operatic grandeur.

Luhrmann had long wanted to bring Moulin Rouge! to the stage but felt that he wasn’t the right person for the job—he worried that he was too close to the material and might be overprotective of it. Enter Alex Timbers, 40, a downtown wunderkind who has brought the cheeky, postmodern spirit of his theater company Les Freres Corbusier to Broadway and shares with Luhrmann a restless, playful and inventive mise-en-scène. “When I saw Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, I could tell that his aesthetic and the way he told a story—very high-energy, very theatrical, ironic but also moving—had a certain kinship with mine,” Luhrmann says. “And after I met him, I knew that he would have his own interpretation but also understand the language of the film.”

The biggest challenge Timbers and his team faced was how to bring the film’s hypercinematic exuberance alive on a stage. “We had to create a visceral and kinetic excitement using an entirely theatrical vocabulary,” Timbers says. “We don’t have any of those virtuosic techniques like close-ups and Steadicam and music video–style editing, but you want the show to be able to leap over the footlights—emotionally, but also as a spectacle. So we use a lot of techniques to do that.”

Do they ever. From the moment you enter the theater, it’s clear that Timbers has realized his mandate to make the show—which he’s been working on for the past six years—“360.” It’s as if you’ve walked into the Moulin Rouge itself, courtesy of the gorgeously overwhelming set (by Derek McLane) that greets you: There are hearts within hearts, chandeliers, the stage flanked by a windmill on one side and an elephant on the other. Then out come the corset-clad boys and girls of the night (who come in all colors, shapes, and sizes) and the fashionable members of the Parisian demimonde in Catherine Zuber’s fabulous costumes. The next thing you know, “Four Bad Ass Chicks from the Moulin Rouge,” as the script identifies them—propelled onstage by Sonya Tayeh’s wildly exuberant choreography—are belting “Hey sister, go sister, soul sister, flow sister,” and we’re off to the races. “I wanted to build this exotic, intoxicating world that felt beautiful and dangerous and gritty and sexy,” Timbers says. “It felt really important for the sets and the costumes to use period elements, and for us to be ruthless about that, but to put them in a form that feels contemporary and surprising.”

The seven-time Tony-winning costume designer Zuber (The King and I, My Fair Lady) has done that and then some, tipping her hat to Catherine Martin’s designs for the film without imitating them. She’s even managed to design Belle Epoque finery that allows the dancers the freedom of movement to execute Tayeh’s propulsive choreography. Zuber is also a master of using costumes to reveal character and situation, as with the ornate gown she designed for Satine after she becomes the Duke’s courtesan and enters his glittering world. Inspired by designs from John Galliano’s 2006 couture collection, it features a bodice that looks like a cage and three rows of lacing down the back. “It’s almost like she’s a prisoner,” Zuber says.

Playing Satine this time around is Karen Olivo (West Side Story,
Karen Olivo (above, far left) leads the production as Satine. In this story: hair, Ilker Akyol; makeup, Maud Laceppe and Sarah Cimino; wigs, David Brian Brown. Details, see In This Issue.

YOUR SONG

Hamilton), who brings very different qualities to the role than Kidman, both physical (Olivo is a woman of color) and temperamental (desperate, determined, and down-to-earth, as opposed to ethereal). Aaron Tveit (Next to Normal, Catch Me if You Can), meanwhile, sings like a dream and brings the requisite dewy idealism to the naïve Christian, but with a hint of something edgier.

The story is very much the same as the film’s: Satine is the star attraction at the Moulin Rouge, owned by the rapacious Harold Zidler (Danny Burstein), who is in financial hot water and in danger of losing the club. Christian and Satine meet and fall head over heels, but she has been promised by Zidler to the villainous Duke (Tam Mutu), who can give her the bejeweled life she’s always dreamed of, forcing her to choose between that and true love. Meanwhile, Christian and his pals Santiago and Toulouse-Lautrec (Ricky Rojas and Sahr Ngaujah) are writing a show, bankrolled by the Duke, that is meant to save the Moulin Rouge from going under. Then, of course, Satine has this persistent cough and . . . well, you know.

