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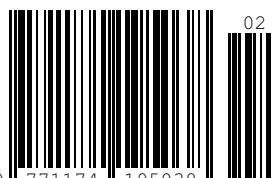
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M2WOMAN

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EDITOR'S *letter*

“Stepping out from behind your own shadow.”
– Alaina Luxmoore, RUSH

Alaina says it almost in passing, right at the end of a conversation about what it actually took to back herself after years of workplaces that quietly and persistently suggested she shouldn't. It works as a conclusion to an article but it's actually really the beginning.

Sara Johnson runs one of New Zealand's largest independent building supply networks and has very little time for leadership that exists mainly as a framed value on a wall. She also says something I have been thinking about ever since. “You shouldn't look at someone and go, ‘I have to be like that to be the CEO.’ It's more about that self-awareness of what you would do and how you would lead.” It sounds obvious. And yet, a great many women have spent years quietly measuring themselves against whoever already has the job. We have been so well trained to ask whether we fit the role that we forget to ask whether the role fits us.

Michelle Herlihy has taken Speirs Finance Group from a \$300 million lending book to nearly a billion dollars in four years, and her

best advice has nothing to do with money, which feels like exactly the kind of thing a good CEO would say.

Wendy Nowell-Usticke built something ambitious, watched rising interest rates, a tightening economy and Cyclone Gabrielle knock significant parts of it over, made the hard calls, and emerged running a cleaner and more honest business than the one she started with.

Korin Balmain has spent over two decades helping organisations navigate the human fear that arrives with technological change, and her most consistent observation, that people move at the speed of trust, is one of those things that sounds almost too simple until it isn't.

Jo Mataira, Chief People Officer at Chorus, describes her work as a combination of people and puzzles, and is refreshingly honest about stepping into an executive role and thinking, quietly, “What on earth were you thinking?” The answer, it turns out, is that you were thinking exactly the right thing.

Alaina and her RUSH colleague Heather Polaschek give the most grounded and

occasionally very funny account of what genuine workplace equity looks and feels like from the inside. Heather's standard for a truly inclusive culture is that it should feel unremarkable. Simple. Demanding. And further away than it should be for most organisations in 2026.

Robyn Galloway, who started Innovative Travel with a phone, a fax and a typewriter in 1990, is somewhere on a Mekong river cruise as this issue goes to print. Some people are simply proof of concept.

Then there is Anne Hathaway, back as Andy Sachs in *The Devil Wears Prada 2*, twenty years on from a film people are still quoting in offices and deploying in dinner party arguments about whether Miranda Priestly was actually the villain. What Anne talks about is not fashion or film or the logistics of a Hollywood sequel. It is about returning to something after two decades of actually living, and discovering that what has changed is not the industry, or the clothes, or the chaos. It is the fact that Andy no longer needs any of it to tell her who she is.

Héloïse Garrity, Editor

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SOUR NEVER LOOKED SO SWEET



A full-page photograph of Anne Hathaway as Mother Mary. She is standing in a dramatic pose, holding a golden scepter or staff in her right hand, which is raised towards her face. Her left arm is extended outwards. She is wearing a long, flowing white robe with intricate gold embroidery and a sheer, lace-like overlay. A large, circular halo surrounds her head. The background is dark with bright, out-of-focus lights in shades of blue and orange, creating a theatrical atmosphere. Bubbles are visible in the air around her.

If you've seen David Lowery's *The Green Knight*, then you know he has an eye for... something. He demands a lot of his actors, none more than Anne Hathaway who describes her role in their new film, *Mother Mary*, the toughest of her career.

"At one point, Annie broke down and said, 'I have to apologise, because I think what's going to come out of me will hurt you.' And Michaela took her hands and said, 'I love you, I trust you.' We were in various stages of that for about a week, shooting that scene," Lowery told *Vogue*.

The film pivots on Hathaway's character, a Lady Gaga type diva, and her strained relationship with her seamstress making her a new dress for her gig in a house that might be driving everyone insane. It's a real trip with big gobs of body horror splashed on top.

Hathaway had to do choreography for non-existent songs, since they hadn't been made yet. Her co-star Michaela Coel described the process. "The physicality she had to learn in preparation for this job – and it's not just us in the barn, it's the crew, it's the producers –

and so, of course, this day was terrifying; a little monster on her shoulder, but no one realised until after the first take. And then to keep doing it – take after take. That requires a lot of strength. Gallons and tonnes."

According to her choreographer, the crew, made up of big German fellas, wept at the end of the shoot that day. Sounds great!



GIVE US THE DRAMA

Guys fighting over Zendaya seems to be a licence to print money in movies these days, whether she's Mary Jane, getting guys to duel on tennis courts, or *Dune* Girl. Now it's Robert Pattinson's turn as they co-star in *The Drama*.

Rising comedy director, Kristoffer Borgli (*Sick of Myself*, *Dream Scenario*) has matched the two in his rom-com, which centres on a pair of young Boston professionals who find their relationship and pending nuptials put to the ultimate test after playing a drunken game of "What's the Worst Thing You've Ever Done?" As stupid little things can do in a fresh relationship, it sends the seemingly perfect couple spiralling into doubt and chaos as they try to make it to "I do."

"You think you know someone, and they can say literally one sentence that maybe they don't even realise they are saying," says Pattinson. "Suddenly, everything has changed, and you can't put the genie back in the bottle."

"In your closest relationships, you should be able to share everything, from how you actually feel to who you actually are," says Borgli. "The Drama is about that idea getting stress-tested between two people who are head-over-heels in love, and who maybe never considered there could be more to the other person. It's about the power of love – an emotional state you don't get to control, and how complicated that becomes when your feelings are at odds with your rationale. When that balance slips, you find yourself inside a crucial dilemma."

Kristoffer Borgli did not set out to write a romantic comedy, or a wedding movie. "The idea for the movie came from reflecting on the ups and downs of romantic relationships, and the quiet negotiations we all make between our emotions and our logic," says Borgli. "I was interested in exploring how love can feel both undeniable and destabilising at the same time." Borgli began writing the movie as a journal of his thoughts. Born in Sarpsborg, Norway, the filmmaker became interested from a young age in how people act in different cultural environments.

Borgli, who currently lives in Los Angeles, adds an additional layer to Charlie (Pattinson)

by making him an expatriate, examining American society and culture through the perspective of an outsider. "I'm from Scandinavia, and while some of the topics and themes in *The Drama* are uniquely American, I wanted to bring a Scandinavian sensibility to an American setting," says Borgli. "Shooting the movie in Boston made sense, because it feels intimate, historic, and human in scale – closer in spirit to a Scandinavian capital than a sprawling American metropolis."

For Emma (Zendaya) and Charlie, going through the rituals of wedding planning, the revelation isn't a deal-breaker at first. "You don't fall instantly out of love when something like that is revealed – it becomes this inner conflict and you begin to see the true image of what you've fallen in love with," says Borgli. "We all carry parts of ourselves that we keep hidden. Secrets, mistakes, fears – things that we worry might change how others see us, even though they fundamentally shape who we are. There's real clarity that comes from living in your truth, but there is also a risk in that. That tension fascinates me."

"Being vulnerable and sharing difficult parts of yourself, including the struggles and challenges you've had in life, can be a great bonding experience."

Borgli wanted to explore how two people in a relationship react when love is tested. "There's no objective solution to Charlie and Emma's dilemma, but we are not our own worst mistakes," says Borgli. "There should be room for error in relationships – and some leeway and forgiveness with the people we choose to share a life with. We can disagree with our own past behaviours and actions, but you still have to be that same person over time."

The Drama co-stars Mamoudou Athie, Alana Haim, Hailey Gates, Zöe Winters, Sydney Lemmon, Jordyn Curet, Michael Abbott Jr., and Anna Baryshnikov.



OnlyFans is so ingrained in our culture now that there are TV shows about it. Elle Fanning, alongside an all-star cast including Nick Offerman, Michelle Pfeiffer and Nicole Kidman feature in this drama-comedy series about a girl whose promising future is suddenly turned upside down after unexpectedly falling pregnant. Elle's character comes from white trash stock, as she's the daughter of an ex-Hooters waitress (Pfeiffer) and ex-pro wrestler (Offerman).

The father of her baby is not someone she wants anything to do with, and bills are mounting up, so she turns to the one thing she thinks might turn her a quick buck, OnlyFans.

Rufi Thorpe wrote *Margo's Got Money Troubles* in 2024, and the manuscript quickly got snaffled up shortly after its release. "I got my hands on [the book] and got to read it early on and was so taken with it," Fanning told *Elle* (the magazine, not herself). "I could see how it could be made into just a fantastic show."

Offerman had already read the book, so getting him to sign up to the project didn't take any effort at all.

You could draw loose similarities to Margaret Qualley's standout show, *Maid*. Both are based on books, except *Maid* is based on a true account and is, frankly, sorta harrowing as reality normally is. *Margo*, on the other hand, is a little more light-hearted while dealing with dire circumstances, and has moments where *Elle's* Margo reconnects with her Mum and estranged Dad in sweet ways, as he shows her the ropes of showmanship despite being uncomfortable with her new career choice.



The show is about family, and destigmatising sex work in a crushing gig economy. It's touching and snarky.

Speaking of Qualley, Fanning had to consult her for her breastfeeding scenes. "I'm kind of flat," Fanning laughed to *Elle*. "We had to pad me up. I talked to [fellow actress and friend] Margaret Qualley about that because I knew she wore fake prosthetics for *The Substance*. I was like, 'How does this work?' We were tracking a lot of boob sizes for everyone."

Fanning has a fresh new production house she runs with her sister Dakota, Lewellen Pictures, named after their family dog. This project was also supported by A24, which always knows a good production when they see one. Her ability to pull together so much talent for this project shows their dedication to making something so truly excellent, Fanning had to star in it herself.

"Some projects, when you go into an adaptation process, you see the seed of a good series that you can add to – maybe a zig here or a zag there," says showrunner David E. Kelley. "But, with this book, the architecture was very sound. The characters were well-drawn. They were people I wanted to spend time with, and that's why I dived in."

"For viewers, it's going to be very hard to say goodbye to these characters – if we do our jobs right," Kelley says. "Because they're going to feel like family members."



FOLLOWING THE DOTS INTO YAYOI KUSAMA'S EXPLODING MIND

You're in Tokyo, you've done teamLab, marvelled at the fish market and hung out with The Strangers rockabilly group at Yoyogi Park. You've also heard some Chicago-style blues at an Ebisu bar, sung karaoke in an obscure booth with some other random travellers and petted a cute bundle of fur in a cat café. What other uniquely Japanese things can you do here that you can do absolutely nowhere else on earth?

WORDS BY CY SINDERSON



How about checking out a museum dedicated to the ultimate Japanese artist who not only showcases her brilliant art but gives you an up-close view of what made her so iconic?

THE POLKA DOT LADY

You've seen the dots. On a tote bag in Parnell, as a backdrop for some art-house rap poet on TikTok or spray-painted on a pumpkin in your mate's seriously modern flat. Yayoi Kusama, a.k.a. the "Polka Dot Lady", is less an artist now and more a global brand – she's currently in a co-pro with Louis Vuitton, selling \$5,000 dotted handbags. The ultimate transformation of radical into commercial. Yayoi won by becoming the system, yet she made her name in New York in the late '60s hanging out with Andy Warhol and all the crazies from his Factory including The Velvet Underground.

Back in the Psychedelic Mist, she often exhibited with Warhol and their contemporaries like Claes Oldenburg, Donald Judd and Eva Hesse. Yayoi had a difficult relationship with Warhol, regularly accusing him of copying her use of repetition while there were obviously a lot of similarities in their use of colour too. Who was first to do this or that is difficult to deduce now but it's safe to say, they probably both heavily influenced each other. Warhol had his 15 minutes of fame back in the '60s and '70s while Yayoi is still going strong 60 years later.

YAYOI'S MUSEUM

Yayoi Kusama herself is the quintessential Japanese: equal parts brilliant, innovative, quirky and completely insane. Her museum in Tokyo's business capital of Shinjuku is totally worth the trip as, not only do you get

a retrospective of her work/descent into craziness, but it also helps you understand the mind of a genius.

Like much of Tokyo's buildings, the Yayoi Kusama museum is narrow and tall, several floors high. Inside, it's a bit cramped but you can follow Yayoi's work through her ages; starting with the dark sable-toothed phallic nightmare of her youth. As you climb the narrow stairs, each level is brighter, more positive, more insane – yet more pleasing to these ever-widening, more disturbed eyes. Each layer features newer paintings; vast, meticulous, hypnotic nets of colour that feel less like art and more like direct neural uplinks from an endlessly repeating mind. But it isn't just decoration; it's a manifestation of a psyche that has stashed, for decades, that it uses art as a means to fight off mental collapse.

On the top floor is a replica of Yayoi's bedroom. You have to queue to get into this room as it can only handle a few visitors at a time. You are also only allowed to be in there for about a minute but it's enough to get a clear glimpse into Yayoi's mind.

This bedroom is covered in Yayoi's famous dots – but they're distorted the further away they are from her bed. To me, it seemed like the whole room was designed to capture that one moment in time when Yayoi had her magical polka dot "vision". If you look at the walls, ceilings and floor from the doorway, all the dots are elongated. But if you look around you from the bed area, they're all just normal dot-shapes. The impression I got from being in that room was that one night, Yayoi was sitting on her bed when suddenly, all these coloured dots exploded out of her mind and splashed all over the room. A recording of Yayoi's madcap singing playing in the background while you are in her bedroom leaves no further questions to be answered. In

that moment, I really felt like I understood her mind – what she went through if not the why.

POSITIVELY CRAZY

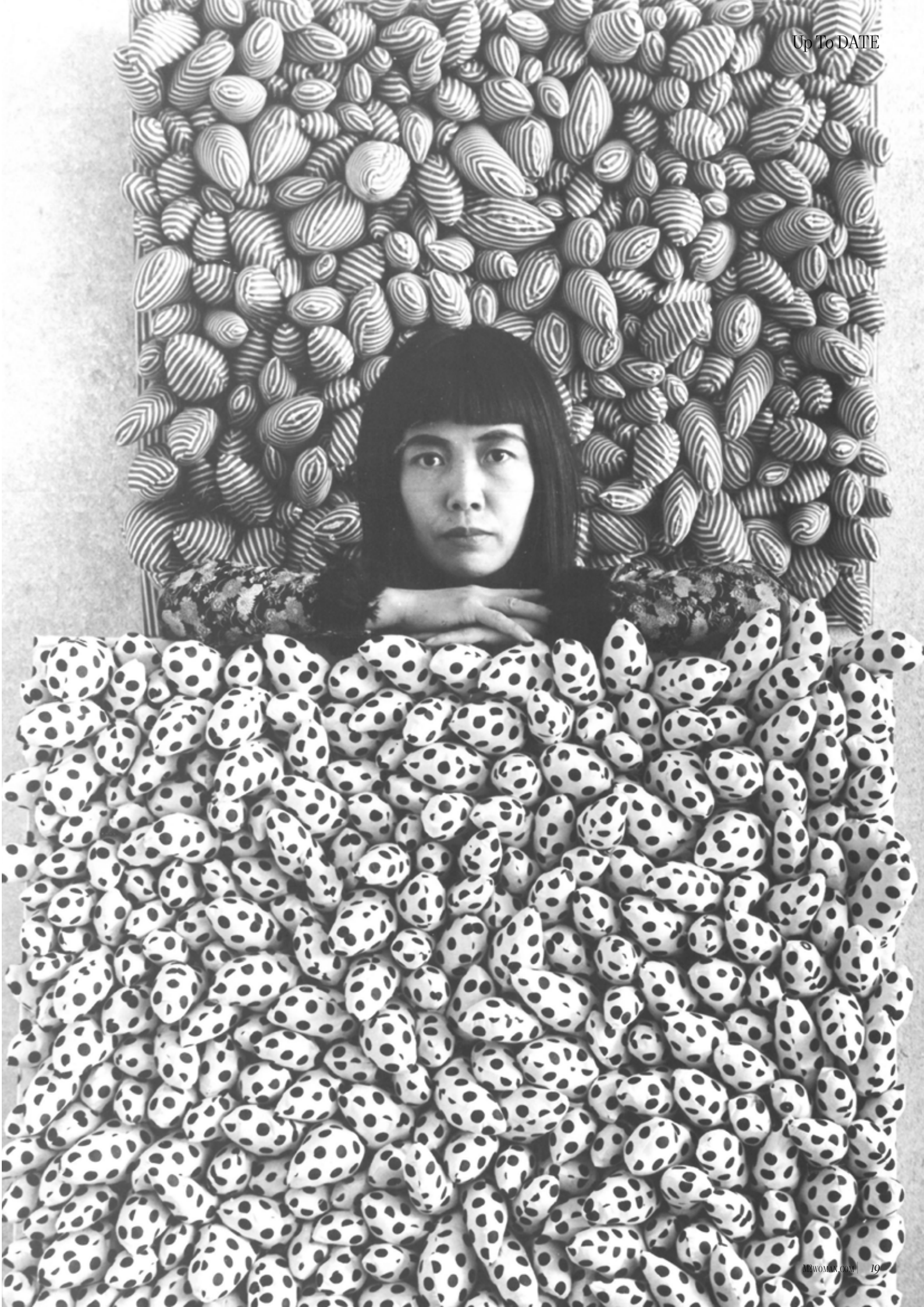
Yayoi didn't choose her dots; they chose her – a visual hallucination that became her life's work. But instead of an ultimately self-destructive torment like Van Gogh, Kusama's has been relentlessly productive. She's built an entire universe from her fixations; even checking herself into the psychiatric institution next door, where she's lived since the '70s – making the asylum both her home and her headquarters. Nuh-uh, that ain't tragic; that's a power move!

GETTING THERE

Getting to Yayoi's museum is not easy by any stretch – but ultimately, I promise it's worth it as it's not like any other experience I've ever had. First, the logistics, because they're certainly not designed to encourage the spontaneous! You can't just rock up on the spur-of-the-moment, you need a ticket booked literally months in advance. I'm not joking; May tickets go on sale at 10am on March 1st and you'll get a 90-minute slot, so make sure you turn up – on the dot.

Getting there courtesy of Tokyo's insanely efficient metro system is not too bad; jump on the Tozai Line and it's a few minutes walk from either Waseda or Kagurazaka Stations. Or you can get off the Oedo Line at Ushigome-Yanagicho Station for an even shorter walk. The whole neighbourhood is pretty studenty with the Waseda University nearby, which means plenty of blaring K-pop, cheap beer, kimchi stew and bookshops to prowl through. Make a day of it, let Yayoi get inside your mind too.





THE GIN CORNER

Each issue, Tim Warren, our untamed reviewer of all things that make life wonderful, turns his attention to the bountiful New Zealand gin scene.

LITTLE BIDDY – AMBER GIN

Little Biddy Amber Gin from Reefton Distilling showcases their beautiful bottle design. The spirit presents a bright aroma of citrus and juniper, and a pour reveals a silky texture. On the palate, the gin offers robust juniper notes and subtle pine-citrus. This potent spirit delivers strength and depth when neat and the addition of a mixer opens up the flavour profile. Orange, lemon, and warm ginger notes emerge. A balanced blend ensures no single ingredient dominates.

This gin suits a classic martini or a simple soda mix, bridging the gap between nuance and power. The complex character will appeal to all, especially enthusiasts with curious palates. It possesses the versatility to stand as a solo pour or enhance any cocktail choice. This amber gin demands attention through quality and craftsmanship. The liquid evolves with every sip, rewarding the patient drinker.





LITTLE BIDDY – SPICED APPLE

This new release offers a stylish and unique drinking experience. The initial pour reveals a light nose with subtle hints of Christmas. Warmth grows through the palate from the first sip, peaking with a late-palate heat. The flavour profile leads with spice rather than immediate fruit. Complex and delicious, Little Biddy Spiced Apple mirrors the depth of aged spirits. The addition of ice and soda releases crisp apple notes and reveals the ginger backbone.

