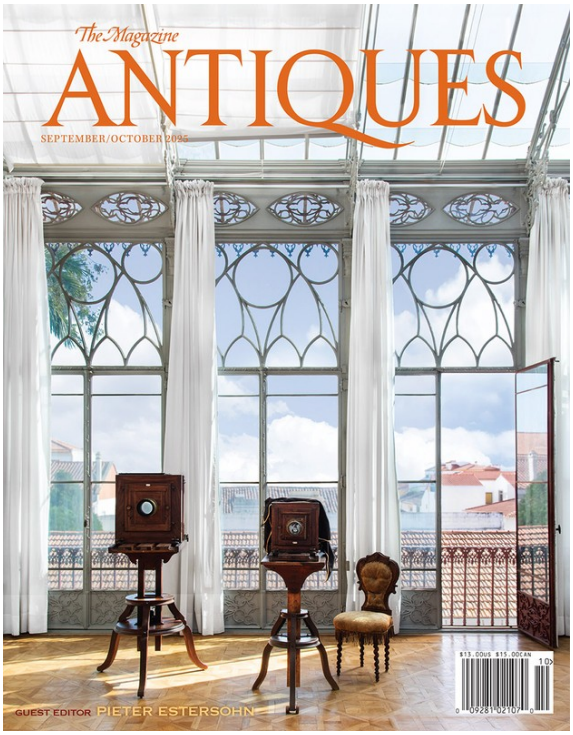
Art Department



GUEST EDITOR'S LETTER

Photograph by Ella Barz-Estersohn.

While speaking recently with a friend and trying to explain the challenges of choreographing the issue of *The Magazine* ANTIQUES now in your hands, I chuckled when she responded, "It's like you're putting together a brilliant dinner party." So be it. Despite having written and photographed countless magazine articles and over sixty books on design, architecture, preservation, and agriculture, I have never had the opportunity to compose an entire issue of a magazine. I have, however, always gravitated toward an informed and interesting mis, so here we go!

I began composing the lineup of this issue while looking back on a 2010 trip to Athens, Greece with my father, Carl, and my son, Elio. With obsessive, almost maniacal curiosity, I had read and plotted out the trip for months before leaving, familiarizing myself with the subtle nuances that the deliberate and meticulous "refinements" implemented by the architects of the Parthenon in the fifth century BC had contributed to the history of architecture. Upon observation in Athens, I witnessed for myself the curvature of the stylobate of the temple, and the entasis of the Doric columns seen behind me in the photograph shown above, and I officially became a Philhellene.

With the architectural vocabulary of ancient Greece fresh in my mind, I returned to the United States, where I went to see what was soon to become our home, Staats Hall—a Doric Greek revival marvel in Duchess County, New York. It had been built in 1839, the year that photography was invented concurrently in both France and England, and it was on a street that contained my Dad's nickname. Listening to the universe, I bought it immediately.

I then jumped into the challenging abyss of restoring a historic home and beginning a collection of classical American furniture to furnish it. I started buying very slowly at first while we were working on restoring the house. My eye had become well trained while first collecting Amish quilts and restoring Caucasian carpets as a kid, frequenting the flea markets at Clignancourt in Paris and the photography sales at Sotheby's in college, later discovering mid-century French architects' furniture, and finally putting together a very unexpected collection of nineteenth-century photographs of veiled women in the Levant. All this energy seemed to dovetail with my areas of study or travel.

By the time my son was ten, he and his friends were well acquainted with lions, eagles, serpents, sphinxes, and medusas due to the scavenger hunts at Staats. You will read more about his experiences growing up with a father who dragged him to historic sites and museums starting on page 48.

Through my work writing for *Interview* in college, then photographing for *Vogue*, *ELLE Decor*, *Architectural Digest*, and presently at *The World of Interiors*, I have met the most illuminating and learned collectors as I evolved from shooting fashion to shooting interiors, architecture, and travel. The clients that I have the most fun with willingly explore the odd stories that we all have accrued on the search for our personal Holy Grail. Which brings me to several questions that continue to fascinate me: how and why do atypical collections come together? What is the driving force, psychosis, or even primal trauma that plays a part in putting together a truly important or unprecedented collection? I have specifically asked all the writers in this issue to dig in significantly deeper than one might expect to offer the reader some profound insights into what passions and curiosities are explored and, if ever, satisfied. Our homes are often the repositories of our collections, and they can also be magnificent opportunities for self expression.

Putting together this issue has been a wonderful experience, as I've had the opportunity to explore these themes through photography, which you will see in the pages of this issue. I have felt supported by the entirety of the editorial team, art director, and publishers—all of whom miraculously pivot with each guest editor's perspective and approach. Many dear friends have been generous enough to share their wisdom, homes, and skills here, and to join the guest list of this metaphoric, and as you will soon see, literal party inside these pages. Dinner is served!

Pieter Estersohn

The Magazine ANTIQUES

BOOKS

The Life Aesthetic

By Pieter Estersohn

In his new book, Peter dedicates spreads to early friends and mentors in the business, including Jacques Grange, Teddy Millington-Drake, and David Hicks, traces of whose influence can be detected throughout the pages. Peter offers a great synthesis of his early exposure in Europe and the more relaxed vibe he now references as the soundtrack for each house he works on. There may be fewer decorating rules in Los Angeles, but you still need to know the history of your métier to pull it off successfully. The cavalcade of color saturation, unusual juxtapositions, and beautifully referenced patterns create his very distinctive signature style.

When I mention classicism, the loose theme of this issue, Peter delves into memories of the seventeenth-century neoclassic Hôtel de Noailles designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart that he grew up in at Saint-Germain-

The World of Peter Dunham: Global Style from Paris to Hollywood, from Vendome, features Dunham's iconic fig-leaf patterned fabric on the cover. The design was inspired by a visit to the house of his next-door neighbor, Salvador Dalí, and encapsulates a life dedicated to the pursuit of very personal and informed style. The book illustrates how he has translated and imported an unusually cultured life into the homes of his clients as well as lines of fabrics and homewares, all reflecting his nomadic explorations.

On a recent stopover in Manhattan, Peter (we met when we were eighteen and I was working at Andy Warhol's Factory) came over to my place to discuss his new book. During coffee, I was reminded that all the experiences I undoubtedly hear about when we reconnect have directly contributed to his having one of the most rarified eyes in a business saturated with them. Before the "boho-chic" trend, Peter was journeying to India and returning with magnificent textiles, many of which have inspired and informed his present textile line. While many designers visit magnificent country houses, Peter lived in them. He has, from infancy, had art world exposure like very few, and the entire scope of his escapades and relationships have synthesized into his ability to see when simplicity must reign supreme and when adding more layers is called for.

Peter Dunham is pictured peeking out from a door cut into an Indian tiger painting. Dunham fortuitously found the frame after purchasing the painting and had a jib door cut through both to gain access to the butler's pantry. *Photograph by Sam Frost.*

BOOKS

Dunham and Andy Warhol at the Privilege nightclub, Paris, photographed by Pieter Estersohn when he was working for Warhol's *Interview* magazine in the early 1980s.

en-Laye before his family moved into an art deco masterpiece in Paris. "Growing up in Paris taught me about beauty in the most classical, pure sense," he explains. "Symmetry, proportion, the power of architecture or decorative motifs—as fun and serendipitous as my interiors may seem, they are absolutely rooted in classic tradition." Dunham sprinkles classical bergères and fauteuils into many of his projects and often incorporates French furniture from the 1940s, much of which references the eighteenth century.

He also spent many formative years at Stowe, the British school housed in the Duke of Buckingham's country house. "My mother chose my schools by their looks," he says. "As we were first progressing down the three-mile-long drive with double-lined, three-hundred-year-old elms that leads to Stowe, I heard my mother gasp and I knew that this was where I'd be going to school."

While at school, Peter would take his pocket money and go into the village. "The only thing that excited me at fourteen was these tiny antiques stores. I still have some of the things I found then, but I really became interested in collecting while on vacation back home in Paris. Hôtel Drouot was then in the Gare D'Orsay, and there was an impossibly long corridor with all the dealers and auction houses lining both sides. It was intoxicating. I would return home, and my mother would mutter, 'Please, no more single chairs.'"

"I love the poetry of the almost feral hunt for an object. We often moved houses. I was away at school, so perhaps collecting grounded me and let me create my own roots. What really shook me up was traveling to the Orient and India. I was impassioned by the culture and history; the textiles made me insane." Peter has translated many of the patterns he saw and collected during these trips; throughout his book, the reader can see wonderfully intricate and evocative prints upholstering his furniture and even the walls in his densely layered rooms.

This eclectic collector's inclinations are clearly seen as one turns the pages of the book, starting with an early flat photographed for *Elle Decor*. The combinations of exotic references and objects that just happen to work together in an unprecedented manner all speak to a life refining, from a design perspective, what resonates both culturally and historically. In reference to the earlier mentioned English country aesthetic, there is a thread that runs through Peter's work that parallels that of the Society of Dilettanti, the eighteenth-century cabal of English milords who traveled the Continent following graduation to deepen their understanding of history and add to their families' collections. The English houses became layered repositories of lives well-traveled in the same manner that Peter seamlessly layers exotic references.