The big difference in terms of the storytelling is that book writer John Logan (Red) has fleshed out and deepened the characters and the relationships between them. “We looked at the major characters, asked what their backstories were, and tried to figure out how grounded they could possibly be in psychological realism and yet still be heightened in that way that musical theater demands,” Logan says. “How did Satine get to be this sparkling diamond—and what’s the price she’s paid along the way?”

But the boldest change—and in many ways the heart of the show—is in the new songs, which give Moulin Rouge! fresh emotional resonance (and whip the crowd into a frenzy). Along with the familiar Bowie, Madonna, and Elton John tunes, expect to hear from the likes of Outkast, Sia, Beyoncé, Fun, Adele, and Lorde, to name but a few (there are more than 70 songs in the show). To curate Moulin Rouge!’s dizzying playlist, Timbers, Logan, and music director/genius Justin Levine held up in a Times Square hotel room with a digital keyboard, dredged up their musical memories, and took note of what worked. Their taste is impeccable, whether using a song for its sheer exuberance, as with a rousing version of Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance,” or to reveal a character’s inner desires, as Satine does with Katy Perry’s “Firework.”

Logan has been blown away to see how powerfully audiences have connected with the show—and the songs. “I went to a wedding recently, and when the dancing started, I heard half our score being played, which was wild,” he says. “And when you see audience members respond to the songs—‘They’re using that song? Oh, my God! No way!’—you can feel how excited they are. It’s an experience I’ve never had before. It’s magic.”

□
The Ice Creams Cometh

We’re living through an exotic, globe-trotting age of iced desserts—from booza to paletas, from whipped acai to frozen avocado. Tamar Adler has the scoop.

*ANA UHIBB, ANTA TUHIBB, nahmu jami’aan nuhibb al-booza!*

Isn’t that what the kids say these days? It should be. (The phrase is Arabic for *I scream, you scream, we all scream for booza!* Booza is a Middle Eastern ice cream made with ground orchid root and tree resin, and before I go on about it—which I could for a while—I’d like to point out that booza is just one of a breathtaking variety of iced desserts on offer this summer. Whatever nadirs of democracy we’ve reached, we have ascended a pinnacle of frozen treats. Ours is a sweetened and chilled golden age! It is an ice-cream belle époque.

Here is kakigori, a featherlight pile of Japanese shaved ice doused in emerald-green matcha syrup. There are Mexican paletas—ice pops—in tantalizing flavors like cinnamon with goat-milk caramel, or mango and chile. And pints of creamy green Cado, an Iowa-made avocado-based concoction, in seven different flavors. Why not sample whipped acai from California? A spoonful of Italian gelato swirled with tangy cheeses? Or something delicious and vegan—with a coconut base or almond or cashew—delicately flavored with black sesame?

For far too long we have limited ourselves—out of some perverse culinary myopia—to churned dairy products made of at least 10 percent milk fat, less than 1.4 percent egg yolk, and weighing at least 4.5 pounds per gallon. (That is an abbreviation of the FDA definition of ice cream, which is 2,408 words long and makes the tax code read like *Pat the Bunny:* How naive we were! For the record, what we think of as “American ice cream” actually originated in Italy in the seventeenth century and was typically eggless. (Maybe this is why gelato has been embraced here since the 1980s.)

Our horizons are finally expanding. A worldliness has taken hold—the same one that landed ramen and poke in the mainstream—along with a coinciding openness to plant milks and plant-based foods in general. What sentient oat-milk–loving cosmopolitan wouldn’t have her interest piqued by a scoop of tahini-flavored Indian kulfi? You’d have to be from the seventeenth century.