This gin avoids loud, artificial flavours. It presents a refined, curious character. The apple pie profile develops further as the palate adjusts. While the juniper core remains, the complexity of spice and fruit takes centre stage. This unique spirit suits late autumn evenings or fireside sipping. It stands out as an excellent gift and a versatile base for spicy cocktails or apple martinis.

CARBON SIX – COCONUT GIN

Carbon Six are no strangers to trying out the more unusual concoctions and this Coconut Gin presents a premium, tropical experience in a bottle. The spirit pours clear with a touch of texture. Immediately you are greeted by aromas of coconut and tropical fruits like mango, pawpaw, and papaya.

The neat pour feels silky and syrupy on the tongue. Adding ice and soda amplifies the flavours significantly. Coconut dominates the nose and palate, followed by a subtle hint of juniper. Subtle notes of coriander, cinnamon, and anise add complexity while a touch of vanilla rounds out the finish.

This unique gin offers a sophisticated alternative to coconut vodka or rum. The profile feels light yet complex. It stands up well to robust or fruity tonics such as rhubarb and strawberry. This spirit excels in summer mixers, fruit juices, or even a twist on a mojito. Carbon Six achieves a special result through this blend. It's a highlight rather than an everyday tippie.





FIRST CLASS – WATERMELON NEGRONI

First Class transforms the classic Negroni into a summer sipper with the Watermelon Negroni. This bespoke interpretation is deliciously fresh and more approachable than its traditional counterpart. The flavour swaps bitterness for subtle fresh summer melon that beautifully balances the drink. Aloe vera juice imparts a silky, viscous mouthfeel and just a whisper of sweetness. While deceptively easy-drinking, it retains a hidden strength, making it both refreshing and potent. It's a dangerously elegant twist, perfect for a range of palates.

FIRST CLASS – PINEAPPLE CHILLI MARGARITA

First Class turns their attention to a Pineapple Chilli Margarita. It's a full-strength premixed creation that serves up a bright, aromatic nose of fresh pineapple and green chilli. There is balance here; rather than aggressive heat, crisp vegetal notes of capsicum make for a playful and approachable spice. This allows the bright, sweet freshness of the pineapple to shine through beautifully. It provides a full sensory experience, even the heat-averse can feel adventurous. It's a crowd-pleaser no doubt.



DAYDREAM GIN

Daydream Gin comes from The New Zealand Rum Co., highlighting the skill of distillers who master both rum and gin production. This award-winning spirit arrives in a beautiful bottle with an attractive label. The gin offers a straightforward pour and a subtle nose that offers much more.

The initial taste reveals a refreshing pine character from the juniper. A floral front note leads the profile, supported by hints of cassia and cardamom. This well-blended spirit ensures no single botanical dominates. The addition of soda opens up the flavours, broadening the characteristics without altering the core profile.

This gin serves as an excellent everyday option. It possesses a distinct edge that helps it cut through strong mixers. It pairs effectively with elderflower or yuzu tonics. The versatile nature of the blend makes it suitable for various cocktails and food pairings. Daydream Gin makes for a great choice for your everyday pour.



WHAT HAPPENS TO A WOMAN BUILT FOR POWER WHEN THE WORLD REWRITES THE RULES?

It is the question at the heart of *The Devil Wears Prada 2*. It is also, rather inconveniently, the question Anne Hathaway has spent the last decade answering in real time.

WORDS BY HELOISE GARRITY

There is a particular kind of power that women of our generation were taught to respect without ever being fully invited to hold. It lived in certain offices, behind certain desks, administered by women who had spent decades clawing their way to the top of industries that were never especially designed to have them there, and who, once arrived, ran those industries with the focused intensity of someone who knows exactly how easily it can all be taken away. It expressed itself through access and exclusion, through who got the meeting and who waited in the lobby, through which names appeared on covers and which were quietly, permanently dropped. For a long time, it was the only game in town. Then, with very little fanfare and absolutely no apology, the world built a different one. And a lot of the women who





had spent their best years mastering the first found themselves holding a skillset the new one didn't especially need.

That shift is the backdrop to one of the more unexpectedly interesting films of 2026. *The Devil Wears Prada 2* is technically a sequel to the 2006 comedy that gave us Meryl Streep as the most terrifying woman in Manhattan and a young Anne Hathaway as the ambitious outsider trying to survive her. Twenty years on, the power between those two women has reversed entirely, and not in a way that's particularly comfortable for either of them. The all-powerful editor-in-chief of a high-fashion magazine empire is no longer dictating to the world from an untouchable height. She is fighting, in that particular ice-cold way of hers, to stay relevant in a world that stopped needing her permission for anything around the time everyone got a smartphone. Her former assistant, the young woman she once treated more or less like

furniture, now holds enough power to rescue her or finish her off with a well-placed article. Soundtracked by an original song from Lady Gaga and Doechii called "Runway," the film announces itself not as nostalgia but as a reckoning, and the question underneath all the extraordinary clothes is one that will feel uncomfortably familiar to any woman who has spent serious time in a serious career: when the structure that made you powerful crumbles, what are you actually left with?

To understand why that question carries real weight in 2026, it helps to spend a moment thinking seriously about Anna Wintour's formidable career.

Wintour took over *American Vogue* in 1988 and spent the next 37 years building a power structure that would make most corporate CEOs feel a little inadequate about their legacy. She was up at 5:30 every morning, editing until midnight, running the Met Gala with what colleagues described as "militant" precision, a word that in this

context sounds less like a criticism and more like a reluctant compliment. Her biography, written by Amy Odell after interviews with more than 250 sources, reveals that industry publicists routinely invoked her name when negotiations got sticky: "Do you want me to go to Anna with this?" was apparently enough to end most disagreements before they properly started. Bradley Cooper sought her counsel when casting *A Star Is Born*. Serena Williams called on her. Andy Warhol, in a characteristically contrarian move, once called her a "terrible dresser." She did not appear to lose any sleep over it.

The scope of her influence was, by any reasonable measure, absurd. She helped push Christian Dior toward hiring John Galliano. She turned the Met Gala from a modest museum fundraiser into the most photographed, most dissected, most memeable night in fashion, personally controlling

the guest list with the kind of authority that heads of state would find familiar and perhaps slightly threatening. The Guardian once called her the “unofficial mayoress” of New York City, which sounds like hyperbole until you remember that she was simultaneously shaping the aesthetic output of the global luxury industry, fundraising for American presidents, and making or quietly ending the careers of designers who had spent their entire professional lives trying to please her. Fashion had always had its power brokers, from Edna Woolman Chase running *Vogue* in the early 1900s to Diana Vreeland’s gloriously deranged reign in the 1960s, but Wintour built something different in scale and reach. She did not just edit the magazine but became what the magazine meant, and in doing so, she became what the industry meant too.

The most telling illustration of how far that power extended came during the production of the original *The Devil Wears Prada* in 2005, when Wintour was reportedly threatening designers and fashion personalities that *Vogue* would not cover them if they appeared in the film. How crazy is that? A fashion magazine editor wielding

the threat of editorial exclusion as leverage against a Hollywood production starring Meryl Streep, just through the quiet and well-understood fact that being on the wrong side of Anna Wintour had consequences.

“People respond well to those who are sure of what they want,” she once said, describing her own management style, in the most politely understated summary of a genuinely formidable operating approach.

Gradually, though, and then very suddenly, the ground shifted. Fashion blogging gave way to Instagram, Instagram gave way to TikTok, and somewhere in that transition, the trickle-down model of fashion, the one where editors decided what was beautiful and consumers, grateful for the guidance, obeyed, quietly collapsed. The micro-influencer with two million followers and a well-timed discount code can now move more product on a Tuesday morning than a six-page *Vogue* editorial could in a month, and without attending a single show, without asking anyone’s permission, and without caring in the slightest whether Anna Wintour approves.

In June 2025, after 37 years, she stepped down as editor-in-chief, retaining the rather



(Photo by Christopher Bogel/Blonquel/Getty Images for Disney)



(Photo by Cristopher Rogel Blanquet/Getty Images for Disney)

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO – MARCH 30: Anne Hathaway and Meryl Streep during the red carpet for the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada 2* at Anahuacalli Museum on March 30, 2026 in Mexico City, Mexico.

magnificent title of global chief content officer and continuing to appear at industry events in dark sunglasses, making people anxious in a more advisory capacity. Vogue, meanwhile, is cutting from 12 monthly print issues to eight a year, each one thicker, more expensive, and repositioned as a collectible object for people who want something to hold in their hands that isn't a phone. One fashion journalist noted flatly that "you don't need Vogue to keep up with fashion anymore." The walled garden Wintour built over four decades hasn't been demolished so much as rendered optional. People just walk around it now.

A very different world from 2006 when Hathaway was fresh off *The Princess Diaries* franchise, and the critical concern at the time was whether she had the weight to hold her own against Meryl Streep. She did, as it turned out. The film made \$326 million against a \$35 million budget and became one of those rare cultural artefacts that people still quote at dinner without any particular prompting. "Cerulean." "That's

all." "I'm just one stomach flu away from my goal weight." What made it stick wasn't the fashion or the one-liners but something more unsettling underneath, a story about the cost of ambition, about what you give up when you decide you actually want to be good at something, about the vertigo of being a young woman in a room full of people who are better dressed, better connected, and significantly less apologetic about both. The genius of the script was that it never entirely condescended to the monster at its centre. The editor was awful and she was also, quite clearly, extraordinary at her job, and the film had the confidence to let those two things coexist without resolving the tension for you, which is probably why people are still arguing about it 20 years later.

Hathaway herself was in her early twenties during that shoot, and by her own admission still very much figuring it out. "I was a 22-year-old mess of a human when I made *The Devil Wears Prada*," she told Harper's Bazaar recently, with the kind of breezy candour that only comes from being firmly

on the other side of something. "I feel like I was everybody's babysitter. We've grown up together." She talks about fans sending her their graduation announcements and wedding invitations, which is either extremely touching or mildly alarming depending on your perspective, and possibly both. "I'm so happy for them and how their lives are unfolding," she says, and the thing is, she genuinely seems to mean it.

But this is also the woman who once said, very plainly, "I think about who I was when I made *The Princess Diaries* and how little confidence I had, but how ambitious I was. Those two things were not a comfortable mix for a very long time." That tension, between wanting things enormously and not yet knowing how to carry that wanting without apology, is what defined the first chapter of her career and what the internet eventually turned against her for. She was too keen and too grateful at the podium, and she wanted it in a way that made people uncomfortable, which, if you've spent any time thinking about how ambitious women are perceived



in public life, will come as absolutely no surprise.

Hathaway spent the years after *The Devil Wears Prada* proving that she had more strings to her bow. *Rachel Getting Married* earned her a first Oscar nomination. The *Dark Knight Rises* followed. Then *Les Misérables*, for which she shaved her head and won Best Supporting Actress in 2013.

And then the internet decided it didn't like her.

The phenomenon was given an actual name, "Anne Hathaway Syndrome," which is one of those internet coinages that reveals far more about the people doing the coining than about its subject. The backlash was vague and largely incoherent, the way pile-ons tend to be, and it boiled down to the charge that she was too polished and earnest, and apparently wanted it too much. "The vitriol cut deep because it mirrored my own self-criticism," she said during a 2022 Women in Hollywood speech. "When your self-inflicted pain is amplified back at you, it's a thing." She stepped back, focused on her marriage to jewellery designer and actor Adam Shulman, her two sons, and projects that interested her rather than ones designed to win people back. She also stopped drinking, which she has spoken about: "I don't normally talk about it, but I am over five years sober. That feels like a milestone to me. Forty feels like a gift."

She and Shulman have been together since 2008, married since 2012. "He changed my ability to be in the world comfortably," she told *Elle*. "I think the accepted narrative now is that we, as women, don't need anybody. But I need my husband. His unique and specific love has changed me." She has also been disarmingly honest about the journey to motherhood, which was not straightforward. When she announced her second pregnancy on Instagram in 2019, she wrote directly to her followers: "For everyone going through infertility and conception hell, please know

it was not a straight line to either of my pregnancies. Sending you extra love." Later she told *Vanity Fair*: "Given the pain I felt while trying to get pregnant, it would've felt disingenuous to post something all the way happy when I know the story is much more nuanced than that for everyone."

That willingness to say the complicated thing, to resist the edited optimised version of herself, is arguably what has made her cultural rehabilitation so complete. The internet initially punished her for being too polished, and she came back by being more honest. Becoming a mother changed the calculus entirely. "It's not like I was lacking integrity, but it made me want to be completely, on every level, true to my word," she said. Her two sons, Jonathan and Jack, now ten and seven, have apparently done their bit to keep her grounded in the most practical possible sense. "Kids interrupt you all the time," she says, in a tone that manages to be simultaneously exasperated and grateful, and in a *Harper's Bazaar* interview recently, she discussed the idea that balance is a trap and has largely abandoned the concept. "If the weight shifts in one direction, you then have to bounce it up on the other side, and we find that it winds us up as opposed to making us steady." Harmony, she argues, is more honest. "We seek to harmonise our life." It is a reframe that will feel useful to any woman who has spent years feeling vaguely guilty for not achieving a balance that probably never existed as advertised.

Her work ethic, she insists, was never about external validation anyway. "I've always just felt defined by my work ethic, because my skill set is what it is and I have to work with what I have, but how hard I can work is something that I can control. And so I never want to pull up short and feel like I could have worked harder. If I know that I'm working hard, I can live with who I am." It is a surprisingly grounded thing to say for someone with

"For everyone going through infertility and conception hell, please know it was not a straight line to either of my pregnancies."

an Oscar on a shelf somewhere, and also, recognisably, the thing that tends to get driven out of women somewhere around the time they are told they should be grateful for what they already have.

Which brings us to 2026 and what is, objectively, a frankly ridiculous workload for one human being. The Devil Wears Prada 2 is only part of the story. She is also starring in Mother Mary, a psychological pop-star thriller from A24 directed by David Lowery, opposite Michaela Coel, in which she plays a global superstar on the edge of a comeback performance and performs every song in the film herself, on a soundtrack written by Charli XCX and Jack Antonoff. The dancing required for the role presented its own particular challenge, and she trained hard for it despite not being, by her own reckoning, naturally suited to it. "It was really, really humbling to have to deal with the limitations that my body had always had, that I'd accepted as part of my identity, but now they were no longer acceptable," she said. The choreographer on the production

later noted that the filming atmosphere felt like director Lowery had "unintentionally started a cult," which sounds either alarming or wonderful depending on your disposition. And then, behind that, there is Christopher Nolan's adaptation of The Odyssey, for which she is also

attached, marking her third film with a director whose attention she describes with characteristic openness: "Getting to be invited twice felt special, but three times? That would've been greedy, so I never let myself hope that would happen." The woman the internet spent several years finding irritating is now one of the most in-demand actresses working, and she seems to regard this development with more curiosity than triumph.

It also came with a confession that surprised a few people. "Photoshoots used to terrify me," she admitted in a WWD interview earlier this year, which is not what you expect from a woman who has been on more covers than most people have had haircuts. The fear, she explained, was really about failure, about the version of herself she might not be able to

"I've always just felt defined by my work ethic, because my skill set is what it is and I have to work with what I have, but how hard I can work is something that I can control."

produce on demand. What shifted, she says, was arriving at a deeper kind of personal openness. "When I arrived at that place in a more meaningful way in my life, that was when it opened up for me in terms of a tangible relationship in fashion." She now appears in Bulgari campaigns looking like she is not having the worst time, which suggests the process is going reasonably well.

As for the sequel itself, the thing that finally moved her from polite reluctance to full commitment was straightforward: Meryl Streep read the new script and loved it, and that was that. "Once Meryl read the script and loved it, I was in. No hesitation," she said on the global press tour in Tokyo, and sometimes it really is that simple.

The first film asked whether you could be ambitious without losing yourself. The sequel is asking something thornier: what do you do when the system that shaped your ambition stops functioning? The magazine needs money, the former assistant can save her old boss or end her, and whatever else you want to call it, that is not really a fashion plot. It is a power plot with exceptional tailoring.

And threading through all of it is "Runway," the original song from Lady Gaga and Doechii, two artists from entirely different corners of the music world collaborating on a track for a sequel to a film about the magazine industry, at the precise moment the magazine industry is genuinely fighting

for its life, without having asked a single editor for their thoughts on the matter. The irony is almost too neat.

"I knew in every cell of my being that I wanted to act," Hathaway once said, recalling the moment as a small child she watched her mother perform as Eva Perón and understood, with total clarity, what she wanted her life to be. That certainty has been tested more than she probably anticipated: public ridicule, industry indifference, the specific fatigue of trying to be taken seriously by a business that keeps moving the goalposts for women in their forties. But she is still here, still choosing the more difficult option, still turning up in elevators next to Meryl Streep and holding her own.

She knows what cerulean is. And this time, she also knows how to use it.



Anne Hathaway at The Devil Wears Prada 2 Gala Event in Shanghai.

穿普拉达
的女生



The Billion Dollar Leadership Journey

For Michelle Herlihy, CEO of Speirs Finance Group, leadership begins and ends with people. Michelle runs a near \$1 billion lending business that supports thousands of New Zealand companies, yet when she describes her role, the financial metrics come second. The real work, she says, is human.

"I would sum it up as always 80 percent people," she says. "It's either supporting people, speaking with people, motivating people, or checking in with people - whether that's our customers, our investors and funders, our brokers, or our own employees." Under Michelle's leadership, the company has expanded dramatically, growing from a \$300 million lending book to nearly \$1 billion in just four years while doubling its workforce. Yet she is quick to dispel the idea that the success comes purely from some complex strategic formula. "It's not rocket science," she says. "But sometimes, it takes a bit of courage to take the steps you need to take."

Speirs Finance Group has been part of the New Zealand business landscape for more than 60 years, originally founded in the Manawatu by Nelson Speirs. The company carved out its own niche by focusing on asset-based lending rather than relying on property security in the way traditional banks often do. Today, its lending spans everything from transport fleets to infrastructure and primary industries.



Michelle's role as CEO spans a broad operational spectrum. On any given day, she may be discussing strategy with the board, reviewing technology investments, overseeing capital funding structures, or working with teams on new product development, but the core focus is about alignment and execution. "The breadth of my role expands across everything we do," she explains. "From setting strategy and then executing on that strategy, and getting everyone aligned and brought into the vision."

Execution, she says, is where many organisations fall short. "Something I remembered from early in my career was a saying that 'execution eats strategy for breakfast,'" she says. "It's about setting that vision, but not putting it in a cupboard. It's making sure every team understands it and getting things done." That focus on execution has translated into disciplined growth. Clear objectives, active accountability, and strong leadership structures underpin the organisation's progress. "The best advice I got from a mentor was to get the leadership team right," Michelle says. "If your leadership team isn't right, you're not going to be able to do anything." Strong leadership, however, is only part of the equation. Sales capability also matters. "Without salespeople, none of us have jobs," she says bluntly. "You've got to have people who can deliver value to customers and who are authentic. If you don't believe the person you're buying from, they're probably not the right person."

But even with the right strategy and the right people, culture ultimately determines whether a business can sustain growth. "It's a huge responsibility and privilege to lead a group of people," Michelle says. "If we can't build a culture where people are excited to come to work and enjoy what they're doing, then we wouldn't be able to do anything." Inside Speirs Finance, culture is not a corporate buzzword. It is something the team deliberately built together. "We set our values from the ground up," she

"I always say it's not rocket science but sometimes it takes a bit of courage to take the steps you need to take."

explains. "We asked our employees what was important to them and literally took their language. One of our favourites is 'we keep it real'. That means we're honest with each other, always with respect, but there's no wandering around wondering what someone thinks."