As we part ways, Peter sums up the synergistic relationship between a life researching different cultures and a career dedicated to passing it forward, "My business now feeds my addiction." Not a bad goal.

Pieter Estersohn

Art Department

HIDDEN GEMS

Warholia

The Old Lyme drawings by Andy Warhol and Marisol

By Pieter Estersohn

Coming to auction at Phillips Auctions Editions and Works on Paper sale in October is a pair of drawings created in 1963 by Andy Warhol and fellow pop artist Marisol.

The two drawings have been in a private collection housed at Teviotdale in Linlithgo, New York since 1972 when they were given by artist Wynn Chamberlain, one of the "sitters" depicted in the drawings, to interior designer Harrison Cultra, who had recently purchased Teviotdale from the Delafield family. "Wynn was tall and lanky, a very good magic realist painter who was beginning to get a little interested in pop," recalled Warhol.

In *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* by Warhol and Pat Hackett, Andy often refers to the endless weekends spent at Wynn's house. "I went out to Old Lyme, Connecticut, a lot of weekends that summer [1963]. Wynn Chamberlain was renting the guest house on [gallerist] Eleanor Ward's property, and he had gangs of his friends out there the whole time. Once, Eleanor visited the guest house and got really, really upset when [writer] Taylor Mead came into the living room dressed up in drag and announced to her, 'I'm Eleanor Ward. Who are you?'"

"That summer in Old Lyme was a prelude to all the craziness later. People were up all night wandering around the grounds smoking dope or playing records back at the house. Every weekend was a non-stop party—no one broke the weekend up into days, everything just flowed into everything else…The great thing about staying at Wynn's was that nobody ever locked their doors—in fact, nobody really had doors to lock, everybody just drifted around and slept wherever, and of course, that made it really convenient to film."

These drawings were created over one of those long weekends in Connecticut in 1963, when several artists, including Warhol, Marisol, John Ashbery, and Chamberlain were there together. On commercial packing paper, the feet (Warhol) and hands (Marisol) of the guests were traced, and then identified.

Teviotdale has a fascinating history. The house was built in 1774 by Walter Livingston in the Irish Georgian style a year after his father, Robert Livingston, the third lord of Livingston Manor, sold him the land. Over the years, many generations of the family were raised there, including the family of painter and inventor Robert Fulton, who had married Walter's daughter, Harriet, in front of the fireplace there in 1808. The house was uninhabited during the twentieth century until it was purchased by Livingston descendant John Ross Delafield, who had also inherited nearby Montgomery Place in 1945. Harrison Cultra purchased the property in 1969 from the Delafields while staying at Grasmere, in Rhinebeck, with his client Louise Timpson, the former Duchess of Argyll. Harrison's clientele eventually included Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Richard Jenrette, and Sam and Grayson Hall, writers of *Dark Shadows*, who lived at Wildercliff, also in Rhinebeck.

Tracings of the feet and hands of Andy Warhol (1928–1987), Marisol (1930–2016), John Ashbery (1927–2017), and Wynn Chamberlain (1927–2014) on packing paper by Warhol (feet) and Marisol (hands), 1963. *Photographs courtesy of the author.*

84 ANTIQUES

Haute Take

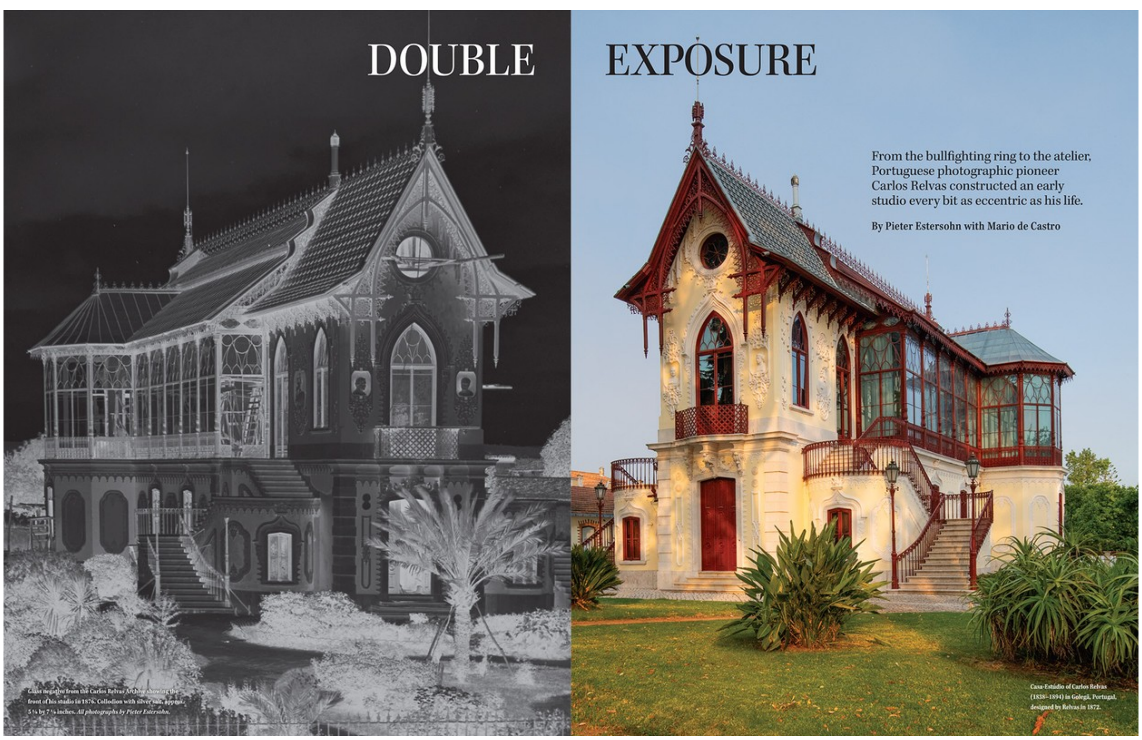
A world of couture comes alive in the collection of editor Hamish Bowles.

By Amy Fine Collins, with Hamish Bowles
Introduction by Pieter Estersohn

I first met Hamish Bowles, Global Editor at Large for *Vogue* and Creative Director at Large of *The World of Interiors*, at a birthday dinner for Peter Dunham, whose book is reviewed in this issue. Since then, he has often referred to his extensive collection of couture, telling me once I approached him about doing this article, that the collection was divided between two locations: London and New Jersey(!) But I was unprepared for what presented itself as I entered Ali Baba's cave recently with Sarah-Jayne Klucken, who was in situ to help me prepare certain pieces of clothing to be photographed. As she opened the doors to the meticulously organized, climate-controlled storage rooms, I was taken aback by row after row of treasures. When I enquired about photographing a piece by Mariano Fortuny, as the theme of this issue was already moving towards classicism, he informed me that he didn't have any there. Madame Grès, I then asked about, or Mary McFadden perhaps? "Yes," was his response to these. I later surmised that Fortuny, sewn completely without infrastructure, was of less interest to him while I was marveling at the intricate couture machinations going on inside the garments that he had selected for us to shoot. An observer cannot imagine how complex the interior of the simplest Madame Grès dress is until the woman wearing one gets undressed, or you get to be in the presence of these magnificent compositions, but that will be for another article. For the moment, revel in the conversation between two of the most eminent authorities in the field of fashion history: Hamish and his dear friend, running buddy, and editor at large at *Air Mail* magazine, Amy Fine Collins.

— Pieter Estersohn

Glimpses into Hamish Bowles's Jersey City, New Jersey storage space—a literal treasure trove carefully preserving thousands of rare, beautiful, and often one-of-a-kind pieces. It's a collection Bowles has assembled over decades. *All photographs by Pieter Estersohn.*



DOUBLE EXPOSURE

From the bullfighting ring to the atelier, Portuguese photographic pioneer Carlos Relvas constructed an early studio every bit as eccentric as his life.

By Pieter Estersohn with Mario de Castro

Glass negative from the Carlos Relvas Archive showing the front of his studio in 1876. Collodion with silver salt, approx. 5 [illegible] by 7 [illegible] inches. *All photographs by Pieter Estersohn.*

Casa-Estúdio of Carlos Relvas (1838–1894) in Golegã, Portugal, designed by Relvas in 1872.

Pieter Estersohn

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Principal entrance hall used by clients in the nineteenth century, with Relvas's diplomas lining the walls.

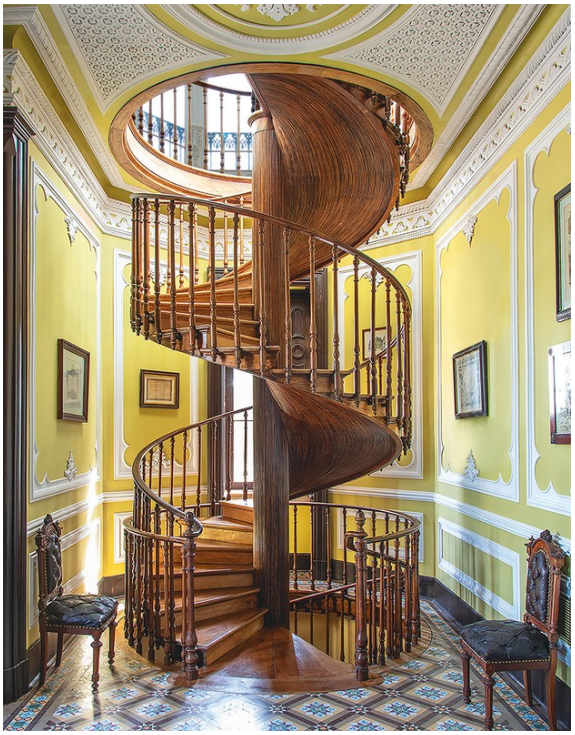
A portrait of Relvas by António Cândido da Cunha (1866–1926) hangs in the reception area, where visitors waited before their photography session upstairs. The decor is a romantic nineteenth-century blend of Moorish and classical Greek and Roman elements with Arab and Indian influences, and a French tile floor.