*Are any of them any good?* I’m glad you asked. In the interest of finding out, on the first warm day of spring, I drove to the nearest, largest Whole Foods and bought every non-dairy ice cream I could find (there was an entire case devoted to the category) and logged on to the website Goldbelly, which ships specialty foods—to order vegan ice cream in Asian-inspired flavors from a New York–based company called Noon; four pints from New York’s Tipsy Scoop in fascinating flavors like Cake Batter Vodka Martini (I’ve never tasted a cake-batter vodka martini!) and a case of Indian-influenced ice cream called Malai (from Brooklyn) in cinnamon almond, masala chai, and sweet milk. Portland’s ice-cream emporium Salt & Straw has a whole nondairy line, which they shipped direct. As did the Oregon company SO

**THE ICE AGE**

A towering bowl of matcha-laced kakigori—a Japanese shaved ice finding favor Stateside. Photographed by Waki Hamatsu.
I WAS FIFTEEN years old and perpetually afraid to speak. I hated being tall because I hated being looked at. I never wanted to call attention to my face, because I didn’t believe I was beautiful enough to deserve anyone’s gaze. It was easy to dismiss makeup as superficial. Lipstick, blush, mascara: These were for the popular girls, the ones who never seemed to have trouble figuring out what to say. But eye shadow was mine. Leaning in close to the bathroom mirror before semiformal dances, brushing postapocalyptic shades from Urban Decay across my lids, I found a way to speak loudly—to trade my inside voice for an outside voice at last.

This season’s embrace of these shimmering and matte pigments, in all of their most vibrant hues, suggests the same claiming of agency: From the painterly sizzle of turquoise and melon at Marni to the retro powdery blue at Lou Dallas and Maryam Nassir Zadeh, each gesture offers a portal to another possible self, in another possible world. Backstage at her show, Zadeh called the swipe of aqua from Nars Duo Eyeshadow in Rated R, applied in a wash from the lash line to the brow bone, a “spicy neutral.” For me, the color—fragile and audacious at once—is another bright tunnel back to 1998, when Christina Ricci, her lids painted a glittery sky-blue, lit up the screen in *Buffalo ‘66*, playing a young woman kidnapped by an ex-con. Makeup artist Gucci Westman, who designed Ricci’s look for the film, tells me she wanted to suggest not just a dreamy innocence but also a girl who was “in her own world,” whose eyes could “offer a way out.”

Many of the latest launches accomplish a similar fusion, bringing together girlish femininity and a strident sense of self-possession. Pat McGrath promises that her new EYEdols range—single pots of velvety shadow, each tucked into a pouch of golden sequins—will “infinitely transform” your lids, as a multidimensional amethyst did at Valentino’s fall show. The four palettes in CoverGirl’s new line trace a narrative arc stretching from the nostalgic romance of fairy tales—shades of taupe and rose called Loyalty, Tulle, and Queen to Be—to the grittier evocation of a darker aftermath: the steely gray of Vanquished, the deep moss of Never Again.

Laid out as a feverish rainbow across my glass coffee table, these vivid powders reveal eye shadow’s singular imperative: It doesn’t accentuate the natural colors of our bodies, the way lipstick draws on the red of our lips or mascara deepens the black of our lashes. It summons what the body isn’t—a spaceship, a galaxy, an upholstered Victorian bed. The logic of eye shadow is metaphoric, not metonymic. It doesn’t just bring our faces to the world. It brings the world to our faces.
Wildest Dreams

A trip through rough-and-rocky California requires actor Tomasz Kot and model Rianne van Rompaey to pack a getaway wardrobe steeped in all the drama—and unbridled romance—of the great American West.
Photographed by Peter Lindbergh.
O PIONEERS!
Are they lost—or simply free? Kot and Van Rompaey play lovers surrendering themselves to the thrill of sharing stories. Van Rompaey wears an Alexander McQueen dress ($4,595) and boots; Alexander McQueen, NYC. Wolford tights. Throughout, Kot wears a Brooks Brothers suit, 45R shirt. Church’s shoes.
Fashion Editor: Grace Coddington.
FIELD OF VISION
There’s a wildness—and a joyous exuberance—behind our heroine’s eyes that flickers like a flame.
Louis Vuitton dress and belt; select Louis Vuitton stores.
DARK PASSAGE
The fire blazes on, our heroine’s auburn hair and stormy gaze coming alive with it. A brilliantly embellished Prada shirt ($3,550), top ($920), skirt ($3,950), and belt only add to the incandescence. All at select Prada stores.