Celebrating success is another key part of that culture. In fast-growing companies, the pressure to keep moving forward can mean achievements are quickly forgotten. Michelle believes recognising wins is essential to sustaining energy. "When you're in growth mode, sometimes you've got to stop and smell the roses and say, 'Actually, that was really awesome. Look what we've achieved.'" That philosophy translates into team events, annual conferences and regular celebrations designed to maintain connection and momentum. Running a financial services business inevitably involves hard metrics and KPIs. Yet Michelle believes leaders must ensure employees understand the broader impact of their work. "One of the things the team said was that we were talking about the numbers too much," she recalls. "They wanted to understand more about the impact they were having." It was a wake-up call that reshaped how the company communicated its purpose. "We started talking about the impact we have in the community," she says.

"How many businesses we support, how many families that helps, how many vehicles we have out there supporting vulnerable New Zealanders."

Michelle's leadership style has also been shaped by decades in financial services, an industry that remains heavily male-dominated. "I would say my entire career, I've often been one of very few women in the room," she says. Yet rather than adapting herself to fit traditional expectations, she chose a different approach. "I learned early on to be who you are," she says. "If you're not authentically yourself, people sniff that out immediately." Authenticity, she believes, is a leader's greatest differentiator. "You might be the best lawyer or the best accountant, but others will have those same skills," Michelle says. "What makes you stand out is you being you." Her own style reflects that philosophy. She jokes easily, sometimes swears unexpectedly, and prefers to keep leadership grounded rather than formal. "I don't see myself as 'the CEO'," she says. "I'm Michelle, and I'm leading a business."

If she could give one piece of advice to her younger self, Michelle says it would not be about strategy or ambition. "Be kinder to yourself," she says. For much of her early career, she says she was far harder on herself than anyone else. "I would spiral internally if I thought I'd made a mistake," she admits. "Things that other people wouldn't even notice, I would be thinking about for days." Learning to manage that internal pressure took years, but the lesson has shaped how she mentors others. "We all make mistakes. That's actually where the greatest learning comes from." Despite the extraordinary growth already achieved, Michelle believes Speirs Finance is only getting started. "We're not done here," she says. "Every time you think we could get complacent, we come up with the next big thing." The company is embarking on a multi-year transformation that includes new products, further technological development and a bold ambition to become the country's leading specialist B2B lender. "We want to be number one."

Yet for all the ambition, Michelle's priorities remain grounded. Beyond the boardroom, she is a mother to two teenage boys and fiercely protective of the time she spends with family and friends. "Sometimes, we make life more complicated than it needs to be," she says. "And it's always good to remember how lucky we are to be here."



The Human Heart of Large Infrastructure

While Chorus is focused on maintaining the digital infrastructure that powers New Zealand, Chief People Officer Jo Mataira is dedicated to the human elements that power the organisation. Having spent over a decade with the telecommunications giant, Mataira has seen the company through a period of immense structural change, yet she gives a simple summary of her mandate.

Borrowing a phrase from a former mentor, she describes her work as a combination of people and puzzles: a mindset that has guided her from senior leadership into the executive suite. For Mataira, the complexity of organisational challenges is where she truly thrives, particularly when those challenges require a deep affinity for human connection. She views these high-stakes environments as the ultimate driver for her daily work. "That's kind of my 'why', really, and why I get out of bed to do the things that I do in the hope that you can make a difference," she explains.

The idea of a typical routine is non-existent within the Chorus C-suite. "Every day looks a bit different depending on what's going on at the time," Mataira explains, describing a schedule that fluctuates between connecting with people on little issues or big issues and coming together as an executive team to prepare for board conversations. This variety is driven by whatever the business requires at any given moment, from catching up with her own team to determining what support is needed across the wider organisation. For Mataira, this unpredictability is the primary draw of her decade-long career in the sector. "No two days are the same," she observes. "It's probably one of the things that I love the most about what I do, the profession that I've chosen, but equally the industry that I work in, because nothing stays the same for very long. I love change. I love people. And it's been a wonderful opportunity to combine those two things."



However, the journey hasn't been without doubt. When she first stepped into the Chief People Officer role roughly two and a half years ago, Mataira describes the experience as nothing short of terrifying. Transitioning from a senior leader to an executive meant operating at a level that, while familiar from a distance, felt entirely different once she was in the thick of it. "I'd be lying if I sat here and said it was all easy and smooth, and loved every minute of it," she says with characteristic openness. "I was well outside my comfort zone, and I had moments of going, 'What on earth were you thinking?'" During the early days of her tenure, she faced the familiar pangs of what she terms the overplayed but very real feeling of imposter syndrome.

Her solution to that internal conflict was a commitment to the very thing she advises others to do: say "yes" and figure it out afterwards. Mataira notes that women often hold themselves back by feeling they must possess every required skill before taking a leap. "I think women in particular move through things too quickly without kind of being able to sit and accept that you're actually good at some things, you've achieved quite a lot," she explains. By making a conscious effort to acknowledge her own achievements while surrounding herself with the right people, she was able to successfully navigate the high-pressure transition to the executive level.

Managing large organisational change while simultaneously navigating a personal career leap requires a high degree of tactical discipline. To prevent herself from becoming overwhelmed by the scale of the task, Mataira relies on a methodical approach. "I guess it's the old adage of eating the elephant one bite at a time," she explains. Her process involves a deliberate focus on structure and connection: "It's about sitting down and forming a plan, prioritising, focusing on where I need to establish or lean in on relationships." She is quick to point out that leadership at this level is never a solo endeavour. "You can't do these jobs on your own. It's not possible," she says, citing the support she receives from her Chief Executive and her wider team. "You're never in anything alone unless you choose to be."

A critical component of her strategy for managing change is what she calls "the pause". In a high-pressure environment, it is easy to rush into action, but Mataira advocates for taking a moment to reset. "You've got to be able to stop for a moment and remind yourself of what you're here to achieve, what your priorities are, what your support system looks like," she explains. This clarity of direction makes the broader organisational goals more manageable and ensures that she is never operating in isolation.

This sense of collective effort has been vital as Chorus undergoes a fundamental shift in its operating model. The company is currently transitioning from being a great network builder to a great network operator, an evolution necessitated by the completion of the majority of the Ultra-Fast Broadband build-out. Mataira understands that such a significant strategy refresh cannot succeed without a corresponding shift in culture. "You

can't reshape a strategy without touching culture, because people are what enable you to achieve an altered strategy," she asserts. This realisation has led to a comprehensive transformation of the company's structure, people processes, and core values.

The shift from traditional corporate values to active mindsets has been one of the most defining moments of this cultural transformation. Mataira ensured this wasn't just a management exercise by involving nearly half the organisation in shaping the outcome. "We moved from values to mindsets because you've got to have people feeling like they have a part to play in that and that they've got some skin in the game," she notes. This transition requires a leadership style that balances strategic vision with the freedom for teams to innovate. "It is about being really clear about the outcome that you're trying to achieve and then creating the space for talented people to be able to step in and help with how we get there," she explains. This approach is anchored in her belief that leadership is about collective problem-solving rather than individual ego. "What's the point in having a team if you think you've got it all figured out yourself?" she asks.

Perhaps the most defining characteristic of Mataira's leadership is her commitment to authenticity, a quality she views as a direct rejection of the traditional executive facade. While she admits the occasional temptation to emulate the polished personas often seen in business media, she relies on the advice of her husband to remain grounded. "Just keep doing you," she says, noting that the goal is to dismantle the myth of the perfect, finished leader. This sense of realness is more than just a personal preference; it is a tactical choice. She believes that while an executive cannot afford to be wishy-washy or to lack clarity or direction regarding the final strategic outcome, there is immense strength in showing vulnerability during the journey.

On days when the path forward is not entirely clear, she is comfortable inviting her team into the uncertainty. "You know what, I'm not sure. Come on in and join me. Let's wrestle with this stuff together," she tells them. By being transparent about the challenges she is still navigating, she proves that leadership is not an elite performance but an accessible reality for others to follow. "For people to feel like leadership is a pathway they want to be part of, you've got to be real," she insists. "Keep it real. Leadership is a pathway for people who are real."



The Building Blocks of Leadership

Sara Johnson leads one of the biggest trade-facing businesses in the country as CEO of ITM, New Zealand's largest independent building supply network. On paper, the scale is substantial: a co-operative of more than 90 stores nationwide, backed by 26 Frame & Truss plants, serving everyone from local builders to major residential construction players. But what makes her role most interesting is not just the size of it but the shape of it. ITM is not some neat top-down corporate ladder. It is a network of independent operators, community relationships and corporate strategy. The job is not just to lead but to keep a lot of moving parts aligned.

In this respect Sara sees communication as a real leadership skill, not a soft one. Looking back at what she brought into the CEO role, she says her background in marketing helped because it taught her "how to communicate to different types of audiences" and "how to break down your messaging". More than that, she says one of the core lessons she carried with her was that "You can never assume how people understand or receive your messages – you need to be very clear on what you want people to take away from what you are saying."

That same idea helps shape the way Sara leads today. "You can't make assumptions," she says. "You have to go and talk to people and really listen and understand them before you form your view." In a co-operative model, that matters even more. Johnson says a successful co-operative must stay very close to its purpose and serve the needs of its members.

Sara doesn't see leadership as something done from behind a desk. "In a pretty typical week, I probably spend a day to half a day on governance or strategy work or risk work and then I'm with stores, suppliers or customers. I put on boots and the high-vis and I'm out in the yards with people talking to them about their businesses." She is also realistic that not everyone in a network like ITM is in the same place. Some are thinking hard about the next five or ten years. Others are not. Part of the job, as she describes it, is supporting that full spectrum while still making clear strategic choices.

And while communication is a key factor for Sara, so are the facts. "My decision making is very analytical based. I love evidence," she says. "A lot of small businesses in New Zealand rely on gut instinct or experience. That's fine and appropriate. But when you're getting into a larger organisation like ours, you do need to start pulling together the evidence to make or to inform your decisions." "In most instances, particularly in the co-operative world, you get a lot of rhetoric and you get a lot of gut instinct and you get a lot of big feelings. But one of the few truths you have is data. And so we here at ITM, we spend a lot of time



and effort making sure our data is correct and a source of truth, so we then can take it to the next step.”

When mistakes happen, Sara appreciates people who can own them. “When they feel the mistake, they know they have a responsibility to make it right. Then I know I’ve got the best person in the job. When you really care about what you do, you will feel the burn of a mistake – and that’s how you learn.” She contrasts that with people who are too relaxed about getting things wrong. “When I’ve observed people who didn’t feel it so much, or a bit sort of laissez-faire about it, then it does make me pause for thought about where their time and attention is going.”

She extends that same standard to organisations. “When you have made a mistake, you’ve got to feel the burden on that. And you’ve got to show your shareholders that you feel it, and you’ve got to show your shareholders your reflections on it, and not brush it under the carpet or try and make excuses for it that aren’t legitimate.” For Sara, honesty is one of the biggest values for an organisation. “Honesty and transparency is key to the way we do things and in our one-to-one engagements and our one-to-many organisational engagements because nothing good comes from any other approach.”

In terms of AI, Sara is interested in it and uses it, but is careful not to turn it into something mystical. “We use AI for work that has a large material impact – but doesn’t require any deeper thinking. AI will change the way we work, but it currently doesn’t have creativity or the nuance to completely meet our needs. And we always have human oversight on the outputs. That’s an absolute must.” She says she also uses it for “checking out or validating previous information, previous decision making, pulling records up quickly, and then building on the thinking”. But she is very clear about the limit. “It’s all past information, using inference to provide a future view. So AI can give you past information, scenario planning, but it’s not a crystal ball. That’s where you have to apply your knowledge, critical thinking, creativity and consider all of the conversations you have every day about what people want and need.”

Part of Sara’s focus is making sure the team can harness their creativity, knowledge and interactions with each other. “I’m quite cynical about companies that talk about culture and then stick it on the wall,” she says. “Culture is what you walk past when you walk through the office. It’s about how people talk to each other, how people engage with each other.” What matters is whether people can actually feel it in the way the place operates. “Do people challenge each other? Do they feel comfortable

“And you shouldn’t look at someone and go, I have to be like that to be the CEO. I think it’s more about that self-awareness of what you would do and how you would lead and how you would apply your problem-solving skills...”



challenging? Are people very territorial? Do people protect their patch or are people supportive? Our team does that really, really well. They fundamentally understand that together they rise.”

Sara also mentions that culture has a key role in shifting some of the imbalance in male-dominated industries. Even when organisations are going through “the motions”, she highlights a moment from a previous company’s women in leadership programme. “If I’m honest, it was a waste of time. They didn’t really invest in bringing women, particularly younger women, up through the organisation and extending them and their skill sets.” In one exercise, the women in the room were asked to step forward if they thought they could be CEO. “It was only me and the woman running the exercise that stepped forward... and it was an environment of fear and cynicism that stopped everybody else from stepping forward. And that was a company culture issue. It wasn’t the women that were in the room. There were incredible, talented, smart women in the room who could do that job with their eyes shut.”

And Sara’s point to other women looking at the CEO role and wondering whether they could do that is maybe not to start by asking whether they match the person already in the seat. “I’ve never sat there and cut the CEO ‘outfit’ out in my mind and then imagined trying it on,” she says. “It’s more of how would I do that? Would I do it differently? How, where do I see the gap here? And how do I apply myself to the gap? Because I think everybody does the job differently. And you shouldn’t look at someone and go, I have to be like that to be the CEO. I think it’s more about that self-awareness of what you would do and how you would lead and how you would apply your problem-solving skills... So don’t ever plan to do it the way I did it – do it your way.”



Alaina Luxmoore is Director of Marketing at RUSH, Aotearoa's leading digital design and software development partner. Heather Polaschek is Head of People and Performance. Between them, they have nearly 40 years of experience across advertising, tech, telecoms, retail and the public sector. A lot of what they say about leadership and culture is grounded in having been in rooms where the rules were very different.

"RUSH is, to be very honest, the first career I've been in where the level of support for growing women in leadership was an imperative, not a side quest," Alaina says. "And even in past roles where I've had wonderful female bosses, there's often been a limited amount of space, or it was a very particular type of woman who was allowed to sit at the table."

She came up through advertising. *Mad Men*, she notes, was not that long ago.

Heather describes the same decade from a structural perspective. The old conversation, she says, was exhausting. "Ten years ago, we were fighting for equality in a different way. It was this constant question: how are we going to influence people to show them why it's important?" That argument is largely settled now. McKinsey, Bain and BCG have all made the case. "The conversation isn't why we need diversity. It's actually how we get more women in leadership because we know it's important."

Both women are fiercely competitive. Alaina says so without apology. But something about where that energy now goes has evolved.

"The competition has shifted from being against each other to how do we win on the same team?" she says.

"I've always got your back, you've got mine, but I'll make you better, and I'll be honest. Radical candour. In order to achieve the goals of the business, but also professionally and personally."

Heather also gives a practical example of what male allyship looks like within the Senior Leadership Team. She told RUSH CEO & Founder Danu about a pregnant employee who was worried about her career. His response: "Well, why would it be an issue? Of course, this is fine."

She contrasts it with how that conversation might have played out ten years ago. "Oh, this woman's pregnant, it's going to impact this project." The difference is not just attitude. It is what gets said when the woman in question is not in the room.

Alaina brings up a quote from Chris Rock.

"The most racist or sexist thing that has ever happened to you, you don't even know about. The conversations being had about you that are preventing you from moving, you weren't even in the room to hear that conversation."

She uses it to make a point about AI and access to information. "The democratisation of information through AI is allowing you to at least ask the questions that give you a peek." Salary benchmarking, gender pay data, company composition. "In the past, you were either not allowed to ask the questions, or you

Winning on the Same Team

Alaina Luxmoore and Heather Polaschek of RUSH have spent years navigating industries that have not always made space for women. What they have been a part of building together showcases what genuine support in leadership actually looks like.

"The growth has been in being a person who can simply say: 'I'm good at this thing and I have evidence, so I'm going to chase it.' Instead of looking for external validation and permission to do the thing first."

weren't getting the straight answer."

When asked how you actually know you are in an organisation where gender equity is real rather than rhetorical, Alaina talks about what is present and what is absent.

"The absence of sexist comments. The absence of conversation about what people are wearing. The inclusivity of language that has become part of everyday vernacular where people aren't having to be reminded of how to speak to people in a non-gendered or biased way," she says. "These are all things that, when they are there, you're subconsciously being put in your place. And sometimes, you can't pinpoint that that's why."

She had to think back to previous workplaces to even notice what RUSH does not have.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANILOPHOTO

Inclusive cultures, she suggests, should feel unremarkable.

Heather suggests that formal frameworks matter because they signal intention publicly, but the real work happens in conversations that never make it into any policy document. An executive quietly checking in after a meeting. A founder reviewing salary data line by line to make sure women are not being underpaid.

"It's the championing behind the scenes that people don't see. It's not performative. And it doesn't mean we always get it right either."

Alaina remembers when RUSH had a reputation in the market as a bit of a boys' club. Most senior leaders were male, most engineers were male. Women inside felt respected. Outside, people murmured it was hard to do well there as a woman. "Which we knew internally wasn't right."

She describes Heather's arrival as a turning point. One of the first things Heather did was say she didn't think RUSH had ever done a gender pay gap assessment, and that she was going to do one. "It just set the bar," Alaina says. "Here's how seriously I take women in leadership here."

Both are mothers. Alaina jokes that Heather must be a digital twin given the hours she logs. And both are honest that flexibility has not removed the tension between executive ambition and parenting.

Alaina uses the glass balls and rubber balls analogy. Some things in life can be dropped and will bounce back. Some will shatter. "Sometimes you have to drop a rubber family ball to catch a glass work ball, or vice versa." Whether the culture around you makes you feel ashamed when you do, is a different question.

She was denied a promotion while pregnant. One she had been explicitly told was coming. She uses it as a reference point, not a grievance. At RUSH now, if someone needs to step away for a family matter, someone else picks it up. "It's never seen as a bad thing."

Heather also has some advice for the juggle. "Sometimes you're not going to be a great parent, sometimes you're not going to be a great leader, sometimes you're not going to do what you need to for yourself, and that's okay. Just be less hard on yourselves."

While the social business case for DEI has been well established, it has become politically toxic in some quarters and programmes are being wound back. RUSH has gone the other way. "We said, 'Well, we're not changing. This is fundamentally who we are. What else are we going to do?'" Heather says, adding that they are currently on a Te Ao Māori journey, deepening their commitment to indigenous frameworks of relationship and interconnectedness.

"You are more successful as a business when you have more diversity in leadership. So why would you pull away from it? You're pulling away from it because you don't want your business to be as successful. That seems quite ridiculous," Heather adds.



She also warns that the people entering the workforce now are watching which companies kept their promises. "All these businesses that made all these promises and then turned back, they're going to be remembered for it. And when the next big push comes with the next innovation wave, and everyone's hiring again and trying to get great talent, they'll struggle." She pauses. "Maybe a personal belief and a hope."

When the conversation turns to what each of them has learned about themselves as leaders, Alaina highlights how much the context of a workplace can have such a profound personal impact, for better and worse.

She describes arriving at RUSH with years of evidence of being a capable, at times excellent, employee, but very little self-worth to match. A long run of workplaces had told her to stay small. "The stripping away of the negative self-talk and negative narrative was as important to my career growth as any technical skill."

"The growth has been in being a person who can simply say: 'I'm good at this thing and I have evidence, so I'm going to chase it.' Instead of looking for external validation and permission to do the thing first," Alaina reflects.

Heather has spent the past two years adding an entirely new commercial remit, taking on RUSH's Managed Services function alongside her People & Culture role. "To realise, even later in your career, that you can really pivot and do really well if you have a curious mind and a great community around you."

Alaina adds in respect to growth, about what it took, about finally being able to act on what she knows she is good at rather than waiting for someone else to confirm it.