The spiral staircase, designed by Relvas and made in Italy, is crafted from chestnut wood and covered with Brazilian cipó vines. It connects the basement, ground floor, and the studio on the second floor.

In 1872 Carlos Relvas initiated the construction of his magnificent Gothic revival photographic studio in Golegã, a small, isolated village that one can drive to in under two hours from Lisbon, passing through the rich agricultural Ribatejo region of Portugal. When I recently visited to photograph this story, the temperature was well past a hundred degrees Fahrenheit, which heightened the poetic, almost Lampedusian nineteenth-century slumber that enveloped the surrounding neighborhood. With cartoon-sized beads of sweat ejecting themselves from my body while shooting in the Grand Palais–scaled studio, I reflected on the inability of his sitters, Portugal's Italian-born Queen Maria Pia of Savoy included, to "swing by" for a quick portrait toward the end of the nineteenth century, when lengthy and dusty carriage travel would certainly have impeded a prolific and profitable business model. Following the initial chapters of the history of the medium in the 1830s and '40s, photographers invariably placed their workspaces in the epicenter of capital cities in order to profit from the convenience offered to their clientele. Golegã is most definitely not in the center of anything except magnificent countryside.

Standing in front of this unprecedented Gothic cathedral of photography and eventually seeing with my own eyes the masterful negatives and prints that Relvas created there, I came to understand why royals and commoners alike made the pilgrimage, just as I was doing, to visit this very early master photographer. I'm not sure the Portuguese parliament had funding this type of sojourn in mind while discussing Queen Maria Pia's expenses in the 1870s, or that they had anticipated her response. "If you want a queen, you have to pay for her." But perhaps presciently, she had realized that strong, dignified portraiture in this increasingly popular medium could solidify the native Portuguese perception of the foreign-born queen as a branding and marketing tool, and that Relvas was just the man to produce this for her.

Carlos Augusto de Mascarenhas Relvas de Campos was born and grew up in the Outeiro Palace in this sleepy town in 1838, just in time to be alive when photography was invented several months later in England



Relvas's office on the second floor.

The photographic studio is accessed directly from Relvas's office.

The office houses Relvas's extensive collection of photographic journals and reviews.

and France. He came from a family with vast land holdings in the area and was a renowned amateur bullfighter, both on horseback, as a *cavaleiro*, and off, as a *bandarilheiro*, the person who thrusts the banderillas, or darts into the bull's neck and shoulders. He donated a bullring to Golegã, a town known since the eighteenth century as the "Capital do Cavalo," or Horse Capital of Portugal. At fifteen, he married Margarita Amália Mendes de Azevedo e Vasconcelos, a Portuguese aristocrat from a neighboring town, and they quickly had four children. Relvas's first exhibition was in 1868 at the Sociedede Promotora das Bellas Artes in Lisbon

As his interest in the medium developed in the 1860s, Relvas amassed a large collection of early photographic equipment while traveling throughout Europe, slowly satisfying his curiosity by experimenting with the different techniques developed by his predecessors, including both the wet- and dry-plate collodion processes, the collotype, and gum, carbon, and gelatin silver prints. He would continue to tinker and refine his photographic process throughout the 1870s and until his death in 1894 from sepsis following a horse-riding accident.

The Casa-Estúdio is an architectural anomaly. Except for Henry Fox Talbot, with his studio at Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, England, and Irish aristocrat Lady Mary Bosse, whose digs were in Birr Castle, most early practitioners of photography worked in quite humble environments.

When Relvas built his studio, the Gothic revival style was taking hold in Portugal, with many aristocratic houses in nearby Sintra designed in the style, which offered a counterpoint to the classicism that had preceded it there since the 1790s. Expressing the esteem in which he held his space, Relvas photographed the entire construction of his atelier, documenting each stage as the Gothic traceries and iron rib vaults were crafted and installed.

Inside, there is a room dedicated to the mixing of chemicals, a beautifully designed

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The colossal photographic studio offered multiple areas to set up differ ent environments for Relvas's still-life compositions and portrait commissions. He developed a system of curtains that would be adjusted by his assistants to direct the light to suit the mood required.

Relvas accumulated a vast collection of early photographic equipment and paraphernalia, much of which is still in situ.

My compositional attempt using his 1870s large-format camera.

darkroom, multiple reception rooms for royal and noble clientele, and the studio itself, which, in its Gothic exuberance, directs the eye toward heaven, or, in this case the sun. Relvas developed a complex system of curtains that could be manipulated to address the lighting he thought would best serve each picture. Most daylight studios at the time, and for years to come, were lit solely by a northern skylight, which provided a soft, even light. In his cleverly designed workspace, Relvas conceived of a multiplex studio, capable of housing several set-ups and unlimited lighting options.

His sitters included sportsmen and commoners, as well as the queen and other aristocrats. In addition, he completed a comprehensive series of self-portraits (some displaying his wicked sense of humor) in an abundance rivalling those of Cindy Sherman. Like Sherman, Relvas dressed himself (or sometimes undressed himself completely) in costumes, appearing

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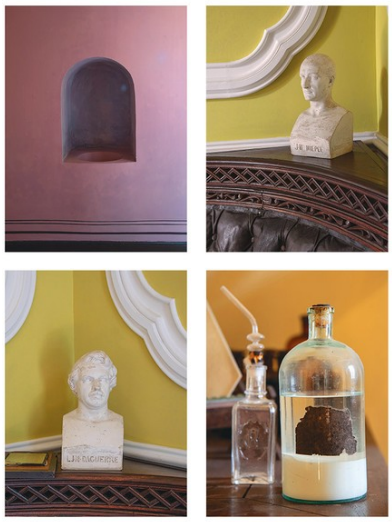


Clockwise from top left: Relvas built several conveniences into the walls in his dark room; this niche is fitted to hold a metal bowl for chemicals.

Relvas honored Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765–1833) and, at lower left, Louis-Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851), the French pioneers of photography, by commissioning plaster busts from Niépce's sculptor son, Isidore (1795–1868).

A collection of glass vessels that Relvas used for chemicals.

Facing page: One of Relvas's cameras installed on a contemporaneous stand.

A selection of glass negatives of self-portraits Relvas took in his studio in 1870, all collodion with silver salt. The two top ones each measure approximately 3 ¼ by 4 ¼ inches; the one at the bottom, approximately 9 ¼ by 11 ⅝ inches.

Self-portrait, 1875–1880. Collodion with silver salt, approx. 5 ⅛ by 7 ⅛ inches.

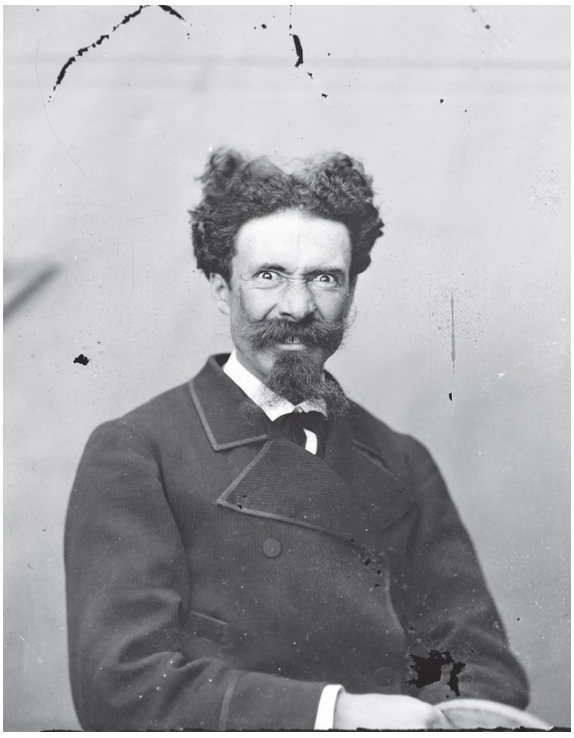
as a shepherd, a bullfighter, or on horseback in a jockey's silks. The obsessive focus that certain photographers have trained on themselves since the first selfie that Robert Cornelius captured in 1839 speaks to the relative ease and rapidity that the medium offered. It also speaks, perhaps, to the analytic nature of the medium and the immediacy of witnessing these self-examining results compared with painting. Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the phrase "The Decisive Moment" with the publication of his book of the same title, further explaining later that "Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera." How better to train one's eye, explore diverse personae, and achieve success in this arena than to use oneself as the model and photographer, providing immediate feedback?

Relvas also traveled extensively, photographing landscapes in Paris, Switzerland, and all over the Iberian Peninsula. But it was in this shrine to photography in which he preferred to work and where he eventually moved to spend the last years of his life.