BEAUTY NOTE
Add intensity to your look with kohl-rimmed lids. Revlon So Fierce Vinyl Eyeliner in Jet Black’s creamy, long-wear formula easily blends around the lash line for a smoldering finish.
GONE WITH THE WIND
As they band together like thieves in the night, the landscape unfolds for them like a well-thumbed novel. Hermès dress; select Hermès stores. Chloé boots.
The star of Paweł Pawlikowski’s bracing, epic romantic drama Cold War, Kot knows about tumultuous love affairs and great escapes. Growing up in Legnica, Poland, he developed his acting instincts by embarking on a different kind of journey—normally shy, he transformed before an audience. “When I was performing, I could do anything, but I was still anonymous,” Kot explains. Inner reserve was required for the making of the film as well. “Pawel doesn’t use stand-ins, so before my scenes I had to sit in front of the camera for a long while,” Kot says. “It felt as if Pawel was a painter, and I was a part of a picture he was painting.” On Van Rompaey: Loewe dress; Loewe, Miami.
KICK UP YOUR HEELS

Alone but for each other, the lovers share a laugh (and a dance) in the soft daylight. Gucci jacket ($2,900), dress ($4,700), and sneakers; gucci.com. In this story: hair, Orlando Pita; makeup, Francelle Daly. Menswear Editor: Michael Philouze. Details, see In This Issue.
Many-splendored fabrics that evoke the great indoors—from plush velvets to delicate toile—lend a baroque take on pattern-mixing that feels right for right now. Photographed by Willy Vanderperre.
GATHER YE ROSEBUDS
A floor-length Paco Rabanne dress ($1,400)—accessorized with a glinting brooch, earrings, and bag—reveals the burnished surface of a darkly beautiful velvet skirt ($1,230) in model Grace Elizabeth’s perfect study in contrasts. All at pacorabanne.com.

Etro boots. OPPOSITE: Model Seynabou Cissé wears an Oscar de la Renta poncho coat and dress; Oscar de la Renta stores. Bvlgari ring. Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.
ODÉ À JOUY

The playful toile de Jouy motif is also versatile. It’s as good in red, animating an asymmetrical handkerchief hemline, as it is when framed in tidy matching separates.

FROM FAR LEFT: Model Giselle Norman wears a Chloé dress ($2,350) and earrings; Chloé, NYC. Model Make Inga wears a Dior shirt, pleated skirt, and buckled oxfords; Dior stores. Elizabeth wears a Johanna Ortiz dress, $1,750; Neiman Marcus stores.
THE MORE THE MERRIER
A backdrop of swagging gold damask reflects both the power and the easy luxury of the Simone Rocha woman. Model Ugbad Abdi wears a Simone Rocha belted coat, $4,495, Simone Rocha, NYC. Erdem hat, Chopard earrings. Rings by Boucheron, David Webb from Karry Berreby, and Chopard.
CURTAIN CALL

Elizabeth goes full Renaissance woman, balancing the fitful florals of a peasant blouse and short-sleeved kimono jacket with crisp white trousers and lug-soled oxfords. Louis Vuitton jacket, blouse, pants, belt, and shoes; select Louis Vuitton stores.
PATCH PERFECT

While the surface and sleeves recall a romantic past, these artfully layered silhouettes feel far from old-fashioned. Inga wears an Etro puff-sleeved dress ($2,510), sheer long-sleeved top (worn underneath, $440), paisley skirt with tasseled hem ($2,970), and boots; select Etro stores. Buccellati cuff watch. In this story: hair, Luke Hersheson; makeup, Peter Philips for Dior. Details, see In This Issue.
Sound Effects

There’s music in the air this time of year — and a road-ready bohemian wardrobe hits just the right note.
HIT PARADE

Across the country, the summer months teem with outdoor entertainments, among them an array of open-air concerts. In August, for instance, the singer and guitarist Gary Clark Jr. will perform at Brooklyn’s Afropunk Festival alongside the likes of Leon Bridges, FKA twigs, Toro y Moi, Masego, Santigold, and Kelsey Lu.
it however you want. And that’s what I did as Second Lady—I defined that role the way I wanted it to be. I would still work on all the same issues. Education would be right up there—and military families. I’d travel all over this country trying to get free community college.” She also talks about prioritizing preschool and kindergarten. “We need good reading programs, and we need equity in schools. We’re competing in this global market, and the U.S.’s standing has got to get better.”