"I think that's the growth part," she says. "Stepping out from behind your own shadow."

Leading the Human Side of Change

Change, by its nature, can be unsettling within an organisation. Korrin Balmain often explains it with a simple analogy.

“Imagine leaving your car at a valet car wash, when you get it back, the seat has moved, the mirrors are different, and the radio station has changed. You would stop the car and put everything back.”

Now imagine that happening to hundreds of employees at once.

“If they have not been shown how to adjust things in the new system, it just feels like disruption.”

It is a simple example, but one that captures a much larger truth about how organisations experience change. At a time when artificial intelligence is reshaping industries at speed and businesses are investing heavily in new tools and systems, Korrin has learned over more than two decades of working across enterprise technology and transformation that the hardest part is rarely the tech itself.

The Change and Partnership Director at Dynamo6 has helped organisations navigate everything from large-scale platform migrations to the cultural challenges that come with technology transitions. During her career, Korrin has guided organisations such as MediaWorks, Trade Me, Xero and Atlassian through such changes across Australia and New Zealand. Over the years, she has become known for translating complex technical concepts into something people inside organisations can actually understand and trust.

“Successful technology adoption is really a people project,” she says. “It’s not just about the tools themselves. It’s about making sure people have the skills to use them and the confidence to embrace the change.”

Her work often involves helping organisations rethink how teams collaborate and communicate as technology evolves. That focus on practical transformation has also been reflected in the Google Cloud ecosystem she works within. In 2024, Dynamo6 became the first New Zealand partner to earn the Google Cloud Work Transformation Specialization.

“Successful technology adoption is really a people project,” she says. “It’s not just about the tools themselves. It’s about making sure people have the skills to use them and the confidence to embrace the change.”

Yet, despite the profound transformation capabilities that organisations have access to, Korrin reiterates the need to focus on organisational needs first before getting caught up in technological possibilities.

The rise of generative AI has pushed organisations into action, but sometimes not for the right reasons. “Everyone wants AI at the moment,” she says. “But sometimes you have to ask, what is it that you are really after? Are you just trying to jump on the hype train?”

Boards and leadership teams frequently feel pressure to act quickly so as not to be left behind. In those moments, a big part of Korrin’s role is to slow the conversation down and “unpack” what the organisation is actually trying to achieve. “Boards will say we need some AI in our strategy,” she says. “But they have not necessarily been debriefed on what it actually means for the organisation.”

And AI is not always the right answer. Automation, better data discipline or improvements to existing processes can often deliver far greater value. “Just because everyone else is doing it does not mean you have to do it,” she says. “Maybe AI is not right for you right now. Maybe automation is.”

Korrin has seen many examples where organisations begin chasing a technology trend before understanding the operational and cultural implications that come with it. When that happens, the risk is not technical failure but human resistance.

“People move at the speed of trust,” she says.

AI tools in particular can feel opaque. “When people are interfacing with AI, they cannot see it. There is just this magical thing that happens in the background. That can create fear.”

People begin to question whether the information returned by the system is accurate, whether their input is safe, and what the broader implications might be for their role. Korrin believes a certain level of scepticism is not only understandable but necessary.

“You are the expert, not the AI,” she says. “AI is just gathering information at a speed that you could never fathom. But you are the one who reviews what it brings back.”

Helping organisations navigate that balance between technological opportunity and human comfort is where Korrin’s work becomes particularly nuanced. She describes herself as a “technical translator”, someone who can move between engineers, executives and frontline staff to ensure everyone understands what a new system actually means. “I have to get the technical people to talk to me,” she explains. “Then I digest what that means so I can tell people what it actually means for them.” Her process begins with understanding the organisation’s history with change. Some companies have a culture that embraces transformation, while others have experienced disruptive projects that left people wary. “How have historical changes gone?” she asks. “How are their people equipped to manage change?”

Korrin often embeds herself deeply within organisations so employees see her not as an external consultant but as part of the internal team. Once that trust is established, she builds networks of early adopters and internal champions who help shape the change process from within.

One of the fastest ways to lose trust during a transformation, Korrin says, is inconsistent messaging. “Right at the beginning, the messaging has to

be consistent,” she says. “If someone suddenly says we were going to do this, but now we are doing this, trust closes.” Employees quickly notice contradictions between what leaders say and what actually happens. Once trust starts to erode, the entire process slows down.

That sensitivity to language has become particularly apparent in the way organisations now talk about AI. In the past, it has been a lot about efficiency, but that can carry certain connotations. “Efficiency and AI can sometimes be seen as negative,” she explains. “People think if I become more efficient, does that mean I will lose my job?”

Some organisations are deliberately reframing the conversation to one of productivity and better outcomes. “They are not saying we want less admin work,” she recalls. “They are saying we want higher quality admin work.”

Despite working at the centre of one of the fastest moving areas of technology, Korrin’s drive comes from the human side of things. After years helping organisations navigate large-scale digital change, she has seen how easily people can feel overwhelmed when technology moves faster than understanding.

“I just want to help people,” she says. “Technology can move incredibly fast, but if people do not understand what it means for them, or they feel left behind by it, then the change will never really succeed. For me, it has always been about helping people feel confident with the technology they are being asked to use, and making sure they understand why the change is happening in the first place.”

If she could offer advice to her younger self, it would be to embrace curiosity. “Ask more questions,” she says. “Now I am probably the annoying person who keeps asking, ‘What does that mean?’ and ‘What happens next?’ But if I cannot articulate what something means, people are not going to come along on the journey.” Because while technology will continue to evolve at extraordinary speed, the success of any transformation still depends on a far older system: human trust.



The Power of Doing Less Better

Wendy Nowell-Usticke has spent long enough in beauty to know when an industry is overcomplicating things. In a world that thrives on excess, multi-step routines, endless launches and ever-changing trends, she has found herself moving in the other direction.

That shift did not come from trend forecasting or a sudden change in taste. It came from experience. Before founding Corbin Rd, Wendy had already spent decades in the beauty industry, including helping build Thin Lizzy into one of New Zealand's best-known beauty brands. She had seen the product cycles, the promises, the constant push towards more. More steps. More activities. More reasons to feel as though whatever you were doing now was not enough. For a long time, she believed it "boots and all!"

"I used to believe more was better," she says. "More products, more steps, more and stronger actives. Now I know the opposite is true."

Wendy's thinking changed because she saw, firsthand, what too much was doing, not just to the market, but to skin. Her own skin had become compromised, stressed, reactive and overworked by the very world she had spent years in. As her original draft puts it, before Corbin Rd was a brand, it was a problem. The Restorative Cleansing Balm, the product that started it all, came out of that realisation. It was not designed to be one more thing in an already crowded routine. It was designed to stop the damage, to remove makeup, sunscreen and environmental build-up while supporting the skin barrier rather than stripping it. It was simple. And it worked.

"I've seen skin perform better when it's switched from being stripped and over activated to gently supported. Simplicity, done properly, is far more powerful than complexity."



Corbin Rd launched in 2019 with a clear point of view around simplified skincare, clean formulations and multifunctional products that replaced the need for cluttered routines. Wendy is quick to point out that this was not some recent correction. That focus was always there.

“Corbin Rd was created to be a more focused, simplified offering from the beginning, designed for real life women. That principle still guides every decision we make, from formulas to packaging. If it doesn’t support simplicity, real results or our sustainability values, it doesn’t make it in.”

As the brand found its feet, Wendy was not just building a skincare line. She was building an ecosystem. In Napier, an iconic Art Deco building was renovated into three modern apartments with a commercial ground floor that became Urban Wellness, an international-style urban wellness clinic and spa for Hawke’s Bay. There was private sauna and ice bath therapy, full-body photobiomodulation, PEMF therapy, compression therapy, oxygen therapy, and the Corbin Rd spa experience itself. It was ambitious. And, as her original draft rather bluntly puts it, poorly timed.

Then the external pressures hit. Interest rates rose. Consumer spending tightened. The economic growth many had expected did not arrive. Cyclone Gabrielle disrupted Hawke’s Bay. Discretionary spending softened further, especially in beauty and wellness.

“It taught me that growth isn’t just about moving forward. It’s about knowing when not to. In business, I learned that not every opportunity deserves a yes, especially if it comes at the cost of control or puts pressure on the foundations you’ve built.”

Business culture still loves the idea that bigger is better. Wendy sounds far less impressed by motion for its own sake. Personally, she says, that period taught her about pace.

“It taught me the importance of stepping back, thinking more clearly, and protecting my energy so I can make better decisions for the long term.”

That is easy to say and harder to do when you are emotionally attached to what you have built, and Wendy does not pretend otherwise.

“Letting go of things I’d invested time, money, and belief into was hardest emotionally, especially knowing there was still potential if I could have lasted the start-up distance. There’s a real emotional attachment to what you build, and to the people who’ve been part of that journey. But I also knew that holding onto everything simply wasn’t an option.”

The business was restructured and non-core ventures were sold down. The focus narrowed dramatically. What remained was Corbin Rd. After four years of operating in the background, pulled in multiple directions and competing for attention, the brand was given a singular focus.

Some of the shift was structural. Some of it was about language. The brand’s earlier “slow beauty” messaging, while philosophically sound, created a perception problem. The implication of slow results worked against them in a market that reads words literally and moves quickly. Corbin Rd went through a sharp repositioning, moving towards a clearer and more direct message: less is more for beautiful skin. The point was to remove confusion, deliver results, and not overwhelm the skin.

“Skin safe clean beauty formulations and sustainable should be expected. That’s the baseline now. What sets you apart is performance, and whether people connect with what you’re doing.”

In an age of supply chain disruption, freight volatility and constant uncertainty, Corbin Rd’s commitment to local sourcing and manufacturing has given it real stability. Key botanicals and New Zealand-made botanical actives are sourced locally wherever possible. Manufacturing is designed to minimise energy use. Packaging prioritises glass and aluminium. But Wendy’s point is that none of that is enough on its own. Consumers still want results. She is equally clear about what the beauty industry still gets wrong.

“It still underestimates how savvy women are. There’s so much noise, overpromising, and unnecessary complication in our industry. Women are busy and wary of wasting time, money, and effort on products that don’t deliver. The women I speak to don’t want a 10-step routine, and they definitely don’t want five if it’s not working. They want simple. They want results. And they want to feel confident they’re doing the right thing for their skin without constantly second-guessing it.”

That same focus on trust and efficacy runs through Wendy’s own view of beauty now.

“It’s become less about appearance and more about condition. Healthy skin, strong skin, well-looked-after skin. That’s what reads as beautiful. I’m also far more confident and comfortable in my own skin.”

It could just as easily describe the way she now approaches business.

“The ambition is still there, but it’s directed. I’m far more selective about where I put time, energy, and investment.”

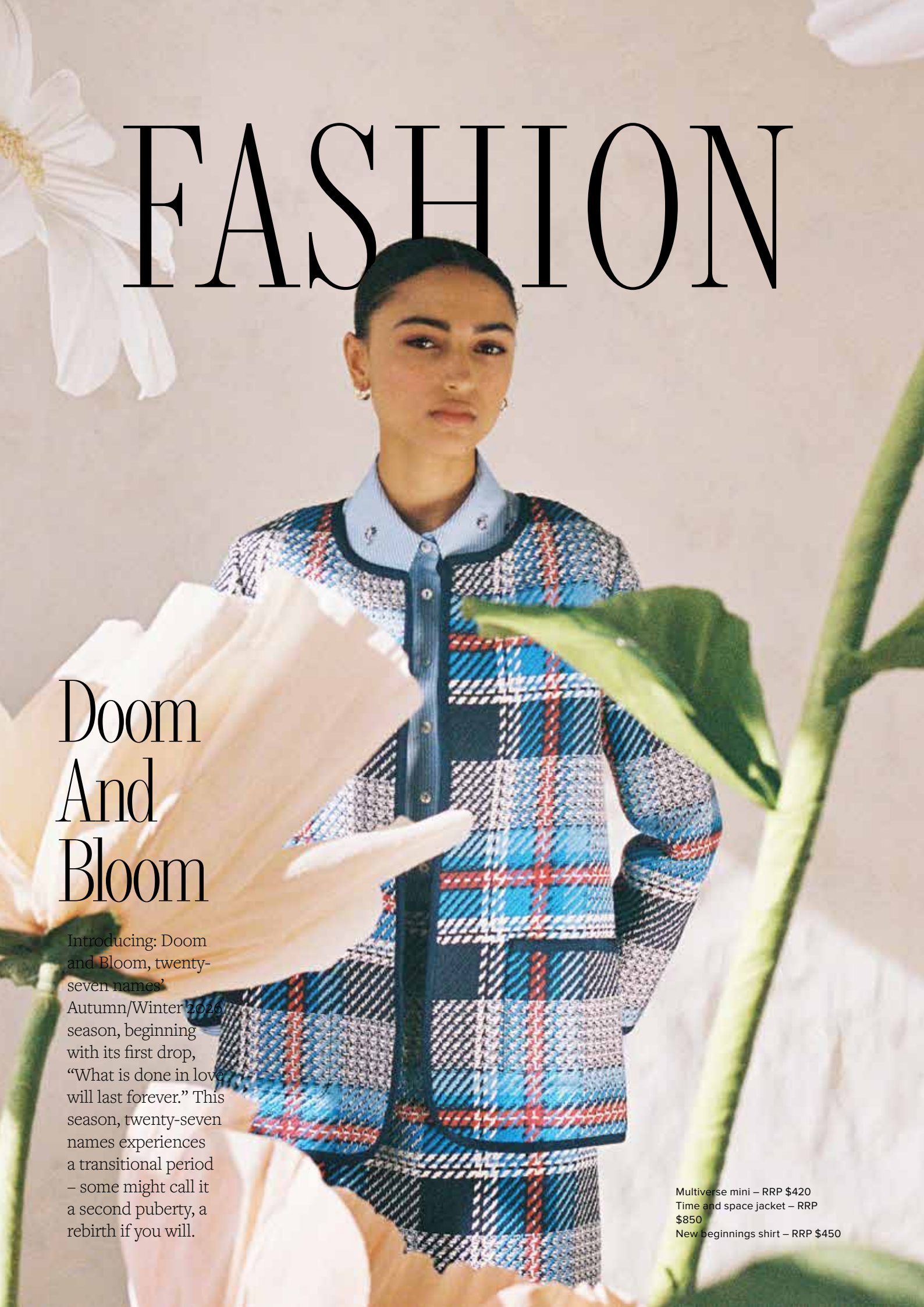
And while Wendy pulled back from a broader expansion across multiple verticals, Corbin Rd is very much in growth mode. The brand has expanded into body products, a dedicated spa-only line, and a refined hotel amenities range for luxury properties, with placements in lodges including Cape Kidnappers, Matakauri and Coronet Ridge. It has also found a natural place with clean beauty facialists looking for effective, multifunctional products that work well in treatment settings. The difference is that the growth feels considered.

“Ten years ago, the concept of success probably looked bigger. Now it looks better. A strong brand, clear direction, products that genuinely perform, and a business that’s sustainable, that’s success to me.”

When Wendy is asked what she would tell a younger woman trying to build something enduring without losing herself in the process, her answer is clear.

“Stay close to your original idea. Don’t chase everything. And don’t compromise on quality, because in the long run, that’s what people come back for. You don’t need to do more, you need to do it better.”

FASHION

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a vibrant, multi-colored plaid jacket and a matching skirt. The jacket has a light blue collar and a dark blue button-down front. She is standing in front of large, white, daisy-like flowers. The background is a soft, light-colored wall.

Doom And Bloom

Introducing: Doom
and Bloom, twenty-
seven names'

Autumn/Winter 2026
season, beginning
with its first drop,
"What is done in love
will last forever." This
season, twenty-seven
names experiences
a transitional period
– some might call it
a second puberty, a
rebirth if you will.

Multiverse mini – RRP \$420
Time and space jacket – RRP
\$850
New beginnings shirt – RRP \$450



Madeleine dress -
Deep green floral
- RRP \$690
Doom and bloom
silk scarf - Cream
floral - RRP \$200

This collection nods to the women who appreciate that life is a delicate balance of existential dread and really exceptional tailoring. Designed as a bridge between inner chaos and outer composure, the collection gestures to the female experience with satirical slogan T-shirts such as “Constant source of disappointment”, notes of red, and statement coats for the seasons to come. It is a visual mixtape of colour, fabric, and design that screams, “I’m here whether you like it or not!”

twenty-seven names doesn’t have the answers to life’s big questions of doom, but they’ll have the outfit you’ll want to be wearing when the credits roll.

Available to shop now, in-store or online at twentysevendnames.co.nz.



Universal dress
– Pale pink check –
RRP \$560
Eliza long-sleeved
polo – Navy – RRP
\$650

A woman with dark hair and bangs stands in a lush garden. She is wearing a sleeveless red dress with a vibrant floral pattern featuring butterflies and various flowers. A red scarf with a white and red striped pattern is tied around her neck. She is holding a red jacket or coat in her left arm. The background is filled with green foliage and white flowers, including a tall stalk of white flowers on the left.

Butterflies dress – Red
Floral – RRP \$550
Free agent coat –
Raspberry – RRP \$720
Doom and bloom silk scarf
– Red floral – RRP \$200



Madeleine dress – Deep green floral – RRP \$690
Theory blazer – Navy – RRP \$680



Oasis shirt – Red floral – RRP \$560
Silk tie – Red floral – RRP \$160
Free agent coat – Raspberry – RRP \$720







Come Into My World



If you haven't seen Kylie Minogue's music video for "Come Into My World", you're missing an iconic piece of cinema. Directed by Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind's Michel Gondry, the video loops on itself over and over as Kylie walks around the block. Each lap she makes, she circles back over the top of the previous footage taken, the background becomes crowded with the same extras interacting in interesting ways, and Kylie herself is accompanied by her own clones. It's a piece of practical VFX that has aged like fine wine. How many rainforests would we have to burn down to achieve this same result with AI now?

Chanel knows class when it sees it, and 25 years later has brought Kylie back for a revisit, this time with Margot Robbie as the girl with the chic handbags. Michel Gondry returns behind the camera to envision a contemporary interpretation, where Margot Robbie runs into every version of herself on the street, each sporting a different iteration of the CHANEL 25 bag.

Introduced for the first time in 2025, the CHANEL 25 bag reinterprets the codes of CHANEL's legendary bags: quilted leather, a leather-interlaced chain, and the double C.

The CHANEL 25 Mini is available in a rich palette of colours: black, white, beige, dark orange, brown, pink, dark khaki, light green, dark brown, deep burgundy, dark blue, ecru and camel, ecru and black, as well as black and white, and many materials: smooth, grained or crinkled calfskin, shiny calfskin, canvas, and denim.

With two signature pockets and a supple, hobo-inspired silhouette available in four sizes, the CHANEL 25 bag embodies practical, effortless elegance.