In 2018–19 the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporanea do Chiado hosted an exhibition of his work. Despite a major exhibition, *Carlos Relvas and the House of Photography*, held in Lisbon at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in 2003 and showcasing around 350 works, as well as a 2018 exhibition at the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Relvas's spectacular photographic legacy has remained little known to the general public. Mark Haworth-Booth, then curator of photography at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London wrote for the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, noting that "Relvas's pictures were very good for his time . . . he created some of the most remarkable pictures of the nineteenth century. There is nothing similar in the world."

Are we to assume that mock humility motivated him to inscribe all his images with "Carlos Relvas, Amateur Photographer, Golegã Portugal"? He knew his worth certainly, but perhaps he didn't know that his place at the table would be resurrected in the twenty-first century. Happily, again, his eccentric grinning face is once more becoming a part of the history of the medium.

MARIO DE CASTRO *is editor in chief of* Soon *magazine and has written several books including* Seaside Style *(Taschen).*



Pieter Estersohn

Art Department

INTERIORS

MAKE DO AND PRETEND

So what if Henry Joyce and his late wife Hope Alswang lacked the resources to buy real antiques, artworks and objets for their charming clapboard home in Providence, Rhode Island? The two museum curators still had scholarship and ingenuity in abundance – not to mention glue, scissors, a staple gun, spray paint and access to a photocopier… The result: fake-it-to-make-it bricolage on a grand scale

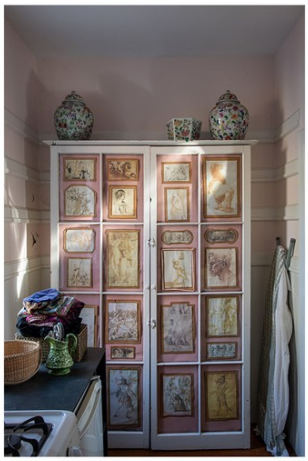
By Pieter Estersohn

17 July 2025

Henry Joyce's study is inspired by the Green Closet at Ham House. All of the 'paintings' are varnished scans from museum websites. The 'Persian tiles' lining the cabinet is actually a scan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Modern Asian-trade paper is glued to the window shutters

The first impression upon entering Henry Joyce's home in Providence, Rhode Island, is that all bets are off; if one is to process the environment, one must surrender to the unbridled whimsy and eccentricity that he and his late wife, Hope Alswang, cobbled together. What presents as rooms chock-a-block with magnificent Baroque and Renaissance masterworks are actually spaces crafted with photocopied images, glue and a staplegun, all on the budget of two museum curators.

'There is now an increasingly built-up decoration here, but it's never enough,' Henry says during the shoot. 'The silly mirror decorations mimicking historic examples were accomplished after going to the kids' store, buying plastic toys, and putting it all together with putty.' This Potemkin village of an installation is located inside a most sober and restrained 1852 white clapboard house steps from Brown University.



The back kitchen cupboard is covered in scans of old master drawings, including works by Guercino, Rubens, Raphael and Leonards, all behind glass. The modern Chinese vases on top are from Chinatown in Manhattan

To achieve this with a degree of precision and insouciance, you better have some scholarly tricks up your sleeve, and indeed Henry has that in spades. 'Endless resources are great, but sometimes financial restrictions are the best route to create a truly unique and imaginative environment,' says Henry's son, Horatio Joyce, who sees his parents as having found, through an impressive string of scholarly posts as curators of decorative arts in both Britain and America, full self-expression in creating their homes. 'They didn't have fantasies or pretensions of who they are,' adds Horatio. 'They were realistic about the means that they had, but they would come home and let their imaginations run wild.' Therefore, it doesn't seem odd for the couple to reference, say, the 17th-century Ham House in London when decorating an awkward space that connects two rooms. And while at it, why not take a generic TV cabinet, cover it with images of Persian tiles and paste on some William-and-Mary-style drawers?

In the sitting room, the chairs are copies of 17th-century ones at Ham House, while the curtain fabric is 'Hidcote' by Brunschwig & Fils. Among the items glue-gunned on to mirrors and pelmets and then sprayed gold or white are toys and Christmas decorations. An 1870s Japanese shrine completes the look. Hope's father, Ralph Alswang, was an Academy Award-winning set designer for film and theatre, and her mother, Betty, an interior decorator, so it's no surprise that she was comfortable surrounded by improvised period items

The couple moved to Providence when Hope was appointed director of the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design 11 years ago. The impressive list of previous positions held by the couple includes her stints at the Norton Museum of Art in Palm Beach and as curator at the Brooklyn Museum in the late 1970s where installing the period rooms was one of her favourite tasks. During this time, Henry was executive director at Planting Fields Foundation in Oyster Bay, Long Island, working on several House of Fantasy room installations designed by Robert Chanler, godfather to *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland.

The couple moved the children to Vermont to take on positions at the Shelburne Museum – Hope as director, Henry as chief curator – where they transformed the Brick House, sometime home of its founder, Electra Havemeyer Webb, into a space that could welcome the public. 'As curators we could never actually own historic rooms, but we could evoke them using inexpensive materials,' Henry says. The time spent in Vermont followed a similar position at Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate, turning what had been a very private home into one set up to receive a constant stream of guests.

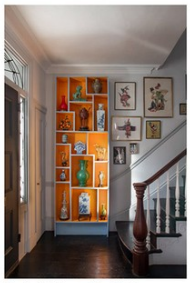
One of the many miniature rooms designed by Henry and Hope contains scans of tapestries and old masters. The sofa is a decoration for a Christmas tree

Henry's very first job, however, was curator of collections for the Duke and Duchess of Bedford at Woburn Abbey, immediately after completing Sotheby's inaugural decorative-arts programme in London. He met Hope while he was living in Dower House. 'The duke was a great showman; his wife was French and they entertained a lot. They had endless dinner services, 24 Canalettos, and loved having visitors,' Henry recalls. Now, in the Providence house, the (non-Ming) blue-and-white dinner service and vases are picked up in Chinatown in Manhattan. Shrewdly, Henry knows that the factory where these cheap copies are made is the same place in Jingdezhen that has been producing them for 700 years using the same kilns. Like the porcelain collection at Burleigh, but… well, different. 'I am not sure we were making conscious decisions to reference Woburn, or its architect, Henry Flitcroft, but influences have crept in. The pier mirrors in Rhode Island are similarly surrounded with fruits and flowers' – albeit plastic ones.

Pieter Estersohn

Art Department

Scans of Mrs Delany's flower collages, which are held by the British Museum, cover the cupboard doors in the kitchen. Above them hang reproduction Sèvres plates, made in tin, bought in museums gift shops including the Wallace Collection and V&A. The blue-and-white china on the shelves is by Spode



Handmade shelves emulating Qing Dynasty treasure cabinets are here used to display cheap ceramic artefacts, old lamp bases, glass vases spray painted to look like celadon, and a Tang horse spray-painted gold. The collages by the foot of the stairs are by Henry

'Sometimes inspired by Tony Duquette, we were just having fun,' Henry says. Three small collages by him hang against two Japanese obis and above a 17th-century-style chair painted white

'When we lived in Greenwich Village and Chelsea in Manhattan, where the kids grew up, there were so many more magazines around covering food and decoration,' Henry says, providing the entrée for a discussion about the myriad colour Xeroxes that are taped, glued and stapled around the house. 'The Metropolitan Museum has a magnificent "public access" database, which – and I am sure they want you to do this – provides a never-ending source of historic content.' Why buy a historic textile to swag around the tester of a four-poster bed when a photocopy of the best one will suffice?

Hope's bed is covered in magazine cut-outs that have been glued on to the cornice. The posts are covered in a reproduction of an 18th-century resist pattern made by Kaufman Fabrics

Horatio remembers bold Matisse paintings, blown up 300 per cent, decorating the walls when he was growing up, as well as album after album of collages that his father fervently created, before these collages inadvertently 'slipped' out of the albums and directly on to the walls. A large cabinet purchased in Vermont when the couple was at Shelburne Farms now houses Henry's plethora of cut-out bits, ever ready to be attached to one of his collages. Hope's dolls'-house rooms, installed on shelves in the library, are evocations of historic suites, and are mostly covered with images from the Kreiss Brothers collection and Gracie wallpapers. The Chinese treasure shelves in the entrance are filled, not with museum-quality Tang porcelain, but reproductions of reproductions of the real thing that the couple had studied. The Baroque-style bed in Hope's room was made of cut wood and collage using images from Daniel Marot, the French designer working around the turn of the 17th century at Hampton Court. Horatio texts me a picture of a Classical-style planter made by his mother from an old plastic container. To this, she glued on shards of swags, then painted the whole thing white to approximate marble. I am amazed to discover that a Japanned Chippendale high boy is actually a mass-produced 1970s Ethan Allen piece with cut-out photocopies of 1740s japanned lacquer glued on. 'Hope wanted one,' Henry tells me.

Out back, the couple constructed the Temple of Flora, sometimes called The Hut, out of a prefab kit and then hung trellis and tin plates on the walls, all purchased at museum gift stores, next to photocopies of delft tiles. 'I always wanted a garden in retirement,' says Henry, whose own family maintained 'serious' gardens in Northamptonshire.