Biden has worked hard to keep up her dual existence—as a senator’s wife and then Second Lady, all the while working as a writing professor. Most of her students had no idea. She asked that the Secret Service dress like college students and sit unobtrusively out in the hallway, on laptops. This worked. “At Delaware Tech, they simply did not know that she was Senator Biden’s wife,” says Mary Doody. “She kept it under wraps. And when she got her doctorate she got it under ‘Jacobs’; she didn’t use Biden, because she has just always wanted to be her own person and for the students to know her as a teacher and not as the wife of a senator. She doesn’t need that affirmation. It’s just who she is.”

This reminds me of something Jeremy Bernard told me about his second day in Washington. “I remember seeing her at Whole Foods shopping, the night before I started my job as social secretary, and we started talking and she was like, ‘Oh, you’ve got to come to barre class with me!’ There were Secret Service whom she was Senator Biden’s wife wanted at a certain distance, but I don’t think anyone else noticed that it was her. There was never a feeling of an entourage or of seeking any attention.”

Jill Biden is a hugger. In fact, as I am leaving the house on Friday evening so that she can spend time with her grandkids, I keep getting drawn into conversations as I walk through the rooms saying goodbye to everyone, and Jill hugs me goodbye four times. When I arrive the next morning, she greets me at the door with another hug, enveloping hug, and because she has just come downstairs after getting ready for our interview, I catch a whiff of her perfume. You smell good, I say. “So do you,” she says, and cracks up. When I went back to reread the piece I wrote about Dr. Biden ten years ago, I was a bit startled to see that I described her as “a flirt.” Would I use that language today? We both agree probably not and that the long-overdue reckoning of #MeToo has been a great, if painful, thing. We also agree that what once seemed simple no longer does—that harmless intimacy that sometimes magically transpires between two people who don’t really know each other.

What’s fascinating, though, is that when I ask her directly about #MeToo, her answer reminds me of the disappointment that Anita Hill must feel about the Clarence Thomas hearings. “Most women I know have been harassed in some way. And you never wanted to report it, because you were afraid of losing your job or you felt like, hey, did that just happen? I think it’s good that women now . . . have the courage! Because it’s not easy. Because you tamp it down, like, Gosh, did he do that because I gave him the wrong signal, or maybe I was wearing the wrong thing? You always think, Oh, was it my fault? But now women have the courage to say, ‘No. It was not my fault.’”

Jill writes at length in her book about how Joe’s affection took her aback at first. Today she says, “When we started to date, Joe and his family were very touching and loving—always touching the boys and running their hands through their hair—and it took me a minute to kind of get used to that. And Joe said, ‘I just grew up differently; that’s all.’ My mother and father didn’t touch us constantly. I’m more affectionate now. I just sort of slid into his way of being.”

I ask her if she was surprised by the women who have been made uncomfortable by Joe’s touching.

“It did surprise me,” she says. “You know, I’ve been married to Joe for 42 years, and I’ve seen how he interacts with people—but times have changed. And he’s said, you know, ‘I’m going to take responsibility for this, I hear this,’ and he’s much more aware of how he interacts with people now.”

Does it feel like it’s still a problem or an obstacle to his candidacy?

“No. It was addressed and he heard the message and moved on.”

Moved on—there’s that phrase again. And it makes me wonder how much the Biden instinct to look forward, to move past concerns and questions—especially from the youthful, insurgent left—coupled with a perhaps constitutional inability to just say, “I’m sorry,” will haunt the campaign. When I speak to Jill in May, as she is preparing for a major rally to be held, Rocky-style, on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, she is all sunny optimism. “It really does feel different this time,” she says. “People are positive. I think people have hope that the tone is going to change in this country. Even last night at my book talk I got lots of questions from the audience: What’s this campaign going to be like? And I said I think people are tired of the vitriol and divisiveness, and I said Joe wants to bring the country together. Boy, you should have heard the crowd.”