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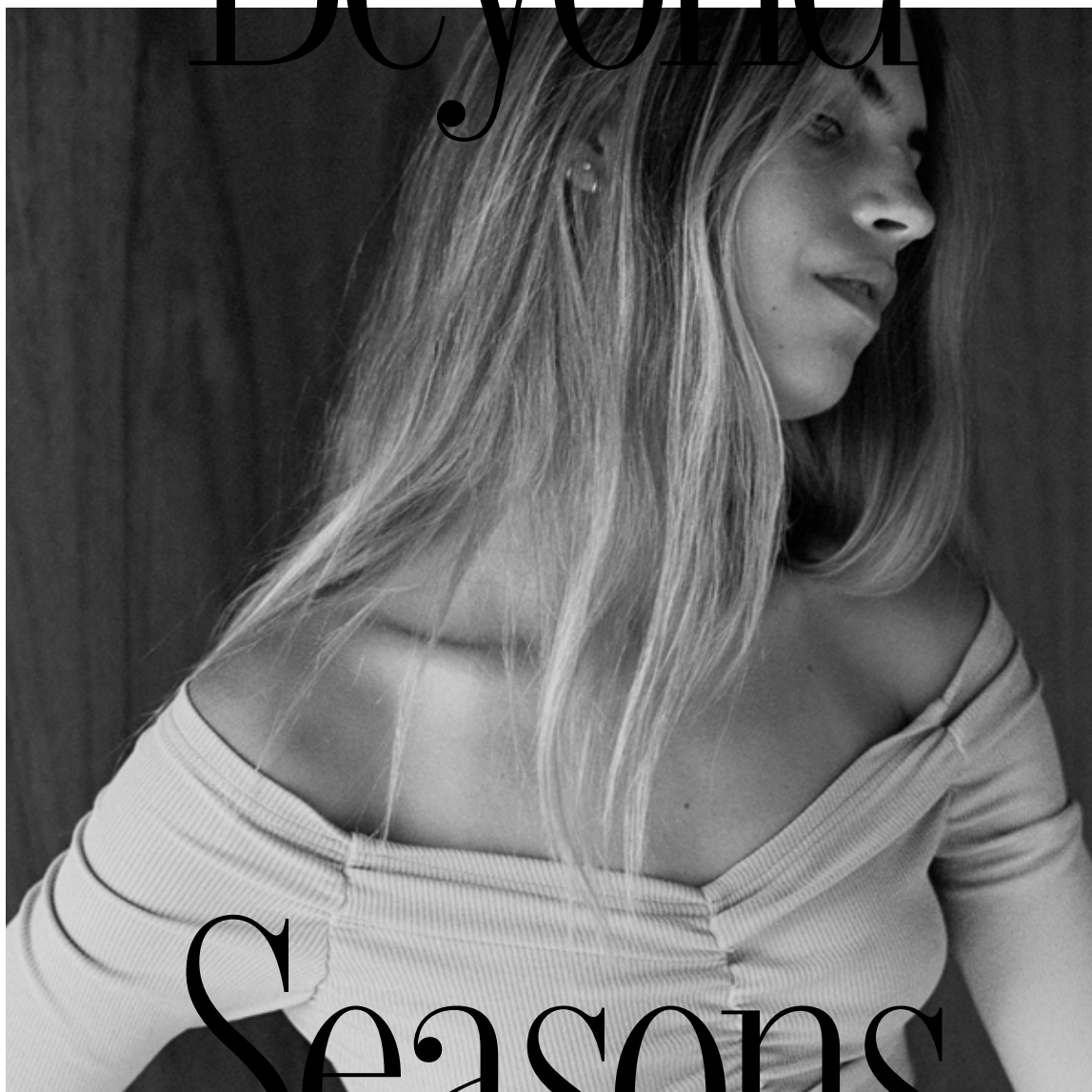
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Beyond



Seasons

New seasons are always exciting – new colours, new looks, new weather to accommodate. With fashion, it can start to feel more like a churn, if not a waste. A seasonal refresh is good but it has allowed fast fashion to rear its ugly head.

To combat this, Dominique Healy has taken the approach to build a considered, ongoing range of core styles that work year-round, eschewing the traditional seasonal cadence of release and forget. These pieces are designed to be refined over time, with new styles and accent colours introduced only occasionally and in small, considered quantities.

For your consideration, we've collected a few pieces from their core collection – classic, timeless...





Below: JILL DRESS
Exclusive:
Clementine Rib
Also available in
Classic Rib



Above: NEVERMIND DRESS
Exclusive: Blue Viscose
Also available in Plain Jersey
Colours: Black, Espresso and White



Above: IVY
BLOUSE & EMMA
SKIRT
Exclusive: Ivory
Textured
Paired with Emma
Skirt: Black,
Espresso and Ivory

Right: FRANCIS
BLOUSE
Exclusive: Silk
Georgette in Vanilla
Also available in
Cotton: Black,
Espresso and Ivory





**Right: NEVERMIND
TEE**
Exclusive: Blue
Viscose
Also available in
Plain Jersey
Colours: Black,
Espresso and White

**Below: IVY BLOUSE
in CRINKLE**
Exclusive: Textured
Scrunch
Fabric Origin: Japan
Available in Black,
Chocolate and Khaki



Above: MAEVE SHIRT
Exclusive: Aero-Wash Cotton
Available in Black, Espresso
and Ivory



Above: NEVERMIND
DRESS
Exclusive: Blue
Viscose
Also available in
Plain Jersey
Colours: Black,
Espresso and White

What's ON



Bella Hadid in Prada, wearing the Prada Bonnie bag on February 25th, 2026 in Milan



Alix Earle wears the Bared Footwear Hillstar knee high boot in New York. Hillstar Black Leather Knee High Boots, RRP \$559.



At a Q&A event for *The Devil Wears Prada 2* at Casa Azul on March 30, 2026 in Mexico City, Anne Hathaway was spotted wearing... Bvlgari. I guess she's not the villain in this one. The sunglasses are a pair of Tubogas rimless sunglasses (904375) featuring a sophisticated squared silhouette and smoke-coloured lenses, adorned with flat metal studs. The temples are embellished with the Tubogas spiral decor, inspired by the iconic jewellery line.

To match she wore Bvlgari Tubogas earrings.



(Photo by Angel Delgado/Getty Images for Disney)

DUA LIPA SHINING

Dua Lipa rocked the 2026 Brit Awards looking as incredible as ever. As an ambassador of Bvlgari, it was unsurprising she was sporting some of their most decadent pieces.

For the occasion, she chose an iconic High Jewellery Serpenti necklace, paired with two High Jewellery Serpenti rings that perfectly complement her stage look. The rest of her ensemble was a custom Gucci jumpsuit as she leaned into the disco theme with glittering knee-high boots over fishnet tights. At the afterparty that night, she stepped out in a black sculptural corset from Mugler's archival capsule collection and a maxi skirt, still paired with Bvlgari jewellery.

Dua Lipa is currently in the studio working on her fourth album, but not even the angels in heaven know when that will be ready.

271626

High Jewellery Serpenti necklace in white gold 18kt with 2 pear brilliant-cut diamonds (1.07 ct), and pavé-set diamond (68.46 ct)

268908

High Jewellery Serpenti ring in yellow and white gold 18kt with 28 marquise diamonds (2.75 ct), 8 round and pear rubies (0.28 ct), and pavé-set diamonds (1.37 ct)



HIGH JEWELLERY WISH LIST

2026 is in full swing and so are the fashion houses as they release one incredible collection after another. A running theme through many of these collections is a fascination with the high fashion of the '30s and '40s. Of course, many of these collections are rejecting convention entirely and are questioning what High Jewellery even entails. Others are looking to nature, a timeless source of creativity throughout human history.

No matter where you go for your inspiration, human ingenuity will find a way to create a harmonious design that fascinates the senses. In an age where artificial intelligence trained on human creativity can play with the data it has been given, it is important to celebrate the exacting human craftsmanship that goes into forging raw materials that have been found deep in the ground into delicate works of art made for a purpose as frivolous as making you feel good, whether it be on the red carpet, or at an intimate night out with your loved one.



In pink gold, the Serpenti necklace by Bvlgari unfolds through turquoise elements and a sequence of oval cabochon mandarin garnets.

Photography by Eva Wang



Cartier

Cartier has found the intersection between High Jewellery, sculpture, and horology. To call the Myst de Cartier merely a watch is dismissive. To say it is just a bracelet is equally inaccurate. It is a piece of art that not only adorns you to make you stand out, but is also a completely necessary utility. Or that's what I always say every time I need an excuse to wear it.



This year seems to be one of looking to the '30s and '40s for inspiration, and Cartier has been no exception. "The new Myst de Cartier watch is all about volume and movement," says Pierre Rainero, Director of Image, Style and Heritage. "Its design follows in the footsteps of the jewellery watches created under the direction of Jeanne Toussaint in the early 1930s – pieces that were both sculptural and flamboyant."

The first thing you should know about the Myst de Cartier is just how truly surprising its construction is. It has no clasp, bringing to mind a trompe-l'oeil bracelet. Strung together like beads, the elements that comprise it resemble protective talismans. The composition puts alternating curves in stark contrast with a domed crystal and geometric pavé dial, which are surrounded by a delicate onyx frame with a triangular hour-marker.



These bold visual elements come together in a symmetry enhanced by spots of black lacquer.

30 hours of work are needed to hand-assemble the piece. Contrasting with the diamonds, the lines of black lacquer were hand-painted one-by-one by an artisan at the Maison des Métiers d'Art.

An alternative version forgoes the gold and lacquer, and instead covers the entire construction in 986 brilliant-cut diamonds and a dial paved with 45 snow-set brilliant-cut diamonds. That isn't to say the gold expression of the watch is lacking in the diamond department. It has 634 diamonds and 47 snow-set diamonds in the watch face surrounded by an onyx frame.

It's not a bracelet, it's not a talisman, it's not a watch. It's a work of art.



BVLGARI

Bvlgari has unveiled Eclettica, a new artistic frontier in the world of High Jewellery, expressing eclecticism as a way of creating beauty through vision, contrast and audacious imagination. At the heart of the collection, nine extraordinary pieces under the name Capolavori have been selected as the pinnacle of ingenuity and creativity. Capolavori is an Italian word meaning Masterpiece. It's not hard to see why they've been dubbed this way.

"The theme of this year's High Jewellery collection immediately captivated me and sparked my creativity. I have often sought to define Bvlgari in just a few words, and 'eclectic' is undoubtedly one of them," commented Lucia Silvestri, Bvlgari Jewellery Creative Director.

"In shaping Eclettica, I was guided by mesmerizing paintings, by audacious volumes that challenged our artisans in new ways, and by architecture, from which I drew the grace of geometry. Each creation embodies the harmony of contrast, born of multiplicity and transformed into wearable art."



Serpenti Imperial Heart High Jewellery Necklace

The Serpenti Imperial Heart High Jewellery necklace in white gold celebrates beauty that endures across time. This creation centres on an historic Golconda-Type diamond whose legendary purity seems equally eternal. Weighing 30.75 carats (D-IF), the gem was entrusted to Bvlgari to conceive a setting worthy of its rarity. The diamond is said to have once belonged to a Maharaja. Fully integrated into the serpent's anatomy, it forms the head, embraced by a bespoke star-shaped mounting that amplifies its luminous depth. Articulated through 180 seamlessly linked elements and realised over 1,400 hours of meticulous craftsmanship, the serpent hovers between strength and light, sculpture and jewellery.



Eclectic Embrace High Jewellery Collar

Echoing the ornamental geometry of Sammezzano Castle near Florence, the Eclectic Embrace High Jewellery collar in white gold translates Moorish mosaics and arabesques into an architectural jewel. At its centre, lies a richly-saturated 10.12-carat octagonal Colombian emerald, framed by pavé-set diamonds, emeralds and black onyx, each stone custom-cut like a tessera. Though boldly geometric, the collar moves with unexpected softness: 180 modular elements engineered for fluid, silk-like wearability. Over 1,000 hours of craftsmanship have found the balance between structure and sensuality.



Graff

For over 65 years, Graff has operated at the very pinnacle of the High Jewellery industry, discovering and crafting diamonds of brilliance and rarity.

Their latest collection is a culmination of everything they have learned in their time as a maker of Haute Couture finery. The new High Jewellery suite commands attention with a powerful, striking aesthetic, the hero being an extraordinary sapphire and diamond choker featuring a rare 31-carat sapphire.



Created over hundreds of hours by master artisans, Graff's new High Jewellery suite commands attention with a powerful, striking aesthetic.

The eye-catching centrepiece is a choker inspired by the moment a single droplet meets a still, iridescent pool of water. It features over 200 carats of expertly selected Graff diamonds. Emerald-cut white diamonds form a luminous, seamless surface, allowing light to flow across its geometry. At the centre of the choker sits a 31-carat unheated emerald-cut sapphire of Burmese origin, from which pear-shape diamonds and sapphires ripple outward – like the pool of water it is inspired by.

Matching earrings complete the composition, cascading with emerald-cut and pear-shape white diamonds and pear-shape sapphires, centred by matching 5-carat emerald-cut Sri Lankan sapphires. Together, the two pieces capture a refined mastery of lustre and movement – fluidity expressed in precious form.

A woman with her hair pulled back, wearing a black sequined dress and a Chanel necklace. The necklace features a large, ornate, diamond-encrusted clasp with a central gemstone, and long, thin, diamond-encrusted tassels hanging down the front of the dress. The background is a bright, white wall with soft shadows.

Chanel

You might have Gabrielle Chanel entirely to thank for the nostalgic timeless Hollywood aesthetic, since they were tasked with transporting the high fashion of Europe in the 1930s over the Atlantic to the stars of the silver screen. Today, Chanel continues that heritage with the new High Jewellery collection, "Reach for the Stars".



Calling upon her 1932 collection “Bijoux de Diamants”, Chanel worked with the spiky star shape – something she considered eternally modern. Almost 100 years later, she has been proven overwhelmingly right.

“Reach For the Stars” isn’t just a cute callback to Hollywood; it’s dead serious with its lineup featuring sensual pieces designed around three symbols: the comet, the lion and wings.

The comet is represented by the luxurious Dreams Come True Necklace, an exceptional creation set with white gold, diamonds, black-coated gold and a 6.06-carat brilliant-cut DFL diamond. It can be detached at its centre to be worn either long or short. A double cascade of jewels in openwork gold rests around the neck and is joined in the middle by a star set with a 6.06-carat round DFL diamond.

The Twin Stars Ring is an open double ring in white gold, which comes with a playful stylised shooting star with twinkling diamonds spraying out behind it. The other star is an 11.16-carat cushion-cut sapphire with intense colouration.

The Wings of Chanel necklace made with white gold, platinum, and diamonds introduces the House’s new graphic and sensual emblem: wings spread in openwork gold, like embroidery set with precious stones delicately resting around the neck. Just like the Dreams Come True Necklace, Chanel allows you to decide how you wear it. It has been elongated by a detachable line of star-studded diamonds that can be worn as a bracelet. At its heart is a cushion-cut Padparadscha sapphire, weighing an exceptional and rare 19.55

carats, lending a pink to orange hue to the piece.

Personally at M2woman, we adore the Full Swing Head Jewel set with a 3.08-carat pear-shaped DFL diamond. It is styled as a pair of wings wrapping around your head made with openwork gold set with round and navette-cut diamonds. Nothing says roaring ‘40s like this.

Finally, the Lion is represented by its own Toi et Moi ring complete with its own lion and star set with a 3.04-carat brilliant-cut fancy vivid yellow diamond. This is mirrored by the lion’s head in openwork gold beside it.

The Strong as a Lion Necklace completes this set with the same openwork lion set in a constellation of diamonds. Below it is a 3.08-carat brilliant-cut DFL diamond and a star set with a brilliant-cut diamond at its centre. Once again it can be worn long or short to suit.

Each set brings its own beauty and colour, and is worth reaching for while creating a night worth remembering.



Prada

High Jewellery is usually marked by sombre refinement with a little glitz here and there. Outrageous but somehow subdued, muted with cool blues. You get the idea. Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons don't follow any sort of playbook though.



They went out of their way to find jewels that leap out at you with their naturally vivid colours. Dubbed *Couleur Vivante*, the collection is defined by the likes of amethyst, aquamarine, madeira citrine, pink morganite and oro-verde peridot set inside drop earrings, solitaire rings, line bracelets and rivière necklaces.

This collection interrogates what luxury design even means. Natural flows are interrupted by stones that were diminutively described only as semiprecious. The designs were also made before the jewels were sourced, unusually for the High Jewellery scene. The end result is a set of pieces that are more reminiscent of 1950s cocktail glam than modern breeziness.

When you own one of these pieces, you don't just own the piece itself, you own its entire history. Prada has recorded each piece on the blockchain via the Aura Consortium. This gives you access to the gemstone's transformation from rough all the way through to cut and polished.



Partridge

We finish our world tour of High Jewellery in the best place on Earth, home. Designed by Andrea Lethiers, Ode to the Ocean is an exquisite collection of one-of-a-kind pieces that feel like treasures crafted by the ocean itself. This is fitting since each gemstone was hand-selected by Grant Partridge and his team to encapsulate the theme of New Zealand's seascape.



On the opening page, we featured Cova, which was inspired by the crystalline waters of Cathedral Cove. This design captures the energy of a clear, powerful wave in almost phosphorescent tones. A pear-shape 1.38-carat Paraiba tourmaline gleams at its heart, accented with delicate diamonds that shimmer like sunlight on the sea.

Marina is a ring that not only evokes a school of fish dancing through a deep body of water, it even illustrates it if you look close enough. Hidden among the bubble of diamonds, you can find small fish swimming throughout, truly celebrating marine life



in motion. At its centre is an 8.10-carat oval Santa Maria aquamarine, set in platinum and encircled by pavé diamonds that shimmer like scales beneath the surface.

At M2woman, our personal favourite goes to Neptune, a ring that curves and mimics the calming movement of water slipping between your fingers. Its eye-catching centrepiece is a pear-shape 2.66-carat Santa Maria aquamarine. It is, in turn, surrounded by pavé diamonds and sapphire cabochons, a composition of true oceanic elegance.

MIU MIU LEATHER GOOD

A dynamic and youthful idealism characterises the new Miu Miu leather goods campaign. Hadid is gamine in appearance; her elegance and confidence shine all the more brightly in a place which is otherwise staid, staged with furniture and in a colour palette that is neutral and, perhaps, from an era other than her own.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: MIUCCIA PRADA

ART DIRECTION: CHRISTOPHER SIMMONDS

PHOTOGRAPHER: STEVEN MEISEL

DIRECTOR: JORDAN HEMINGWAY

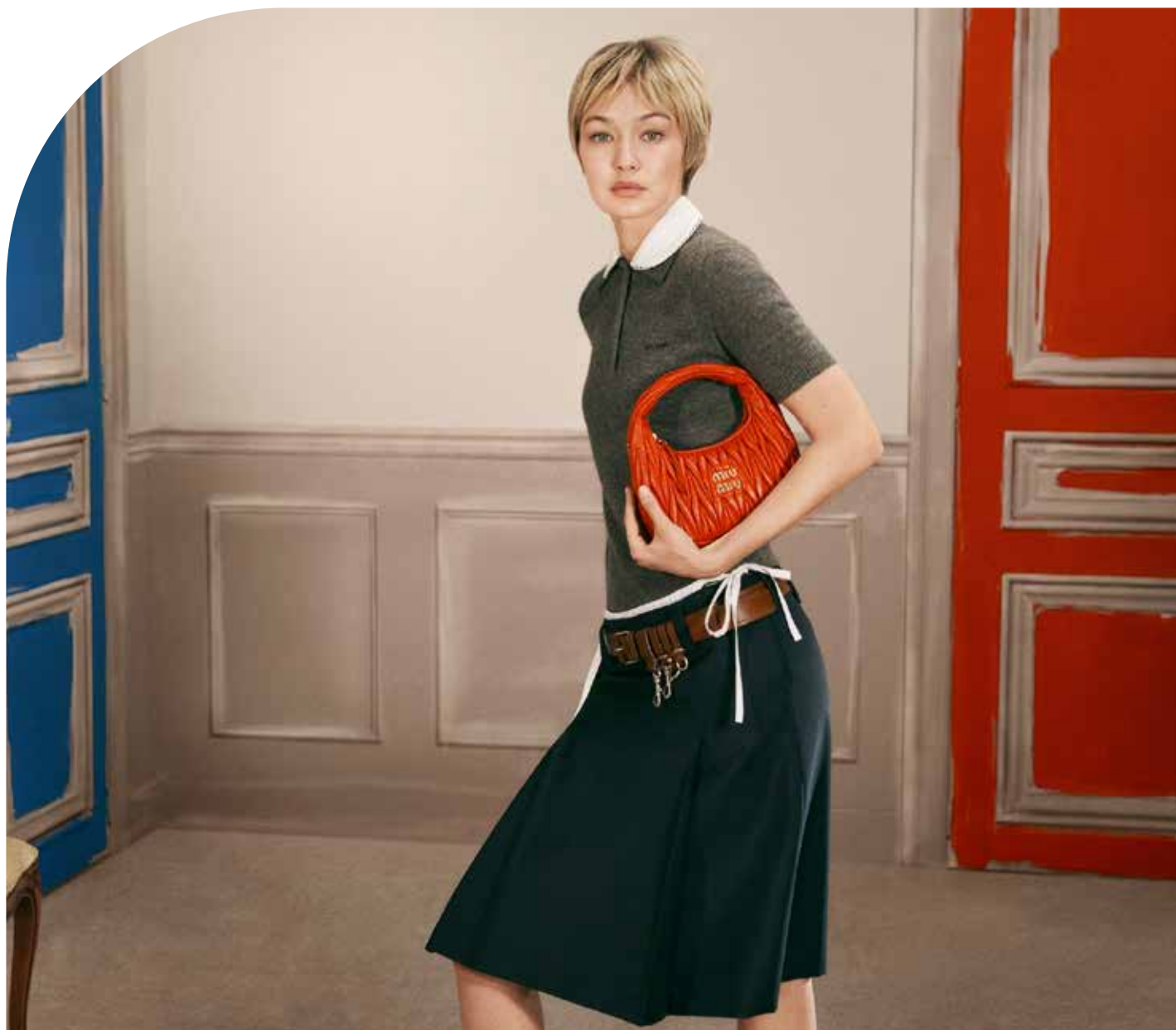
STYLING: LOTTA VOLKOVA

CAST: GIGI HADID





The Arcadie and Wander bags, as always, also have starring roles, in emblematic, matelassé leather, Miu Miu's most recognisable signature and an enduring symbol of the brand's innovative technique and rarefied craft. Both are in a palette at once chiming and wilfully clashing with the surroundings, in pop colours, as well as more muted and sophisticated tones. With their eased, quilted bodies and silhouette that is not only aesthetically impactful but also sits naturally against the body of the wearer, these beloved designs are the perfect accompaniment to both wardrobe and ambience.