Gardens are often metaphors for hope, and it is perhaps providential that hope is also the motto of Rhode Island. But it is also telling that Cicero said that *providentia* is the knowledge of things that are good or bad, or neither. In a world where the word curation is recklessly thrown around, it is refreshing to see informed interpretations of the decorative arts coaxed out of years of study. Might Cicero not agree that these are good?

1stDIBS INTROSPECTIVE

[IN THEIR OWN WORDS]

Pieter Estersohn Celebrates Suzanne Rheinstein's Rare Elegance and Warmth

In words and pictures, the renowned photographer reflects on the inimitable style and brilliance of the late Los Angeles design legend.

BY

[MAY 7, 2023] The collaboration between a designer and the photographer tasked with documenting her projects is an intimate one. If they are lucky enough to bring out in each other heightened levels of trust and appreciation, the relationship intensifies and evolves over time — and across varied projects.

I was fortunate to have experienced this type of relationship with SUZANNE RHEINSTEIN, the Los Angeles decorating legend with whom I worked on countless magazine features and three books, including *SUZANNE RHEINSTEIN: A WELCOMING ELEGANCE* (RIZZOLI), published in March just days before Suzanne's death from cancer at the age of 77.

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The late, great decorator Suzanne Rheinstein, shown here outside her Los Angeles house, is celebrated in the new book *SUZANNE RHEINSTEIN: A WELCOMING ELEGANCE* (RIZZOLI). She died just days after its publication (portrait by Drew Blackwell). Top: Rheinstein's final home was a restrained retreat she designed in Montecito, whose interior and exterior walls are covered in a hand-applied integrally colored plaster. The living room walls, which change color throughout the day, are hung with a group of pochoirs from PABLO PICASSO's "Antipolis" series. On the far left, a drawing by Sarah Graham of an enlarged epiphyte hangs over a PORTUGUESE LIBRARY TABLE with baluster legs. The sofa is inspired by one in the Palazzo Fortuny; the bronze-and-lacquer coffee table is Rheinstein's design, crafted by Quintus; and the LOUIS XIII–STYLE chaise longue is 18th-century French. All photos, except the portrait, are by Pieter Estersohn.

Collaborating with Suzanne meant enjoying the privilege of traveling with her from project to project — and having my face hurt at the end of each day because we always laughed so hard and had so much fun. We also would indulge each other's curiosity.

I tend to ask a lot of questions when I'm working, often so that I can understand what needs to be prioritized in an image and how the narrative of the story might best flow. When an architect or designer responds that something "just looks right" or "feels like the right choice," my antennae go up immediately, and I wonder if they've done their homework. (Yes, I get "judgy," as my son, Elio, says.)

In a Bel Air project by Rheinstein, the patio off the family room, shaded by an awning to protect it from the afternoon sun, is outfitted with Formations furniture facing toward the pool and pool house. "The gardens and landscapes surrounding the houses she worked on were enormously important to her," Estersohn writes.

Never once did this happen while working with Suzanne. Every single component in her interiors was there for a reason that she could explain with erudition, nuance and clarity. Of course, everything *felt* like it belonged where it was, but the distinction with Suzanne's work was that she had studied, read and, perhaps most importantly, traveled all over the world to both satisfy her inquisitive nature and inform her design choices.

If you are going to reference the work of RENZO MONGIARDINO, as Suzanne did in a guest house in West Hollywood, it helps to have done more than just look through old shelter magazines featuring Mongiardino projects. Suzanne believed it was crucial to see your inspiration in person in order to dial it up or make it your own. Tucked away on a compound in Los Angeles, a family gym was built in homage to the GUSTAVIAN-ERA metal tent at Haga Park, in Sweden. The gym's success owes to its proportion and scale, which Suzanne picked up during her visit to Stockholm.

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Left: In West Hollywood, Rheinstein looked to Italian design maestro RENZO MONGIARDINO for her conversion of a garage into a chic guest house, covering the walls and custom banquettes in Clarence House paisley fabric and tiling the floor in locally made terracotta. The wall lights are from KATIE LEEDE; the artwork is *Echo* by Jim Goldberg. A mirrored wall behind Moroccan treillage hides storage, a bar and a television, while visually expanding the space. The bedroom is sheathed in Rheinstein's Lanare Paisley pattern, and the ceiling is painted to evoke the feel of sleeping under a tent. The lantern is from Soane. Right: Back at the Bel Air estate, a striped-metal pavilion, referencing one in Sweden's Haga Park, is tucked behind the pool house and serves as a family gym.

The gardens and landscapes surrounding the houses she worked on were enormously important to her, and travel and research informed her work outdoors, too. (The Garden Conservancy, which she long supported with passion and commitment, honored her this past winter at a gala at the Union Club in New York City, where I was thrilled to be her date.) I'm not sure she would have taken on a client who didn't share her appreciation for gardens.

The interior of the Bel Air pool house sports a BILLIARDS TABLE re-created from an 18TH-CENTURY FRENCH ENGRAVING and a massive Chinese drum from RICHARD SHAPIRO that acts as a coffee table. The shades and curtains of a ROBERT KIME fabric were adapted from the previous house, and the wall art is an anonymous TANTRIC DIAGRAM.

Suzanne's work has been labeled "TRADITIONAL," but it was actually much more ambitious and modern than first impressions might suggest, so rooted is it in her own personality and in showcasing the interests and COLLECTIONS of her clients. Her approach might at times be thought of as "scholarly," but this isn't really accurate either, since that implies a somewhat labored process and Suzanne's creativity flowed freely and organically as an expression of her identity.

In the Bel Air primary bedroom, the FRANCES ELKINS–inspired bed was painted to resemble inlaid ivory. A BENNISON silk was used to line the bed hangings and for the curtains. Above the fireplace are Vladimir Kanevsky porcelain flower sculptures and an 18th-century NEOCLASSICAL MIRROR.

We geeked out on the stories behind things. As we worked, we'd talk about the Palazzina Cinese, in Palermo; FORTUNY FABRIC (antique versus modern); and why using GEORG JENSEN SILVER really matters. We'd stop shooting when the sun went behind a cloud, and she'd share her thoughts, for example, on why a grouping of BLACK CERAMIC VESSELS by Kaori Tatebayashi fit perfectly in front of a LUCIO FONTANA painting. She was correct, of course; it was a magical and unexpected juxtaposition.

Indeed, I'd always come to see the "magic" after she explained her process and how her eye worked — which she did because she wanted to share her joy and appreciation for these things, not to dominate or show off. Curiosity, which again, Suzanne had in spades and for which I so loved and admired her, is a humbling force.

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The walls, club chairs and ottoman in the wife's upstairs study are sheathed in the same fabric used for the curtains: Rheinstein's Woodcut pattern for LEE JOFA, which is based on a scrap of Japanese textile. The lacquered desk is by GRACIE, the desk chair is REGENCY, and the pictures flanking the window are embroidery and appliquéd NEEDLEWORK.

Suzanne was also passionate about repurposing objects and furniture from her clients' previous homes, a "green" practice that feels correct for these times. For Suzanne, it went deeper than correctness. Although many of her clients could easily afford to scrap their previous possessions and start anew, Suzanne promoted the ideas of connecting not just with the past but with their personal histories as well. She cherished the process of dovetailing old possessions into a new home and a new design ethos that reflected the environment her clients wanted for that period of their lives.

Repositioned treasures: The homeowners had acquired much of their collection for a previous house (left), and Rheinstein ingeniously regrouped them in the Bel Air estate (right). The mix of styles in the entry hints at the range of GRAND TOUR PIECES within. The sconces and console table are 18TH-CENTURY ITALIAN and came from Richard Shapiro; the CHAIRS ARE DUTCH.

Also in the entry are a RUSSIAN ICON in an intricately carved vineyard frame, a 15TH-CENTURY SPANISH chest on a stand and a 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN CHAIR, all set against Georgian panelling.

The dining room walls are covered in striped cotton fabric. Chairs in a linen damask and silk curtains with bobble fringe were used in the clients' previous house.

In the double-height living room are a velvet-lined 17TH-CENTURY BENCH and a Portuguese-style settee. The French doors lead out to a newly constructed pergola. The hanging lantern is from JAMB.

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The living room also now has a FRANK STELLA ARTWORK over the fireplace and ANTIQUE CHAIRS from Richard Shapiro.

While shooting *A Welcoming Elegance* with Suzanne, I often felt I was having a reunion with old friends when I recognized pieces I'd previously documented in earlier residences, be it a 15th-century Spanish chest on a stand or a collection of 18th-century embroideries by women.

I mention the fact that these were by women because this is how Suzanne introduced them to me — the person who'd created an object was paramount for her. The ceramic garniture in the entry of a Bel Air house, she'd tell me, was made by EVE KAPLAN, and the collage over the mantel in the Newport Beach, California, project was by MARIAN MCEVOY. Suzanne was intent on always crediting her collaborators, because she understood the deeply cooperative nature of her work.

Left: In the guesthouse, the husband's office has a BUNNY WILLIAMS for Dash & Albert indoor/outdoor rug, a vintage octagonal table from North Africa and objects collected on the family's many travels. Right: A MAISON JANSEN gilt and glass coffee table in the living room is topped by an ITALIAN LACCA POVERA box.