She was just as optimistic ten years ago. That time, as I was leaving the Bidens’ house in Wilmington, Jill grabbed me by the shoulders, looked me in the eyes and said, “If we win . . . when we win, I am going to come to Manhattan and take you out for martinis and French fries to celebrate.” I was pretty sure it was just a rhetorical flourish, an optimist’s exclamation point at the end of a very long day. Sure enough, eight months later, my phone rang and it was Jill’s then-press secretary, calling to see if I was available for lunch. We met at the Blue Water Grill on Union Square, Jill and two or three junior staffers, with a Secret Service security detail dining at a table nearby. As I’m saying goodbye to Jill in Rehoboth, we try to remember when exactly our date happened and what the occasion was. Her chief of staff Anthony Bernal pipes up: “It was the day before your birthday, so it was June 2, 2009.” Jill is impressed by his recall. “We had to go to New York for Ann Curry or something like that,” Bernal continues. I tell her that I
remember hemming and hawing over whether to order a second martini—and we did. She cracks up laughing.

“Well, that’s the most fun, right?”

**DARK ARTS**

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genes that are like”—in a jokey Yiddish accent—“I gotta provide, she’s gotta go to school, what do I do?”

A Rousseau-like mural of a fantasy jungle fills one wall in Vera’s bedroom. It was painted jointly by Kantarovsky and the Swiss artist Nicolas Party—trees and landscape by Party, birds and animals by Kantarovsky. Party met Kantarovsky in 2017, when Liz and Party both had solo shows in Edinburgh. “What I like the most about Sanya’s work,” Party said, “is his ambition to make every single part of the painting, every single mark, have a function, be essential to the existence of the painting.”

On a gray day in late January, Kantarovsky and I are looking at the Fayum portraits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He visits the ancient paintings every time he goes to the Met, which is at least once every couple of months. (“I go when I get stuck,” he says.) He remembers loving the Fayum portraits in Moscow’s Pushkin Museum, when his grandmother or mother would take him there. The Met’s portraits are in the ancient Egyptian galleries, a dozen realistic, life-size faces, looking right at you, that date from the first to mid-third centuries A.D., soon after Ancient Egypt was colonized by the Roman Empire. Placed on mummy wrappings, each one represented the upper-class person inside. “What I find so bizarre,” Kantarovsky says, “is that these faces have dated less than some of the Italian Renaissance and Dutch portraits, and even stuff from the nineteenth century. The most fascinating part of painting for me is that it’s rooted in the idea of continuity—the desire to convey the lived experience of another person. That’s what these portraits do.” We stop in front of Portrait of a Man with a Mole on his Nose. “It’s 130 years after Jesus died,” he says. “It’s insane how fresh they are.” Leaning in close to another portrait, he says, “This guy looks a lot like my former galleryist.”

Kantarovsky’s breakthrough moment came in 2014, with his New York debut at the Casey Kaplan gallery. In the three years since he graduated from UCLA, he’d had a few gallery shows on the West Coast and in Europe, but his work had become “boring” to him. The eighteenth paintings at Kaplan marked a change of course into bold primar-}

THE ICE CREAMS COMETH

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Delicious, which makes cashew milk–, oat milk–, coconut milk–, almond milk–, and soy milk–based frozen desserts. A case of booza from Republic of Booza in Brooklyn, and some Coconut Bliss (flavor: Infinite Coconut), bought at my favorite local supermarket, rounded out my selection. The total pint count was something close to 50. (The counting was done by a seven-year-old. It is my opinion that she was distracted and may have double counted or made omissions.)

On a balmy Sunday evening, after a modest meal of eight pizzas, a small group, including the seven-year-old, her eleven-year-old brother, my son (two), and his cousin (three), plus two adult ice-cream aficionados born and raised in close range of the Ben & Jerry’s factory in Vermont, one writer who is a known contrarian, and sundry other grown-ups gathered in my kitchen. I’d designed

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my tasting with care and discretion. A pretty cream-colored flowerpot full of spoons was arranged at one end of a long wooden kitchen counter and a pad of paper for ratings and reactions at the other. It would be simple to collect responses and draw a matrix of qualities and preferences.