BEAUTY



GLACIAL GROUNDING

Navigate the deep freeze with a protection-first mindset
to fortify the barrier against the elements.

BEAUTY BY SOPHIE CHUNG | IMAGE BY DOLCE&GABBANA

BEAUTY HOTLIST

Update your winter ritual with this curation of hand-picked essentials to safeguard your mood against the chill.

1

BALANCED BASELINE

No longer just for the gym bros, creatine is the season's breakout star for women's wellness.

BePure Creatine & Magnesium, \$49.90, supports not only muscle strength but bone, cognitive and metabolic health across all life stages.

2

SERENE SANCTUARY

Created in collaboration with New York-based perfumer Michelle DeFina, **CIRCA** Cherry Blossom & Green Tea Soy Candle, \$52.95, is a warm contemporary floral grounded by soft musk and sandalwood.

3

LIQUID GLASS

Pairing Niacinamide with Crystalide peptides, **Medik8** Niacinamide Peptides, \$120, calms redness, refines pores and strengthens the skin's barrier to create a glass-like glow.

4

GLACIAL GLOW

Inspired by sunlight on fresh snow, **Tom Ford** Soleil Neige, EDP, 50ml, \$298, blends bergamot and white florals that melt into a smooth, sensual musk for a radiant, cool-weather signature scent.

5

DERMAL DEXTERITY

An ode to our most hardworking appendages, **Aēsop** Solais Replenishing Hand Serum, \$69, uses facial skincare intelligence to brighten and even the skin tone.

6

WAND WIZARDRY

Featuring an innovative Korean-made metal wand, **MECCAMAX** Fangirl Mascara, \$33, is a glossy black tubing formula that lifts, lengthens and fans the lashes.

7

BARRIER DEFENSE

Combining physical filters with vitamins C, E, and beta-carotene, **Environ** RAD ACTIVÉ Antioxidant Sun Cream SPF 20, \$89, reinforces the skin's natural barrier while neutralising free radicals for resilient daily UV protection.

8

HYDRATED HERITAGE

New Zealand-founded **GULP** evolves from its treatment-led roots at The Facialist into a hydration-focused skincare brand. This five-piece edit simplifies routines through high-performance, science-led formulations designed for maximum skin health.

9

OPULENT EDGE

Dolce&Gabbana The One, EDPI, 50ml, \$244, is a bold, ambery floral reinterpretation of the iconic original. Vibrant pink pepper and blackcurrant melt into a luminous jasmine heart, grounded by a creamy vanilla and opulent amber base.

10

MONOCHROMATIC MAGIC

Nudestix launches its cult-favourite "Sweet Cheeks" shade in three finishes – Matte, Bloom and Glow – offering a soft, warm pink reimagined for every mood.

11

AOTEAROA ARTISTRY

Created entirely from New Zealand botanicals, **tahi** skincare Ritual Set, \$149, celebrates the potent healing properties of native flora. Harnessing kawakawa, harakeke, propolis, and koromiko, this grounding sequence restores balance to provide a deeply nourishing, luminous glow for the skin.

12

OPTICAL ILLUSION

A translucent balm-gel with blurring technology, **Trinny London** Miracle Blur Diffuser, \$59, smooths fine lines and pores for a perfected, soft-focus complexion in seconds.





A definitive briefing on the season's most significant drops, delivering the innovation and artistry needed to elevate your routine.

GLOSS GUARD

The shift toward glass hair and structural integrity has redefined the modern wash-day, prioritising mirror-like shine and deep-fibre repair. Focusing on internal repair, the **Redken** Acidic Bonding Concentrate range, comprising the Shampoo, Conditioner, and Leave-In Treatment, \$63 each, transforms all hair types by reinforcing weakened bonds and providing ultimate strength repair and intense conditioning. Formulated with hyaluronic and glycolic acids and wild rose oil, **Kérastase** Gloss Absolu Anti-Frizz Glaze Milk Spray, \$92, is an all-in-one smoothing spray for frizz-prone lengths. A multi-tasking essential for daily maintenance, **BondiBoost** Miracle Mist serves as a lightweight, nutrient-dense elixir that detangles, strengthens, and protects against environmental stressors.



PLUMPING PROTOCOL

Dermalogica LuminFusion Plump Peel, \$260, is a transformative dual-phase treatment that bridges the gap between traditional chemical peels and barrier health by offering visible results with zero downtime or visible flaking. This innovative system uses a resurfacing balm with AHAs, PHAs, retinol and enzymes, followed by a “fizzing” activator to instantly hydrate and volumise the skin. Paired with the Pro Pen and LED Light Therapy, the treatment delivers a professional-grade glow for all skin types and tones.



HAILEY'S HEROES

Arguably the most exciting global expansion into New Zealand, **Rhode**, the breakthrough beauty brand founded by Hailey Rhode Bieber, landed on our shores in February. The curated lineup features the viral, high-shine Peptide Lip Tint, \$39, designed to nourish the lips while leaving a sheer but buildable colour; Glazing Milk, \$63, a nutrient-rich essence that preps the barrier; and the Pocket Blush, \$49, a creamy, portable flush of colour that delivers a satiny finish for that signature, effortless glow.





POWERED PAIRINGS

The emergence of high-performance bases that prioritise skin health over heavy coverage has turned the daily makeup routine into a final step of skincare. Leading this shift, **Clarins** Double Serum Foundation 2-in-1, \$105, is a true hybrid that houses their formula in a dual-chamber system to combine at the moment of application. For those seeking longevity that is weather-proof, gym-proof, and transfer-proof, the newly reformulated **Estée Lauder** Double Wear Stay-in-Place Makeup, \$93, now offers a more breathable and buildable formula with a never-flat matte finish. Meanwhile, **Embryolisse** CC Cream, \$75, provides a lightweight, universal veil that harnesses hyaluronic acid and soft-focus pigments to instantly blur imperfections while nourishing the skin barrier.

EYES ON YOU

The rise of high-impact yet low-maintenance eyes has made versatile palettes and tactile shadow sticks the new indispensable kit essentials.

Anastasia Beverly Hills Haze Eyeshadow Mini Palette, \$55, offers a curated selection of nine muted mattes and high-shine metallics for a sophisticated cool-toned look.

Elevating the experience, **Tom Ford** Eye Quad, \$180, remains the gold standard for luxury pigment payoff, sculpting the eye in runway-inspired finishes. For a singular swipe of pigment, **Anastasia Beverly Hills**

Glidr Shadow Stick, \$49, provides water-resistant budge-free wear in matte, metallic and sparkle finishes while the **Bobbi Brown** Crystal Eyes Shadow Stick, \$69, imparts a luminous shimmer with a jelly-like fresh and weightless feel that's buildable for day or night.



POLISHED POUT

The current shift toward “lip-care-as-colour” has turned the humble pout into the ultimate canvas for hydration and high-tech pigment. Proving that performance and clean formulations can coexist, **Aleph** Aura Gloss, \$58, uses fenugreek sprout extract to visibly improve fullness and definition over time. For a balm formula, **SIMKA** Peptide Plumping Lip Therapy, \$44, doubles hyaluronic acid synthesis to deeply hydrate, while **Laneige** Juicepop Box Lip Tint, \$36, offers a water-to-oil formula that locks in eight hours of juicy, buildable colour. Finally, the cult-favourite “Honey” franchise expands with **Clinique** Quickliner for Lips, \$47, now available in Black Honey, Pink Honey, and Nude Honey to perfectly define and hold your lipstick in place all day.



PROACTIVE PROTECTION

A new era of preventative skincare has arrived, pairing potent corrective actives with nutrient-rich formulas that safeguard the skin's future.

Leading this protective charge, **Dermalogica** Pro-Collagen Banking Water Cream, \$155, employs a potent blend of collagen amino acids and peptides to help bank collagen and elastin in the skin's natural stores. For targeted restoration, **Elizabeth Arden** Retinol + HPR Ceramide Rapid Skin Renewing Eye Cream, \$135, combines high-performance retinoids with protective ceramides to smooth the delicate eye area without irritation. Grounding the routine in local botanical wisdom,

TWYG Renewing Antioxidant Facial Oil, \$135, uses the properties of totarol to combat oxidative stress, while **RAESO** Tranquillity Water Activating

Mist, \$139, provides an instant sensorial reset, flooding the skin with mineral-rich New Zealand volcanic thermal water to soothe and stabilise the complexion.



A woman with dark hair is lying in bed, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a dark-colored shirt with thin, light-colored vertical stripes. Her arms are raised, resting on two large pillows that also feature the same striped pattern. The duvet covering her is also striped. The overall lighting is soft and warm, creating a cozy atmosphere.

living

Over Easter, my partner and I attended our friend's Icelandic wedding. A beautiful couple finally tied the knot. During the speeches, the sister of the groom referenced their family as a "randy Scandy family", which tickled me enough to want to get in on the action with my own punny title. Wordplay aside, the two things this region of the planet is good at are staying warm and looking good.

While Hommey is an Australian lifestyle brand, their Head of Design Jamie Ashkar developed a lasting impression of the Scandinavian approach after spending years in Copenhagen. Drawing on that impression, they have run with it and developed a Scandinavian-inspired collection spanning bedroom, bathroom and living, designed to flow seamlessly across the whole home.



"I was drawn to the restraint, the softness, the way simplicity becomes a statement in itself," Jamie says. "This collection is us channelling that warmth through Hommey's own lens." The palette of Hazelnut, Chocolate, Cream, Cornflower and Riviera carries that same quiet confidence, with pinstripe details that add dimension without visual noise.

For Founder Justin Kestelman, the range is also a deliberate statement. "This collection is Hommey leaning into what makes us different. Being copied on a product level is inevitable – but what can't be copied is our ability to curate a point of view, invest in design and creative, and tell a story that resonates. This collection is us leaning fully into that."

It is also the first time Hommey has designed with the whole home in mind, with each category speaking to the next both aesthetically and functionally. Bedding sits at the heart of it, made from 100 percent organic cotton in two styles: the Versa reversible design in Caramel/Cream and Chocolate/Mist, and the Solid range in Hazelnut and Riviera. Towels come in Pinstripe and Solid styles across the same colourways, with two-pack bath towels from \$88 and bath sheets from \$128.

Cotton/Ramie robes in Hazelnut and Chocolate are \$129, with Stripe PJ sets including long shirt (\$99), short shirt (\$89), pants (\$99) and shorts (\$89).

"From the outset, I knew this needed to be more than a series of product launches," says Jamie. "It had to feel like a complete expression of the Hommey lifestyle. Every element feels purposeful, yet effortless."

The collection is available now at gethommey.com.au and across all Hommey stores.



OUTSIDE IN

There is a reason indoor-outdoor living never really goes out of style.

Done well, it gives you the best of both worlds: the comfort, polish and intimacy of a beautifully considered interior, with the freshness, light and unrestrained ease of the natural world. Sometimes, that means drawing greenery, daylight and organic texture further into the home. Sometimes, it means taking the discipline of interior design outside, so a terrace, conservatory, bathroom or dining space feels just as inviting as any room within four walls. The following pages are full of ideas that do exactly that. From outdoor kitchens with the composure of indoor joinery to bathrooms softened by planting, and dining setups that blur the line between garden and home, these spaces show that the magic often resides in the blurry in-between.

GREENHOUSE EFFECT

When you are styling an indoor-outdoor space, work with what is already there, rather than fighting it. The smartest thing about this setup is that it does not try to make the greenhouse feel like a formal dining room. It keeps the charm of the structure, then adds just enough indoor comfort to make people want to linger. String lights soften the structure, lanterns create pockets of glow and TruGlow candles bring warmth at table level. Together, they do what one overhead fitting never can: make a space feel intimate. Another good takeaway is to keep the table relaxed. In a setting like this, slightly undone usually looks better than overly polished. Simple crockery, soft linen and a bit of asymmetry feel more natural. The best indoor-outdoor spaces are the ones that feel easy, atmospheric and just polished enough.





Colour match: Resene Campground



TUB LIFE

This space is a good example of using natural elements to humanise luxury. The Maison Valentina Symphony Oval Bathtub and Armour Stool bring presence and elegance, but the real trick is the planting. In a bathroom, especially one with a pale or polished palette, greenery can stop everything feeling too pristine. Though a dramatic living wall to achieve this effect isn't the only answer. One larger plant, softer curves and materials with some texture will shift the mood significantly. Indoor-outdoor design in a bathroom is really about creating a sense of exhale – you want the room to feel restorative, not just expensive.



Colour match: Resene Balance

GRILL SEEKER

The smartest outdoor kitchens borrow the discipline of indoor ones. That is the key idea here. The outdoor Frame kitchen by FANTIN feels elevated because it is treated as part of the home's design story, not as a stand-alone barbecue zone. Open shelving works well outdoors because it keeps things light and gives tableware a decorative role. Textured ceramics, boards and serving pieces can soften more architectural materials.

The broader lesson is to make outdoor cooking feel habitual rather than improvised. Once the space looks resolved and properly considered, people start using it like a real room rather than something rolled out only in summer.



OVERHEAD AMBITIONS

For some reason, outdoor spaces usually improve the moment you give them one thing that feels deliciously indoor. In this case, it is Juliette's Interiors' Crystal Glass Outdoor Chandelier, an IP66-rated waterproof six-arm chandelier designed to handle rain, humidity, wind, dust, salt corrosion and temperature swings. The tip is not necessarily to hang a chandelier over the lawn, although that does have a certain confidence to it. It is to introduce one elevated, unexpected feature that gives an exterior setting the polish of an interior. Outdoor rooms often have furniture and planting, but they are missing that sense of occasion overhead. A statement light fixes that quickly. It also helps define the space, making a terrace or garden table feel more intimate and more intentional. Keep the rest of the setting simple and let the hero piece do the heavy lifting.



LAWN AND ORDER

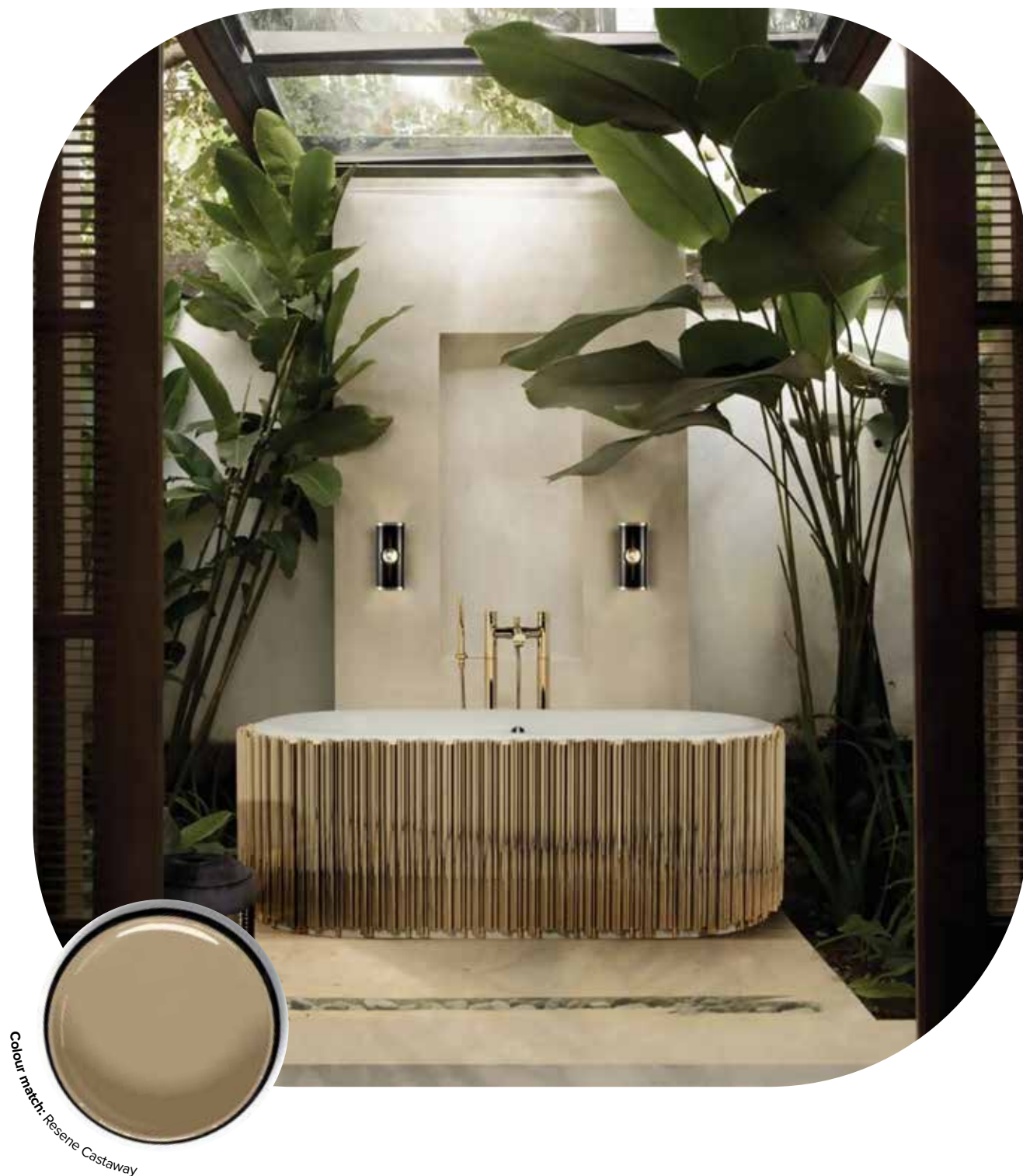
This scene is less about “outdoor furniture” and more about making an exterior space behave like a proper room. The clever move is the symmetry. Two low, generous sofa modules face each other across a matching coffee table, which instantly gives the area the calm social logic of an indoor living room. The Modular Designer Outdoor Garden Seating Sofa Set from Juliette’s Interiors helps because it is deliberately built to blur that line, with four configurable modules, a matching coffee table, Iroko wood, white powder-coated plinth bases and pale grey all-weather upholstery that is UV-, pool- and seawater-resistant. The low profile is smart too; it keeps the sightlines open to the planting and garden beyond, so the room feels sheltered but never shut off.