The apotheosis of her career, I believe, is her own last home in Montecito, which she designed with James Shearron and Richard Bories and which figures prominently in the book. Here, in an almost reductive mode, her true genius manifested. (I told her while we were shooting it that it seemed she had really put on her big-boy pants for this project, and she howled with laughter.) It is a rare talent who can design a home with such a decisive hand.

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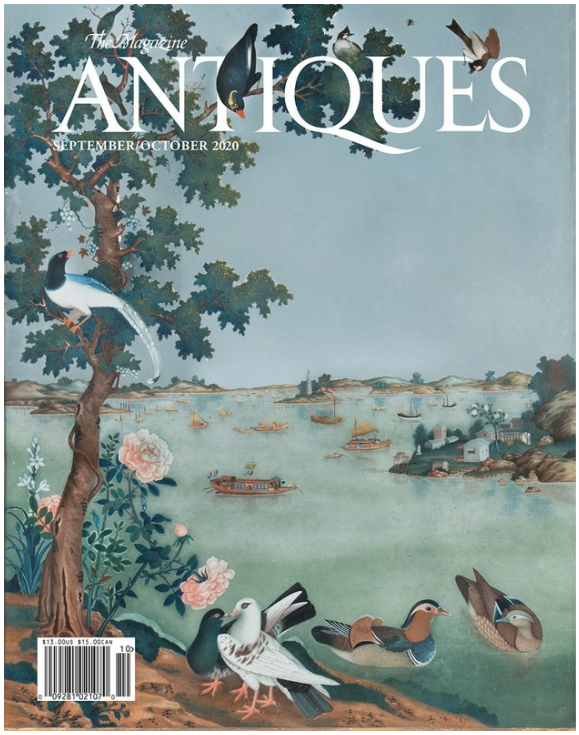
Returning to the living room of Rheinstein's Montecito retreat, which Estersohn refers to as "the apotheosis of her career," the light fixture is by GIANCARLO VALLE, the table is from GERALD BLAND, and the ENGLISH REGENCY CHAIRS have been painted *en grisaille*. The SLIPPER CHAIR is upholstered in a Carolina Irving stripe with hemp fringe. On the left, a TUSCAN TABLE holds a group of ceramic pots and hyacinths by Kaori Tatebayashi, above which hangs a *Concetto Spaziale* by LUCIO FONTANA; the stools are Swedish.

I hope I was able to capture the degree of thought that went into this home, which she designed as a retreat during a period of profound health concerns. While we were shooting, often in the afternoon, Suzanne would let me know that she was just going to lie down for a moment. I knew she was experiencing significant discomfort from the challenges of confronting cancer, and the quiet nobility of these announcements made me love her even more.

There was an undertone of not wanting to disturb my thought and work processes, the desire to support the esprit de corps of the team and the confidence of not needing to be the superstar. Suzanne was, after all, someone who admired the subtle and whispering qualities of the back of the fabric. Hail!



"There is no part of the Union where the taste in Landscape Gardening is so far advanced, as on the middle portion of the Hudson." So wrote Andrew Jackson Downing, the nation's first self-proclaimed "Landscape Architect," in his 1841 *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America*.[1] The romantic period in landscape design is intimately and intricately woven into this region through the work of Downing, Jacob Ehlers, André Parmentier, and, today, by Jim Joseph and Scott Frankel at Forth House.

As evident in the present iteration of the garden at Forth House, Downing's observation remains apt. In the region where Downing, as arbiter elegantiarum on the subject of American landscape design, popularized his teachings, Joseph and Frankel have brought a fresh eye to the design precepts that Downing introduced in his first blockbuster book.

The house is in the town of Livingston, New York, near the heart of what was once a vast tract of land ruled over by the family of the same name from the late seventeenth century into the nineteenth. The property is named for the Firth of Forth, the estuary of the river Forth outside of Edinburgh, Scotland, the ancestral homeland of the Livingstons. The name is also a jeu de mots, in that the house is situated on the southernmost of four lots left by the third Lord Livingston to his heirs in 1790. The first Lord Livingston, Robert, had immigrated from Holland in 1673 and would come to acquire a swath of territory totaling 162,248 acres—which would become known as the Manor of Livingston—via a royal land grant that gave the owner a semi-feudal authority and judicial powers over his demesne. In 1832 a descendant, Carroll Livingston, purchased the property where Forth House would be built from his cousins, and swiftly began construction of his home. The Livingstons were notorious for intermarrying to maintain land holdings. (A risible result of this tendency was that one branch of the family named a son Livingston Livingston.) The merry-go-round of home ownership among Livingston cousins was remarkable in this region, and Forth House was no different, as several members of the family rented it or owned it over the years.

Keeping the flame of the romantic landscape design tradition in the Hudson River valley

Written and photographed by Pieter Estersohn

Fig. 1. The front elevation of Forth House in Livingston, New York, built in 1835 by Carroll Livingston (1805–1867).

Fig. 2. The stone terrace along the rear facade, with iron garden furniture and marble urns, creates a transitional space influenced by the teachings of Humphry Repton (1752–1818).

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Fig. 3. Boo, Jim Joseph and Scott Frankel's fourteen-year-old shelter dog, rests on the front porch between two of four fluted Ionic columns.

Fig. 4. The northern facade of Forth House is covered in a blanket of climbing hydrangeas.

The romantic garden fostered

emotional reactions with features such as rugged landscape contours that led to abrupt and daring compositions, mysterious Gothic follies, and irregularly shaped bodies of water—all meant to provoke a sense of spiritual awakening

The young local nurseryman Downing was introduced to architect Alexander Jackson Davis in 1838 at Blithewood, the prototypical American rural villa owned by Robert Donaldson in nearby Annandale-on-Hudson. They created a professional and creative union that integrated home and garden for the first time in America "as a foundation from which one's moral character was shaped."[2] This philosophy was a response to the classicism that was then prevalent in architecture and design, and the new viewpoint offered options that diverged toward organic and site-specific forms. From 1846 until he died in 1852, Downing also offered penetrating insights on the subject of rural landscape design in the *Horticulturist*, of which he was editor. His goal was to stimulate dialogue rather than provide dogmatic programs.

Classicism is often thought of as the polar opposite of romanticism, the first exhibiting Cartesian rationalism, and the latter exploring a spiritual, sublime, and mysterious subtext. While the architecture of Forth House, which was built in 1835 at the height of the American Greek revival, is expressed with an elevated and extremely sophisticated classical vocabulary, the garden is decidedly romantic. It is an unusual occurrence when these two distinctly different styles convene, as in the monumental landscape paintings of Hubert Robert. But there was also a short period in American history, particularly in the region and at the time the house was built, that the melding and comingling of such diverse aesthetics dovetailed perfectly and triumphed.

Joseph and Frankel purchased their home in 2004 from the van Dyke family, whose surviving sons, Harry and Frank, had lived there since 1959. During the 1970s and 1980s, Harry, an architect who built the conservatory on the left of the house that now serves as the kitchen and who did extensive work for the Frick Collection in New York City, landscaped much of the garden. Several exterior hemlock garden rooms, which surrounded specimen trees such as Sargent's Weeping Hemlock and Japanese Umbrella Pine, were in place when Joseph and Frankel purchased the ten-acre property. Sadly, the overall effect had waned, and was in dire need of an acute overhaul and re-evaluation. Joseph, a partner at the architectural firm Hottenroth and Joseph, and Frankel, the Tony-nominated composer of such Broadway musicals as *Grey Gardens* and *War Paint*, brought a vigorous and well-informed energy to their new project.

"Every tree was covered with vines," Joseph recalls. "The spaces were a series of disconnected events and we wanted to create a proper nineteenth-century circuit, in homage to the pleasure grounds found at the time in the region." Frankel adds: "The architecture of the garden was in place, as were the mature trees, some of them great examples like an agave taken as a clipping from Montgomery Place," a nearby Livingston country seat that is now part of the Bard College campus. "But it was a puzzle tying together disparate elements, creating axes, and extending vistas. We wouldn't have started out on this scale, but the makings were here—with a provenance and age that are the same as the house. You take stock of the original conceit, palette, intention, and honor and restore it when possible."

Over the years, the couple has expanded the boundaries of the property to eighty-eight acres through a series of what they call "campaigns," a term that conjures up a robust series of Napoleonic actions. The expansion prompted them to re-evaluate many aspects of the extant plantings and redefine the circuit through them. The mature hemlock hedge on the western edge of the original ten-acre plot was seen as too confining, and opening this up became a priority. Ultimately, they created today's magnificent wisteria-entangled arbor and an allée of fastigiate beech trees lining a path that bisects agricultural fields and connects the residence to a pond. In their extensive research efforts, many varieties of plants have

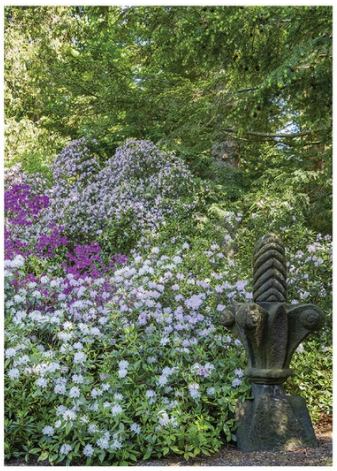

Fig. 5. The porch table set for an informal summer lunch. Joseph and Frankel often serve meals on the west-facing back porch, where they can fully appreciate the light at the end of day.