But faced with 50 pints of ice cream, human beings go crazy. There was a stampede. My son absconded with a pint of vegan pistachio from New York’s Van Leeuwen (which predicted this whole trend with its artisanal ice cream served out of a buttercup-yellow truck back in 2008). I lost my notebook—its pages, I believe, were used as napkins. Eventually an adult turned on the water tap and insisted that everyone eating directly from a pint rinse his or her spoon and then move on.

This order imposed, some opinions emerged, which I report from memory. Many of the plant-based ice creams were found too icy. This iciness, some complained, exaggerated flavor. The richest nondairy candidates were made with coconut milk. The issue with coconut ice cream, though, is that its flavor is so strong that all varieties taste like coconut hyphenates. The contrarian declared an adamant objection to the entire category of nondairy ice creams. “Just don’t call them ice cream!” he shouted, feeling, I think, as though language and tradition themselves were under attack.

Technically, he’s correct. According to the FDA, there should be no such thing as “nondairy ice cream.” Why the FDA won’t admit that the definition of ice cream expanded de facto in 2012, when a technique for blending frozen bananas into “ice cream” swept the internet, I don’t know. (I assume it’s the dairy lobby, which is still working on legislation to limit the definition of milk to the product of lactating ruminants.)

As someone with great emotional affection for lactose but no physical tolerance for it, I am blessed with the ability to taste through nostalgia and FDA parochialism. Cado mint-chocolate-chip is as creamy and minty as anything should be. I love Nada Moo’s coconut-based maple pecan—but then I adore coconut so entirely that my mouth starts watering when I’m around people tanning. All the Van Leeuwen vegan flavors, coconut hyphenates though they may be, were near perfect. Coconut Bliss is the most honest coconut ice cream on

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In This Issue
the market. Its ingredients are “organic coconut milk, organic agave syrup, organic coconut cream, organic dried coconut, organic coconut extract, organic vanilla extract.” It is coconut-flavored and coconut-textured, and its self-assurance is inspiring and delicious.

**Are any of these healthier than FDA-sanctioned ice cream?** Have you read the data behind the landmark nutrition investigation the China Study, and its subsequent repudiations and reinterpretations? Have you read the studies tying climate change to cattle (i.e., dairy) and the ones crediting managed animal husbandry and rotational grazing with improved soil quality? Do you know whether agave is as evil as sugar? The long-term effects of organic-soybean monoculturing on the ecosystem? No? Me neither. But I’ve read enough summaries to have concluded that it is unlikely that any version of ice cream should be eaten in large quantities, or that any version needs to be strictly avoided—unless you are also lactose intolerant or vegan or highly allergic.

After we had been tasting various frozen treats for fifteen minutes, it occurred to me that I should have called everything, including official ice cream, an “ice.” According to the authoritative pastry guide *Frozen Desserts*, that is the true umbrella category for all frozen sweets containing water and sugar. *Frozen Desserts* illustrates the larger ice-treat kingdom via an inverted triangle with cream, milk, and sugar syrup at the corners.

Just as I began searching for paper to draw a square, label it “ices,” and write those three in corners and “plant milk” in the fourth, a cry rose from the end of the counter. “This is great!” shouted a Vermont to whom I am also married. “What is this?” he demanded. It was a pint of boozy! I had been instructed by one of Republic of Boozza’s founders to agitate each flavor before serving to achieve maximum chewiness. I’d forgotten, but when I tried to remove the pints of boozza from circulation to padle them in a Kitchen-Aid, all of the tasters formed a human blockade. I did my own sampling and found each already thick, slightly chewy and stretchy, and potently satisfying. I cast aside my attempt to reclassify ice cream and decided to focus instead on learning to demand a creamy, refreshing summer treat in Arabic. No matter what you call it, nothing beats boozza.
Loewe flats, $1,250

For the summer, Loewe delivers us delicate ballet slippers that tell two tales:
The slouchy leather (a napa plongée lambskin) says that you prize comfort above all else—but the fanciful bow bijou (Swarovski) crafted by an Italian jeweler speaks to your need for just the right touch of bling. It’s an equation that adds up to flats that are anything but flat.
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