LEMON AID

Bringing the outdoors in does not require rustic clichés. This kitchen works because the architecture is controlled and the natural elements are edited. The Frame kitchen by FANTIN has strong lines and a very resolved structure, but the room avoids feeling cold because greenery and produce soften it. That is the tip: start with one clear design language, then add a few organic notes. A bowl of fruit, one sculptural plant, timber accents, natural light. Done properly, that feels much more sophisticated than scattering nature-themed styling everywhere.

Indoor-outdoor design is usually strongest when it is restrained.



SOAK AND AWE

The big takeaway here is that bathrooms need softness as much as they need polish. The Darian bath from Maison Valentina is bold and glamorous, but what stops the room feeling cold is the way nature is brought into the scheme. Planting, warm timber tones and layered textures all counterbalance the harder finishes. If you have a bathroom full of stone, tile, glass or metal, add something live or tactile to interrupt it. A bathroom does not need to become a jungle, but it does need contrast. The best indoor-outdoor spaces aren't overt – they bring depth, ensuring a highly-finished room never feels emotionally flat.



Colour match: Resene Sazerac

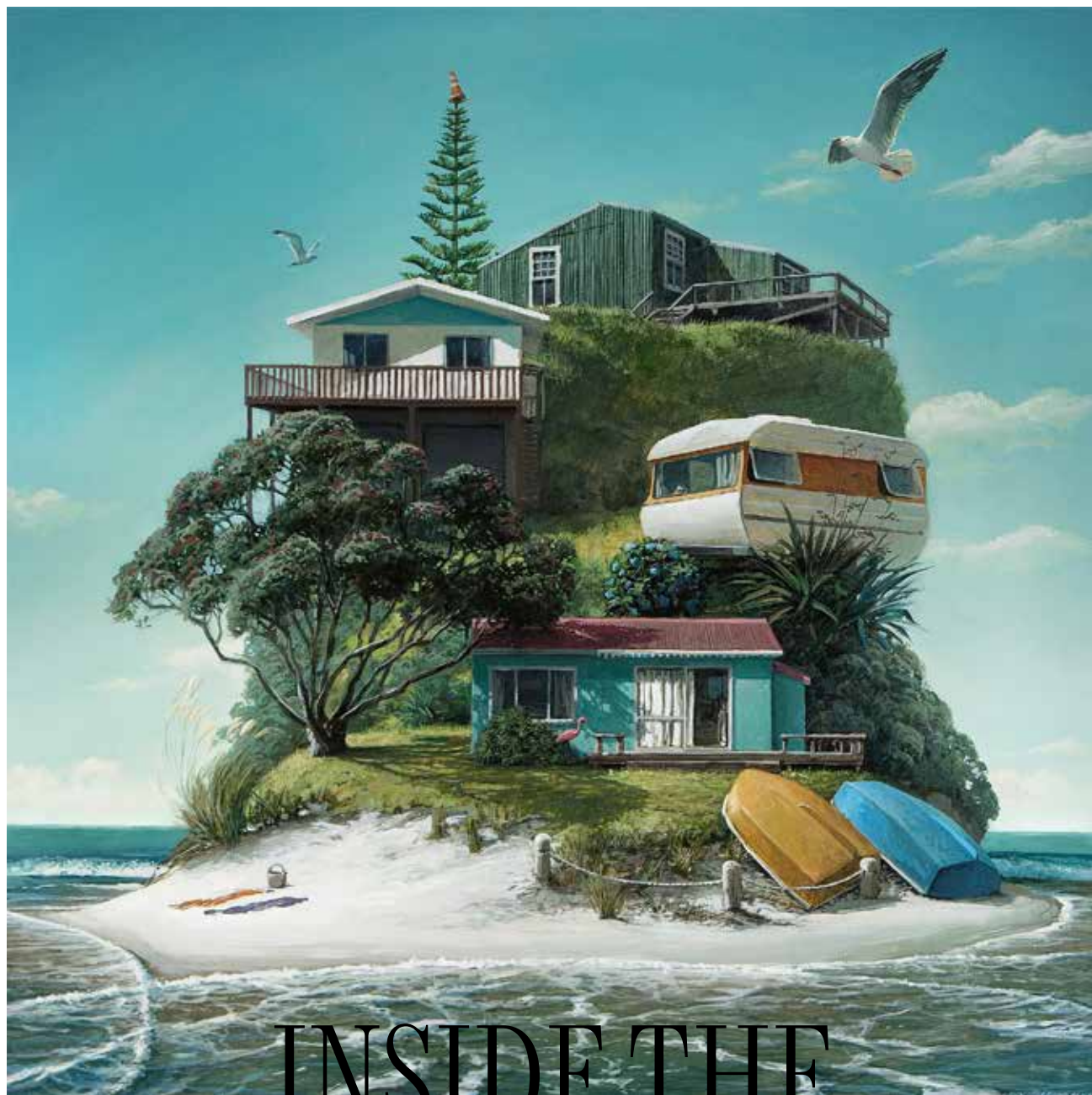
GINGHAM STYLE

You do not need a Scandinavian-designed greenhouse and a table that looks as though it was poured from artisanal cement by a very stylish man named Lars. The useful tip here is much simpler: let the table do the work. Sophie Allport's Warm Stone Gingham Linen Tablecloth brings instant structure, then everything else can stay relaxed. A few pots of herbs, some fruit or veg, simple candlesticks and napkins that are not folded within an inch of their life will get you most of the way there. The best indoor-outdoor tables usually feel a bit gathered rather than painstakingly "styled". Use what is already around you, keep the palette soft and natural, and let a little ease in. That is often what makes a setting feel charming rather than try-hard.



TROPIC LIKE IT'S HOT

Here is a great example of the power of contrast. This shower scene feels connected to nature because the greenery is generous and immersive, but the black accents keep it sharp and contemporary rather than drifting into spa cliché. Going bigger with planting and tighter with everything else is often the smarter move. A few oversized natural elements will do far more than lots of scattered decorative touches. The black-framed shower gives the space structure, while Maison Valentina's Diamond Towel Rack, a three-tier polished brass piece set on a diamond-shaped Nero Marquina marble base, adds a more refined indoor note. That balance is what makes the room work so well: organic softness meeting crisp architectural control.



Barry Ross Smith

INSIDE THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

There is a little bit of an irony in the art world in that most of it is made far away from where most people see it. Not in grand institutions or under flattering track lighting with a waiter drifting past holding a tray of exotic mollusc hors d'oeuvres and Champagne. More often, it is made in garages, converted rooms, sheds, shared spaces, and home studios tucked next to the wheelie-bin spot at the bottom of a typical suburban driveway. Which is exactly why open studio weekends are so compelling. They cut through some of the hoopla and distance that tends to build up around art and the art world. One such example is Open Art Studios Upper

Harbour. On Saturday, 9 May and Sunday, 10 May 2026, nine studios and 20 artists across Auckland's Upper Harbour area will open their doors to the public, offering access to working spaces that are normally private. Visitors will be able to move between studios in Greenhithe, Albany, Rosedale, Unsworth Heights and surrounding suburbs, meeting artists and getting a first-hand peek at their process.

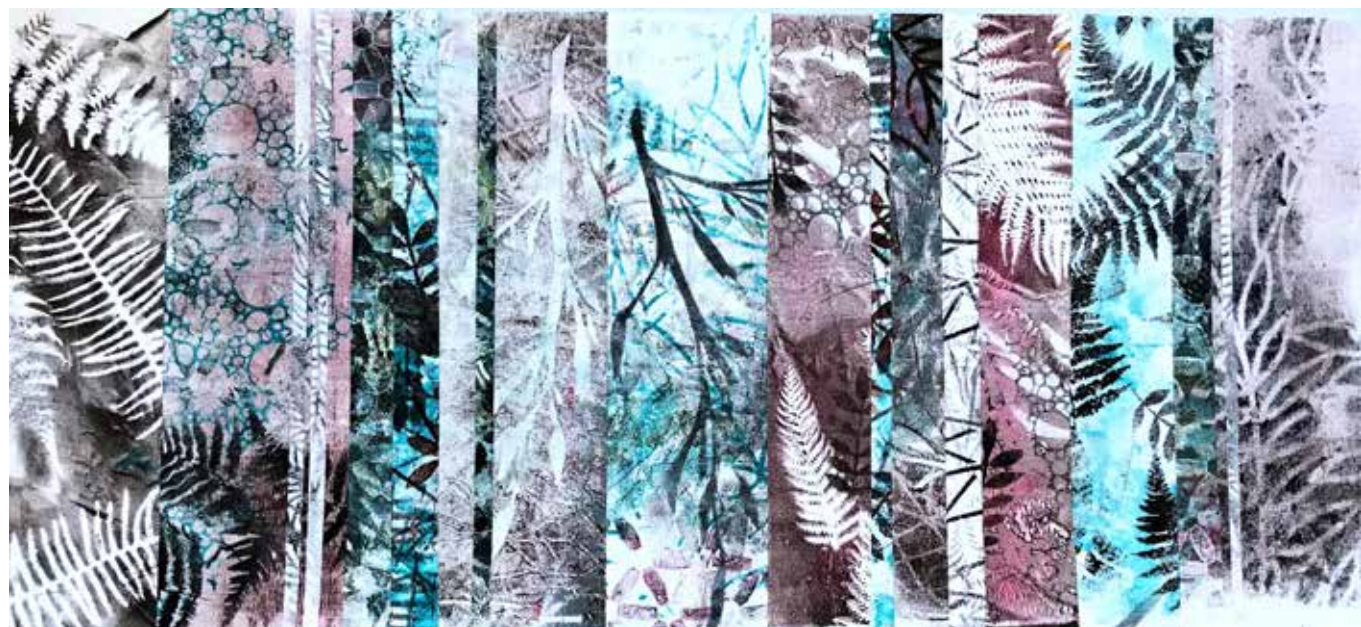


Michael Freeman



Margaret Sumich

It's very hyperlocal for a nationwide magazine, but we think this is an important movement. For all the talk about supporting the arts in New Zealand, the real backbone of creative culture is often built at community level through local organisers, local funding, local audiences and artists willing to open up spaces that are usually personal, private and a little hidden.



Lesley Pearce

Open Art Studios Upper Harbour is returning for its second year, funded by the Upper Harbour Local Board and led by Renée Tanner of Lightbox Projects. The 2026 programme has expanded after a strong first year, with additional studios still being confirmed.

Tanner describes it as a chance to open spaces that people would not normally get to see, and to experience art where it is actually made, rather than only as finished work in a gallery. There is also a lack of pretence in the format. Open studio events tend to attract a broader mix of people because they feel less coded. You do not need to pretend you have strong feelings about negative space and the golden triangle. You can just turn up, look around, ask questions and maybe buy some art.

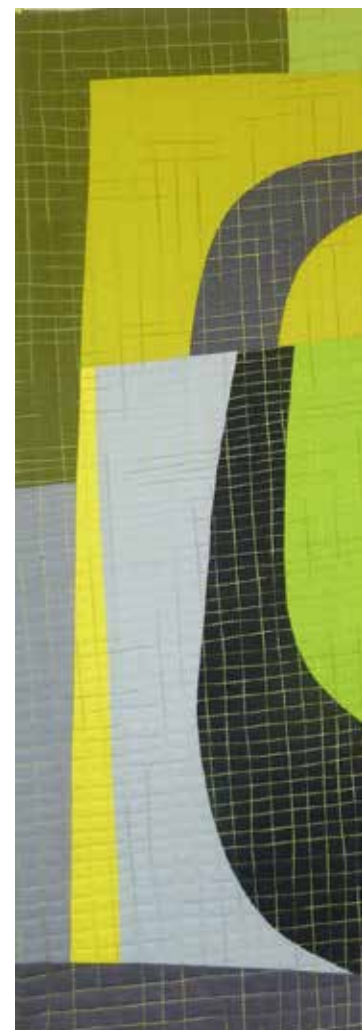
Julie Freeman



Sheree Foster

The artist line-up spans a wide range of practices. Ryan Mateo Art, based in Albany Heights, is a self-taught wire sculptor opening his home studio to visitors. His work turns metal into expressive hanging and table-mounted forms, and guests will be able to watch the process and take part in hands-on wire weaving.

Barry Ross Smith, in Greenhithe, creates surreal oil paintings of islands, colonial villas and oversized birds, with work that draws oblique attention to environmental issues and the after-effects of colonialism on native species. Sarah Ward, also in Greenhithe, is an award-winning textile artist known for abstract quilts that range from bold and expressive to more restrained palettes.





The Freemanz Studio will offer a look at hyper-realistic pastel works in progress, while Mead Ceramics and Apollo Clay & Art will run live pottery demonstrations, with handmade cups, bowls and functional ceramic pieces available to purchase.

It is a good mix, partly because it reflects the range that exists within local creative communities and partly because it resists the idea that “art” is one thing. It can be sculptural, domestic, conceptual, technical, tactile, decorative, political or all of the above. In a studio setting, those categories also become less rigid. You are not just encountering an object. You are seeing how someone works, the little trinkets of inspiration, the iterations, and some of the wider context behind the final artwork.



Sarah Ward



The weekend also includes a couple of smart additions around the studio trail itself. Opening Night on Friday, 8 May at the Greenhithe Old School Building brings together artists, organisers and the local community over drinks and nibbles, with event maps available to help visitors plan their route. Then on Sunday afternoon, artist Xie Yi will host a Zen Tea and Mindful Painting session at Mount Top Art Studio in Unsworth Heights, combining tea ritual and painting in a more reflective setting. These details help broaden the weekend from a simple browse into something with a bit more rhythm and personality.



Open Art Studios Upper Harbour is part of a wider series of open studio events across Auckland, with Kaipātiki and Waitākere opening later in the year. Not every area needs a major gallery precinct or a flagship cultural building to have a meaningful arts identity. Sometimes, what it needs is a cool format and a way for people to really connect artwork with art work.





CROWNING GLORY

Queenstown has just welcomed its newest five-star luxury alpine sanctuary. Perched overlooking the Shotover River by Arthur's Point sits the Coronet Ridge Resort, an intimate retreat that mixes impeccable hospitality with the rugged beautiful views the South Island is famous for.



Queenstown has just welcomed its newest five-star luxury alpine sanctuary. Perched overlooking the Shotover River by Arthur's Point sits the Coronet Ridge Resort, an intimate retreat that mixes impeccable hospitality with the rugged, beautiful views the South Island is famous for.

It's both the perfect home base for adventuring out being just 10 minutes from the world-renowned Coronet Peak Ski Area. Likewise, you could always be a homebody making the most of the resort's Roman spa, sauna, and steam room or delicious catering. Why not get a massage while you're at it. You deserve it.

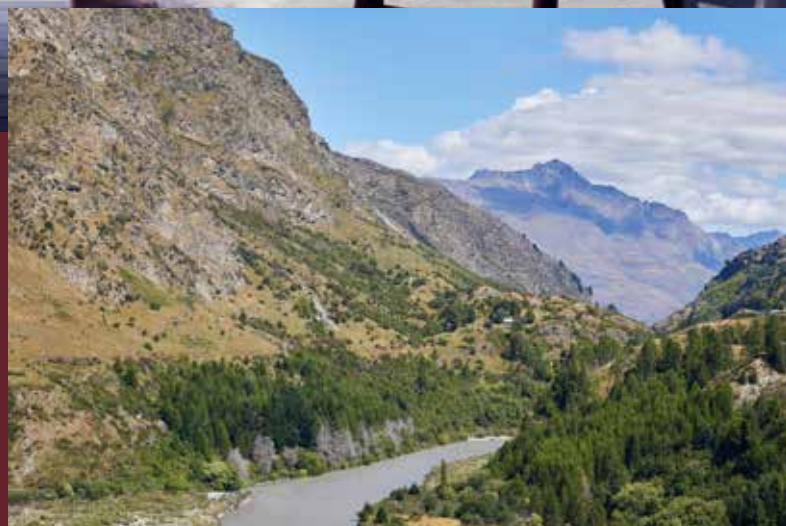
Each of the 41 rooms and suites has its own private balcony and patio with spectacular mountain





vistas or garden view rooms. So whether you're in a 37sqm Alpine View and Shotover River View rooms, 70sqm Shotover Suites or a 70sqm two-bedroom Coronet Suite, you're guaranteed to be able to enjoy the view. Interiors are decked out in a sophisticated palette of warm, natural tones, with bespoke timber joinery and sumptuous textures.

The lodgings are just a 9-minute drive from the center of town, so you're not far from some of the best eateries and restaurants Queenstown has to offer, but staying closer to home the Coronet offers its very own Elevation Bar & Restaurant with views of the Wakatipu Basin and the Remarkables. Executive Chef Dominic Dsouza uses locally sourced ingredients to inspire a seasonal menu, whether you're starting the day with a gourmet breakfast or dinner. Their lamb and eggs come straight from Nadia Lim's Royallburn Station farm





situated between Arrowtown and Wānaka. They're the only station in the southern hemisphere with its own abattoir, meaning this is the closest you can get to true farm-to-table food. Dsouza's career includes stages at world-renowned Michelin-starred establishments including Geranium (Denmark), Sidart and Sid at the French Café (Auckland), Gaggan (Bangkok), and Alma by Juan Amador (Singapore). At Coronet Ridge he marries classical French techniques with New Zealand ingredients, reflecting his Indian heritage.

The Elevation Bar & Restaurant's terrace allows dining in the fresh alpine air, and during the winter you can cozy up at the Library Bar with its fireplace with a wine or single malt.

Definitely consider Coronet Ridge next time you go south.



THE LONG-HAUL JOURNEY

35 Years of Grit, Growth, and Innovative Travel

These days, the travel industry is brimming with algorithmic social feeds, tracked ads, apps and online booking systems, but Robyn Galloway is living proof that nothing can replace true human experience, expertise and passion. As the founder of Innovative Travel, Galloway has led her company through the massive technological and geopolitical shifts of the last 35 years. Yet, still her business remains built on a philosophy that prioritises specialised knowledge and deep, personal relationships.



The origins of Innovative Travel are in stark contrast to today's tools and digital access. "Innovative Travel started very humbly," she reflects. "It was just me with a phone, a fax and a typewriter. Now they're normally museum pieces these days, most of them. So it's been a long journey and an interesting journey." From that single desk in 1990, she began to carve out a reputation as a destination specialist and wholesaler – a role that sits distinctly apart from a standard high street travel agency. "We're not a travel agent," she explains. "We're a destination specialist, a wholesaler, a specialty tour designer. So we are experts in certain regions of the world, and that's where we come in."

This journey from the analogue to the digital has been a significant evolution. In the early '90s, the simple act of coordinating international travel was a massive financial and logistical undertaking. "I remember our communication bills back in 1990 were about \$15,000 because everything was faxed. So it was very clunky and expensive communication." While current technology has streamlined these processes, Galloway remains cautious about the current rush toward total automation. While her organisation is looking to include artificial intelligence over certain components of the business, she is adamant that it must never replace the human connection that her clients rely on. "AI can give an answer, it is not necessarily the right answer," she observes. "So I think we're actually looking to include some AI in some components of our business, but we can't just - we can't detract - from the people factor."

Galloway's specialised focus is shaped by a deep love for the Middle East and the Mediterranean, a passion sparked by

her first visit to Egypt in 1986. That trip did more than just introduce her to ancient monuments: it fundamentally shifted her understanding of the region and its people. "I think that really changed my life because I was just so astounded by the hospitality and warmth of the people. It was very different to stock standard ideas about what Middle Eastern people might be like." This personal connection has become the foundation of her business model, leading her to focus on countries such as Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey alongside Egypt. To maintain this edge, Galloway and her team are constantly on the ground.