Fig. 6. A mature grouping of azaleas forms a backdrop for a carved stone garden ornament in one of the hemlock-bordered garden rooms.

Fig. 7. An early twentieth-century cupola, originally from a building in Albany, New York, and repurposed as an ornament, anchors the center of another garden room.

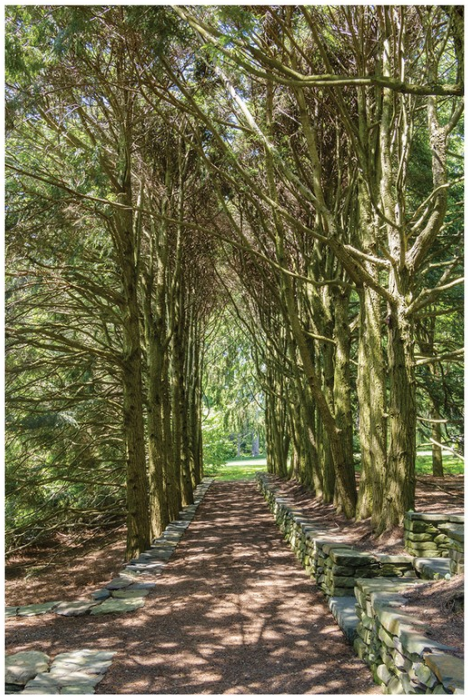

Fig. 8. The allée of hemlocks was planted in the 1970s and now forms a romantic path.

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been considered and rejected over the years. "Forsythia is always wrong," Joseph says with a wink when quizzed on the reject list. Certain self-evident truths are bound to become apparent when aesthetically astute visionaries delve into such a project.

Frankel concedes that the process was "all about respecting what was here but not being intimidated by it." Joseph adds: "You need a certain ruthlessness. It's like surgery. The older it is the more respect it deserves. Sometimes we had to repeat a project because we weren't ruthless enough. Often you realize that something is not in the perfect spot, especially when the scale is rapidly changing. Get rid of the bubblegum-pink azaleas." I suppose it's a bad idea to humiliate a garden into submission, but sometimes a strong hand is needed. Some of the challenges included the fact that the enormous trees created an extremely shady environment. "We had many experiments to see what would flourish, and tried to 'push' the zone when possible," Joseph says. "We tried to extend the growing season as well, to cover as much of the year as possible. There are now sixty witch hazel shrubs that bloom in January and February."

A challenge, Frankel adds, is that "Jim's work is very geometrically based, and this landscape is not about that"—an attitude in keeping with the nineteenth-century notion that really listening to the specific attributes of the topography, the genius loci, will ultimately best inform a garden plan. "There's an element of eccentricity here," Frankel says, "but in a way so as to not fight with nature." Joseph tells me: "The idea was to create something on a big scale that was easy to maintain. A country landscape gives a lot of leeway, and this is not about perfection." But the two certainly have, with little outside help, created an environment that dares to come close to that achievement. A stroll through this garden offers the visitor a sense of serenity sorely missed in our often-disjointed lives. And if, as Robert Pogue Harrison writes in *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*, "Where paradise is imagined as a garden of perfect tranquility, our incurable Western agitation takes on a diabolical quality,"[3] Frankel says that there is a therapeutic aspect to gardening. "It's a great palate cleanser of what is going on in my head," he says, charmingly mixing metaphors. "Your mind wanders and drifts while weeding." Indeed, after sixteen years of these meditative practices, the lawn is virtually weed free.

In their way, Joseph and Frankel are continuing the work of Downing, who served as critic, advocate, and guide on many Livingston estates in the Hudson River valley. "Nothing is more instructive than a personal inspection of country seats, where the grounds are laid out in a tasteful manner," he wrote.[4] This region was pivotal in the evolution of the romantic period of landscape design in America, and Carroll Livingston belonged to a family who lent great support to the young gardeners who forged the link between the pleasure grounds created by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, the inventive eighteenth-century English landscape architect and self-described "Place-Maker," and an enthusiastic American clientele looking to elevate their country homes in a stylish and geographically appropriate manner.

Fig. 9. A nineteenth-century copper barn ornament sits atop a contemporary stone pedestal. Placed in the park-like northern expanse of the garden, it is surrounded by specimen trees popularized in the 1830s and '40s by landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852).

Fig. 10. A limestone garden ornament punctuates the end of a rhododendron-lined pathway.

Fig. 11. The swimming pool is situated between tall hemlock hedges.

The romantic garden was a response to the eighteenth-century rational, geometric gardens of France and Italy, which sought to dominate and impose order on nature. While no less artificial, the romantic garden fostered emotional reactions with garden features such as rugged landscape contours that led to abrupt and daring compositions, mysterious Gothic follies, and irregularly shaped bodies of water—all meant to provoke a sense of spiritual awakening.

There is a direct historic and aesthetic lineage connecting the work of Capability Brown—so nicknamed because he invariably informed his well-heeled clientele that their properties had the "capability for improvement"—and that of the present owners of Forth House. That lineage includes those who furthered the evolution of the romantic English garden, from Brown's most successful student, Humphry Repton, to Uvedale Price, William Gilpin, and Downing's contemporary John Claudius Loudon. Downing took inspiration from them all, and developed an American romanticism that dovetailed perfectly with the nation's aesthetic mood of the 1840s. Downing's successors would present his romantic ideals to a much broader range of the public. His British-born protégé Calvert Vaux incorporated the romantic philosophy into his work at The Point and later at Wilderstein, both of them Livingston estates in the region, as well as at Olana, the home of painter Frederic Edwin Church near the city of Hudson. His 1857 collaboration with Frederick Law Olmsted on their Greensward Plan for "The Central Park," as it was then known, was selected by the governing committee and successfully introduced the romantic garden heritage to the citizens of New York City, where it continues to be appreciated and interpreted today.

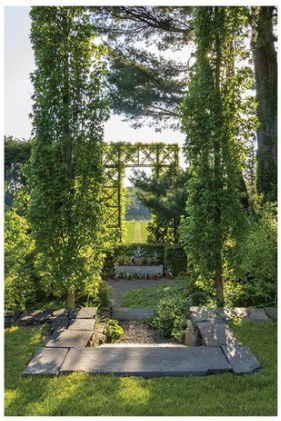

Fig. 12. Stone steps leading down to the rock garden are framed by two American sweetgum trees (Liquidambar styraciflua "Slender Silhouette"). In the background, a steel arbor covered in wisteria frames the view toward the pond and agricultural fields on the western side of the property.

Fig. 13. The setting sun peeks through a commanding weeping beech as one approaches the residence from the driveway.

Fig. 14. A view back toward Forth House from the pond, past an allée of young Dawyck European beech trees (Fagus sylvatica).

Wandering the gardens at Forth House, you see at every turn examples of distinctive features from the romantic landscaping lexicon. There is a court in front of the home to offer transition from the lawn, as prescribed by Repton. There are carefully cultivated gnarled branches that are the epitome of the sublime. There are magnificent examples of rhododendrons, first popularized in the English countryside in the early nineteenth century and greatly favored by Price. There are vistas that conjure up the Roman Campagna and the seventeenth-century paintings of Poussin and Claude Lorrain, both early inspirations for the movement.

Recently, as I left Forth House after a long day of taking photographs, I noticed how the garden is perfectly sited to catch the setting sun, in keeping with Capability Brown's observation that trees and lawns should be backlit to best show the sinuous, wavy "line of beauty," a term he borrowed from William Hogarth.[5] I was struck by the truth of this notion.

If a garden is an opus with an indefinite end, there are always projects that queue up in the mind of the curious and optimistic gardener. Joseph says, for example, that he plans to place one single bench at the swimming pool to anchor a magnolia tree that will be arriving shortly.

"In Landscape Gardening the country gentleman of leisure finds a resource of the most agreeable nature,"[6] Downing wrote in his *Treatise*. I'm not sure whether two busy professionals in 2020 can be referred to as gentlemen of leisure, but certainly Joseph and Frankel have found peace and enjoyment in that resource while Forth House is in their care. As all who live in a historic house should know, Frankel says: "You pay it forward to the next steward of the house."

[1] Andrew Jackson Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* (1841; New York: A. O. Moore and Co., 1859), p. 28. [2] Bessina Hamaz, *Bluebeyond: A History of Place* (Sydney, Australia: Bluebird Press, 2009), p. 17. [3] Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens, An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 138. [4] Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, p. 21. [5] Edward Hyams, *Capability Brown and Humphry Repton* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 136. [6] Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, p. ix.

PIETER ESTERSOHN *is a leading photographer of architecture and interiors. The president of the Friends of Clermont and a board member of the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance, he is presently at work on two books: one about new farms of the Hudson River valley, the other on private wildlife and land conservation.*

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Art Department

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MARIST

Humanities

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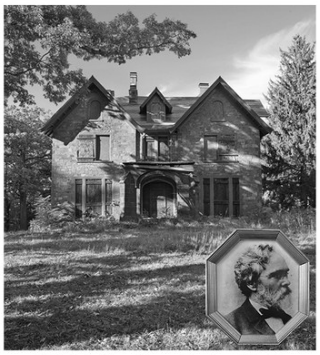
Symposium:
Designing the Landscape That Made America

The following articles are adapted from a symposium that took place May 21–22, 2022, at Staatsburgh State Historic Site. The two-day event was presented by the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance and sponsored by the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust with support from The Garden Conservancy. Pieter Estersohn acted as master of ceremonies and has adapted his remarks as an introduction and overview of the symposium.