"We physically site inspect the hotels and the Nile cruise boats throughout the year because we want to make sure we're working on real information, not PR material."

The most transformative business decision Galloway ever made was the choice to bring in deep, local partnerships. In the mid-1990s, she formed a partnership with Cairo-based director Elhamy Elzayat. Galloway recalls the conversation that changed her trajectory: "How would you feel if I became a director in your company? And that turned out to be the best decision I ever made because he's regarded as a grandfather of Egyptian tourism." She explains that she sought a business partner who understood the complexities of building a business. "I didn't

want somebody as a business partner who had an easy road. I wanted them to understand the challenges of growth so that we were a match in that way."

Through this partnership, Innovative Travel gained access to a level of local influence that is unavailable to the average operator. Galloway recounts the benefit of a VIP express immigration service that allows her clients to bypass hour-long queues. "You arrive in Egypt, and our local partner has

"I think that really changed my life because I was just so astounded by the hospitality and warmth of the people."



a special express lane for immigration," she explains. "You don't stand in the line that's an hour and a half long. You just walk straight through, and everyone thinks, 'Who's that famous person going through?'" It gives absolute security for people who might be a bit tired or a bit nervous. They know they're with the right people from the moment they land."

Beyond the logistical perks, this partnership provided a masterclass in resilient leadership. Galloway observed Elzayat's commitment to his staff during downturns in the market, a move that ensured the business was ready to surge when the good times returned. "Even though that's cost him personally a lot of money, he's always retained his key staff so that when the good times come, they're able to handle the business."

That resilience has been tested anew in 2026, as conflict in Iran sent fresh uncertainty rippling across the broader Middle East. For many travel operators, such headlines would prompt retreat. For Galloway, they demanded clarity and decisive action. She was quick to distinguish the region's geography for concerned travellers, stressing that "the Middle East" is a broad term spanning many countries, and that Egypt, with no US bases on its soil, sits well apart from the conflict. Egypt's travel advisory level had remained stable and low for over 18 months, comparable to destinations such as the United Kingdom.

"I didn't want somebody as a business partner who had an easy road. I wanted them to understand the challenges of growth so that we were a match in that way."



To reinforce the message with actions rather than words, Galloway booked herself on a flight to Cairo, arriving on 14 April to personally walk the Pyramids, visit the new Grand Egyptian Museum, and share the journey in real time via social media. "Leadership in action," she wrote to her agent network, a phrase that neatly captures her instinct to lead from the front.

The pandemic, too, reshaped the way people think about booking travel. For a period, the convenience of online platforms had seemed to make the traditional specialist redundant. Then Covid arrived, and travellers who had booked independently found themselves stranded and entirely on their own. The experience prompted a significant reassessment. Innovative Travel's model, connecting clients with a locally owned, trusted family company in each key destination, suddenly made a great deal of sense. That network ensures 24/7 local backup for travellers while they are on the ground, and it provides the kind of flexibility that online platforms cannot replicate: the ability to design a genuinely personal itinerary, to extend a stay, to spend two or three days properly exploring



the new Grand Egyptian Museum rather than rushing through it.

None of this would be possible without the people behind the scenes. Galloway is quick to acknowledge that the business could not function without the commitment and expertise of a team that, in many cases, has stayed with the company for years. In an industry where staff turnover is high and institutional knowledge is easily lost, that continuity is itself a competitive advantage.

For an SME to grow and remain relevant over three decades, Galloway believes that stagnant thinking is the greatest risk. She encourages other business leaders to make clear priorities and plan for the future, even when resources are limited. "If you keep doing the same thing, you get the same old results, as they say," she observes. "And in a changing world, that's not a luxury that any business can have." This requires a constant state of evolution, whether it is upgrading digital systems or finding new ways to reach clients. She recently completed a roadshow across Invercargill, Dunedin, and Wanaka, proving that even in a digital age, the "old-fashioned way" of speaking directly to an audience is still a powerful tool.

Galloway's business insights are often framed by a sense of historical perspective. Visiting sites in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Morocco provides a sense of scale that she believes is essential for perspective. "Egypt's first kind of tombs or temples date back to about 7,000 years ago. So it's incredible. It gives you a sense of time that we can't comprehend here in New Zealand," she says. She speaks of the Valley of the Whales in Egypt, where whale skeletons lie in the sand 300 kilometres inland, as a reminder of the Earth's constant state of change. "The Earth has been changing since we were created, and to go out in the desert and actually see these whale skeletons incongruously in the sand and looking around saying, 'Well, where's the harbour? The harbour's nowhere near.'"

The evolution shows no sign of slowing. Even as the article went to press, Galloway was mid-journey herself, completing a CroisiEurope Mekong cruise in Cambodia, a company for whom Innovative Travel holds the General Sales Agency for New Zealand, operating boutique ships in the Mekong, Brazil, Southern Africa and Europe, before continuing on to Egypt. The itinerary is fitting: it reflects a deliberate

strategic expansion Innovative Travel has been accelerating, broadening holiday choices in destinations closer to home for New Zealand travellers, including South Korea, China, India, Vietnam, and Cambodia. At the same time, the company is extending its reach into Southern and East Africa, where rising demand from solo travellers keen to join small group safaris has opened a compelling new market. Flights via South African Airways or Qantas make the routing increasingly accessible. For a business built on specialist knowledge and boots-on-the-ground experience, expanding into new regions is not a departure from the founding philosophy. It is a direct expression of it.

This appreciation for history leads her to a poignant question about our own modern legacy. "I always say, what are we building today that we'll be able to look at in 5,000 years' time and go, 'We made that really well'?" she asks. This question serves as a metaphor for her approach to business: she is not interested in building something fleeting. She is interested in building a legacy of quality, expertise and connection.

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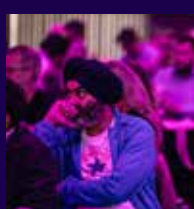
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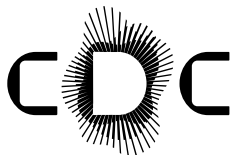
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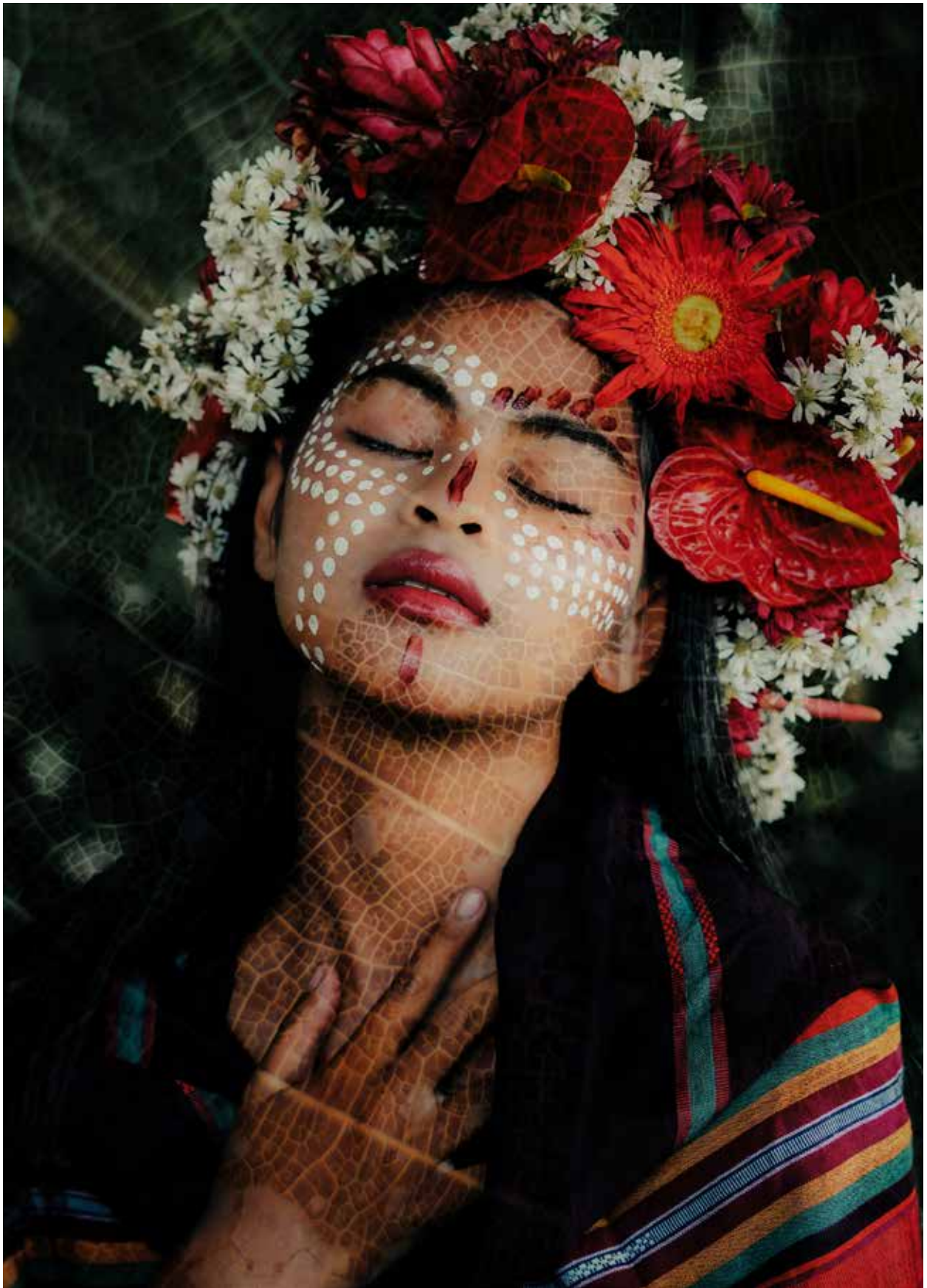


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... AND WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN



A Girl with a Flower Crown

This image combines two photographs: a portrait of a girl and the texture of a dry leaf, blending natural forms into a single visual narrative.

© R. Eko Hardiyanto, Indonesia, Winner, National Awards, Sony World Photography Awards 2026

THE GREAT EQUALISER

THE HUMAN STORY

All across the world photographers are taking part in the Sony World Photography Awards, taking everything from portraits to uh, landscapes. The images vary wildly in their subject matter but each is a fascinating window into another world.

The sheer variety, in the context of each other, equalises the moments. Dame Judi Dench in her greenhouse is as important as the bride taking a cigarette break on Patriarshy Bridge in Moscow. A young Venezuelan coca leaf picker lazing in his crop for a moment, is as different, but as peaceful as the Buddha looming large over a quiet urban Taiwanese street.

Banal moments in other people's lives are suddenly fantastical glimpses into a whole other world, alien to our own. Looking back at us, what is fantastical about your daily life? Because it's there, you just have to learn to see it, and be thankful for it.

This year also marks a new initiative by Sony and Creo supporting local photography communities around the world via the National & Regional Awards programme. Across this year's competitions, over 430,000 images from over 200 countries and territories were submitted. The overall winners in the Student, Youth, Open and Professional competitions of the Sony World Photography Awards 2026 will go on display as part of the exhibition at Somerset House, London.

Until then, here are our favourites of the bunch.



© Joel Meyerowitz, New York City, 1975, Courtesy Huxley-Parlour Gallery and Howard Greenberg Gallery



© Joel Meyerowitz, New York City, 1965, Courtesy Huxley-Parlour Gallery and Howard Greenberg Gallery



Dame Judi Dench in her garden.

© Charlie Clift, United Kingdom, Shortlist, Open Competition, Lifestyle, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



South Wales Jazz Band

Laurie Broughton photographed the Cefn Fforest Marching Jazz Band as they competed at an event in Caerphilly. He was immediately struck by the musicians' costumes and the energy of their performance, as they stormed around the sports hall playing Taylor Swift covers on kazoo's. While they prepared for their performance, Broughton photographed the band in moments of transition, adjusting costumes, warming up, and interacting with one another.

© Laurie Broughton, United Kingdom, Shortlist, European Student Award, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Her Hands are the Past, Mine are the Continuation

This image captures a quiet moment in Taitung, Taiwan. The afternoon light falls softly as a mother guides her daughter's hands, each stitch like a memory written into the fabric. Without a stage or audience, tradition survives in silence, shaped by patience, presence and time.

© Wei-Cheng Tsai, Taiwan, Winner, National Awards, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Darwin, a young Venezuelan coca leaf picker (raspachin), rests on freshly harvested coca leaves in Putumayo, Colombia, before they are processed. The raspachine's work is physically demanding, but the shifts usually last only half a day and are paid in cash. For many migrants, coca harvesting is one of the few reliable sources of income.

© Santiago Mesa, Colombia, Finalist, Professional Competition, Documentary Projects, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Sacred Bond

This image was taken in Villa Epecuén, a small coastal village in Argentina that was underwater for almost 30 years after a nearby dam collapsed in a storm. The photographer set the scene with a large-scale print of a photograph of a forest, contrasted with the dead trees on the beach, reflecting on the bond between humanity and nature.

© Claudia Behrens, Argentina, Shortlist, Open Competition, Creative, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Banjaran

A candid portrait of a Banjara girl at Pushkar Camel Fair, which is held annually in Rajasthan, India.

© Swati Biswas Guha, India, Shortlist, Open Competition, Travel, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Opening the Vortex

Northern California's 4,000-metre Mount Shasta is dwarfed by a phenomenal lenticular cloud formation that recurred intermittently over 10 days. This image was taken around 20 minutes before the sun set.

© Lisa K. Kuhn, United States, Shortlist, Open Competition, Landscape, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Above the Neighbourhood

An ordinary residential street is quietly overshadowed by a monumental presence in the distance.

© ChenYu Hsieh, Taiwan, Shortlist, Open Competition, Travel, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



In the Dressing Room

A group of models get ready for a fashion show in Medellin, Colombia.

© Hernan Jaramillo, Colombia, Shortlist, Open Competition, Lifestyle, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Dog Beach

For around 30,000 years, dogs have been closer to humankind than any other animal. For the photographer of this series, it sometimes seemed that it was not humans who tamed dogs, but dogs who domesticated humans — and both became mirrors of the other. Dog Beach consists of portraits of dogs and their humans, taken at the North Sea coast in Germany. To create his portraits, the photographer asked his human subjects to tell him about their 'love for dogs' and then photographed them and their often revealing and humorous interactions with their canine companions.

© Hans-Juergen Burkard, Germany, Shortlist, Professional Competition, Portraiture, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



Nymphs is an underwater photographic series shot in a swimming pool using a camera in a waterproof housing. Lights were placed outside the water to provide both front and back lighting, with the images of national synchronised swimmers captured using breath-hold immersion.

© Delfina Pignatiello, Argentina, Shortlist, Professional Competition, Sport, Sony World Photography Awards 2026



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Kombi to ID.Buzz

The name may have changed,
but the style remains

The Volkswagen ID.Buzz is the historical successor to the Kombi van. And while its looks are very contemporary, it has much of what made the original vehicle good. It is practical and pleasant to drive, while double electric sliding doors make for brilliant accessibility. There are no downsides to choosing it over a typical SUV.



The interior is a highlight of functionality. The GTX model features excellent seats with Alcantara sides, extending to all seven seats. With a four-wheel-drive system, there is no transmission tunnel, creating a useful flat floor in the back. It is full of well-designed spaces; you could fit a family of five plus three neighbours and still have room for groceries. Better yet, fold down or remove the back seats, and a family of five can go camping. Electric doors on both sides make

loading people and parcels easy and can be activated or disabled from the driver's position. The interior surfaces are good, with little reflective material, and seven USB-C slots are spread around the cabin.

Technology is well-integrated. The heads-up display is good, while the driver's display is compact and functional. A high-quality, bright centre display is within the driver's reach, and the media controls on the

steering wheel make life easy. The physical touch controls for the air conditioning and volume on the center console work well. In an attractive design touch, a clever warning light sits just below the windscreen that you don't notice until you need it.

The driving experience puts a smile on your face. Visibility is excellent for navigating a busy road or a tight car park, and its length is comparable to an E-Class Mercedes, so it feels manageable. Pickup is excellent with its available torque, making it ideal for a delivery vehicle around town. It handles well and the steering lock is good. I drove it in 'B' mode to improve the brake feel, and while it is not quite one-pedal driving, the engine braking mode is effective. Performance is sprightly: the Buzz features up to 250 Kw with a gobsmacking 694 Nm torque - exactly what you want for a big load. On a full charge of the 91 kWh battery, the car indicated a 390-kilometre range. I did a return trip to Whangarei to the Hundertwasser Gallery. This used most of the battery yet I was confident in the displayed range and it was no problem. When I arrived home I just plugged it into the wall with the supplied charger.

From a practicality and convenience standpoint, the ID. Buzz is a worthy Kombi successor with its cute looks and blinking headlights adding to the fun and practicality. With a tow bar, excellent stereo, heated wing mirrors, and much more, it is a thoughtfully equipped vehicle. I would drive this as my family car in a heartbeat.



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Let's be honest, the auto industry has a habit of talking to the wrong person.

More often than not, it's women who are actually running the show when it comes to the family vehicle. We book the appointments, coordinate the drop-off, figure out what's urgent versus what can wait, and juggle pick-ups around school runs and work commitments. Yet turn up to the mechanic solo and suddenly everyone's waiting for hubby to walk in.

That changed when I dealt with RDA Brakes Service Centres. No side-eye, no Autos-for-Dummies responses, just straight answers, especially when it comes to safety, which is their speciality.

RDA BRAKES - THE SPECIALISTS IN GOING FROM 100-0 KM/H

So much vehicle talk is about going forward; acceleration, horsepower, torque and driving range. Yet just as important as its speed in going from 0-100 km/h is the amount of time any vehicle takes in going from 100 km/h down to 0.

Keeping you and your family safe in your vehicle is what RDA Brakes specialise in, all day every day. With a nationwide network of over 100 local workshops, RDA Brakes can offer a solution for whatever you drive whether it be EV, Hybrid, Car, SUV or 4WD. Voted consistently in the top three preferred brake brands by Autoguru, a leading online auto consumer review site, they offer one of the largest ranges of brake parts covering over 90% of vehicles on the road. Their brake pads are eco-friendly too with zero copper used in their manufacture, as part of RDA Brakes' philosophy of helping keep NZ waterways clean for our next generation.

RDA Brakes also have a range of parts that covers General Purpose, Ceramic, and Heavy Duty applications that all come with an industry-leading warranty.

RDA Brakes. Because going fast is optional. Stopping is not.

RDA Brakes - What's stopping you?





You Are In A Pickle

When running an advertising campaign you need to ask yourself
“what will make people care? Why should they talk about this.”

For better or worse, the new campaign for the limited edition Pickle Combos at the UK branch of KFC has absolutely knocked it out of the park. The low-hanging fruit of course is to start putting pickles where they don't belong. Get your head out of the gutter.

The UK's new Pickle Mania Combo comes with frickles (pickle fritters), pickle loaded

fries, and some sort of pickle chicken burger. Beyond the pale inclusions has to be the Pickle Pepsi Max. Max?? Full sugar pickle flavoured carbonated beverages only for me thanks.

To give pickles more sex appeal they've also made a pickle puffer jacket that has gherkins floating around in its brine inside it. The idea actually started as an AI abomination, which

has since been picked up by KFC and made a reality. Fun details are the zipper tag pickle and the ominous hydration hose out of the chest, in case you're feeling a little parched and need to suck on some pickle juice.

I'll give them 10 points for marketing genius with minus 10 points off for making clothing look so unhygienic. I don't want to think about that thing while chugging on my Pickle Pepsi Max.

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