Calvert Vaux and His Peers in the Hudson River Valley

Pieter Estersohn



The Point before clearing of the views. Inset photo of Calvert Vaux. All images courtesy of the author

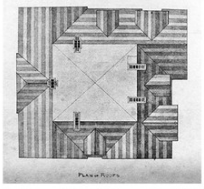
To best describe the genesis of the symposium that I chaired through my work with the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance (CVPA), it might be helpful to explain my own experience in becoming familiar with one of the most underrated architects and landscape designers working in America in the nineteenth century.

My introduction to *The Point*, the home that Calvert Vaux designed for Lydig and Geraldine Livingston Hoyt in Staatsburg, came while doing research for my book, *Life Along the Hudson: The Historic Country Estates of the Livingston Family* (Rizzoli, 2018). On the recommendation of John Winthrop "Wint" Aldrich, who wrote the foreword to the book, I hiked through Mills Norrie State Park and discovered the home that he made clear must be included. The Point had been described by Vaux in his 1857 book, *Villas and Cottages*, as "Design No. 26. Picturesque Stone Country House," and indeed it was still very much just that. Overcome by the poetic and overtly Gothic Revival Picturesque design (in its then state of deterioration it might have been described as Gothick), I clearly had no choice but to include the structure — with what Vaux referred to as its "well-balanced irregularity" — in its own chapter. Inside, I was struck by the second floor of the house, with its intact architectural details, including Vaux's famous canted corners, window seats, and layout. Outside, I was impressed by the "structural polychromy," as Vaux referred to the fantastic graphic use of color in the design.

Canted corners on the doorways and a window seat on the second floor of The Point

This was incorporated following a precedent initiated during the Gothic Revival period in England, which continued in the teachings of John Ruskin before becoming part of the architectural vernacular used in America. It was Vaux, along with Jacob Wrey Mould, his lesser-known Central Park collaborator, who contemporaneously imported this vocabulary to America. Besides at The Point and Olana, it is visible in many buildings throughout the Hudson River Valley.

Born a Livingston, Geraldine Hoyt had grown up next door to The Point at Staatsburgh, the home of her parents, Maturin and Margaret Livingston, both descendants of Robert Livingston, First Lord of Livingston Manor. The property on which The Point was located, much of which had been a gift from her parents, was visually cut off from any connection to the Hudson River at the time of my visit. To a great extent, this obscured the Picturesque impression that Vaux had intended by very intentionally siting the home in this location. Here, Vaux had been able to capitalize on the property's spectacular views of the Hudson River and distant Catskill Mountains. In 2020, CVPA organized the clearing of the accumulated secondary growth that had impeded access to these iconic views from both the property and house; the effort was financed by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. Now, visitors can better understand and experience the brilliant positioning of the Hoyts' house by Vaux and the intentional Picturesque views that he so deftly framed.



Slate roof design in a polychromy pattern

The Point after view-clearing

Pieter Estersohn

While developing the symposium, *Designing the Landscape That Made America: Calvert Vaux and His Peers in the Hudson Valley*, one of the goals shared by the co-hosts, the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance and Classical American Homes Preservation Trust, was to present an updated and historically correct narrative of the legacy left by Calvert Vaux and the people he collaborated with in the Hudson River Valley. The collaborative process, as we were to see, was a crucial theme throughout Vaux's career. Another hope was that we could create an environment for comparison and dialogue on the varied approaches to design that evolved during the mid-nineteenth century in our region. This was achieved through the speakers that we hosted as well as the visits organized to some of the landscapes and residences that Vaux worked on.

After Kyle Toth and Emily Cooperman of PS&S LLC delivered their recent research commissioned by CVPA on the history of the landscape at The Point, they led guests on a tour of the site, located a short walk from where our tent was situated near the Hudson River at Staatsburgh State Historic Site, so that we could see firsthand the research just discussed.

This and other site visits were a necessary component of our vision for the symposium. I have a very distinct prerequisite as a historian, photographer, writer, and preservationist: I can only fully understand architecture and landscape by actually visiting the sites that I am researching. For me, it's hard to write about a place without physically experiencing it; obviously photographing architecture and gardens demands it. That is how I learn, and I am so obsessed with this path of study that my son Elio, now nineteen, has been dragged to thirty-four countries and all the gardens, museums, and houses that I really MUST SEE(!).

Before I moved to Dutchess County in 2010, my interest in the nineteenth century made a full stop in 1840. This was my criteria in looking at more than 100 houses before buying Staats Hall in Red Hook, New York. The home had been built in 1839 for the same family that had owned and named the town of Staatsburg, location of The Point. There were vestiges of a once lovely Romantic landscape and farm there, but they had been left to deteriorate. Wanting to do justice to my new home, I dug deep into the period the house was built in to satisfy my curiosity and so that I could best implement the ethos and aesthetic of the period in my restoration. This meant scouring the region for properties from the period, which occurred while I was researching the chapter on The Point for my book. My field of interest in design evolved at this point to include the period being covered by our symposium.

I eased slowly into the mid-nineteenth century. Researching Vaux, I came to appreciate this tiny man (he was under five feet tall), and his role in the evolution of American landscape design. As I further explored his background, I traced a lineage beginning in Great Britain with Lancelot "Capability" Brown, Uvedale Price, Humphry Repton, John Claudius Loudon, and William Gilpin, all of whose landscapes I had visited as a child in England. It was Andrew Jackson Downing, our native son from Newburgh, who continued the conversation begun in England by specifically adapting it to the climate

A remaining gate and wall at Highland Gardens

and socio-economic structure of the United States, very different than that in Great Britain at the time. His efforts very much resonated with the growing middle class in America. The 1996 biography of Downing by David Schuyler is titled *Apostle of Taste*, which rather sums up his role at the time.

Downing brought Vaux to America in 1850, immediately after meeting him in London. Upon arriving in America, Vaux was installed at Highland Gardens, Downing's home on the premises of his family's nursery. This was also the location of Downing's "Architecture Bureau," where Vaux was to work.

Having become obsessed with discovering this now-lost property, I searched and finally located where Highland Gardens had stood.

Most of the locations published in Judith Major's book, as well as that of our speaker and Vaux biographer Frank Kowsky, were queued up on a list to explore following this initial discovery. As a result of this very focused path, I am now better able to contextualize the nuances of Vaux's designs. Vaux, whose work has been woefully underappreciated, is all around us if we know where and how to look to uncover his inspiration.

I visited Downing Park in Newburgh, so named for Vaux's mentor, which Vaux had worked on with frequent collaborator Frederick Law Olmsted. I made many visits to Springside, the location of Matthew Vassar's home in Poughkeepsie that Vaux worked on with Downing immediately after arriving in America.

Warren House, Newburgh

I had a friend bring me to Idlewild, the 1853 residence designed by Vaux for Nathaniel Parker Willis in Cornwall, New York. Sadly, an unsympathetic renovation has obscured the original design, but it was interesting to observe the siting of the house.

I spent many hours at Wilderstein and its 1891 landscape created by Vaux

Porter's Lodge and the original gate at Springside (above). Porter's Lodge interior (below)

and Company. (Vaux used this name on his masthead at the time, following the addition of his reverently named son, Downing, to his practice.) To this day, Wilderstein, located in Rhinebeck, creates an interesting dialogue with Vaux's earlier design for The Point, which it faces across Vanderburgh Cove.

To better understand the period, I collected early editions of the books by both Downing

The house at Wilderstein seen from the lawn (above) and the view toward The Point from its tower (below)

and Vaux, but in order to really grasp the American evolution of landscape design, I gained access to early editions of the Red Books that Humphry Repton published around the turn of the nineteenth century to illustrate for his clients what COULD be implemented in the transformation of their grounds in Great Britain. "Capability" Brown had earned his

moniker for just this reason, but the books by Repton very clearly indicated for his clients just what they might be able to achieve with their properties by using a series of before and after overlays.

Many of the design elements introduced during this time made their way into the Hudson River Valley a few decades later. In one volume, I found an early example of bargeboards from 1796 that Repton had incorporated into a design for a cottage, which Downing later adopted. Today, we can see the American interpretation of this architectural element on the northern elevation of The Point, where they miraculously remain intact.

Bargeboards on The Point

I ended up finding most of the houses that Vaux had worked on in the region, either alone or with Downing, Frederick Clarke Withers, or Frederic Edwin Church at Olana. Sean Sawyer, president of The Olana Partnership, shared his research on Vaux's work with Church on his magnificent estate. As mentioned previously, collaboration was a dominant theme that ran through the career of Vaux, and Olana is another illustration of this process.

While on a trip to Washington, D.C., I visited the monumental Andrew Jackson Downing urn that Vaux had designed in 1856, now standing in the Enid A. Haupt Garden next to the Smithsonian Museum and the National Mall. A partial extract from the inscription reads "...When these grounds were proposed he was at once called to design them: but before they were completed he perished in the wreck of the *Henry Clay*." This reference was to the tragic death of Downing in 1852 at the age of thirty-seven in the Hudson River.

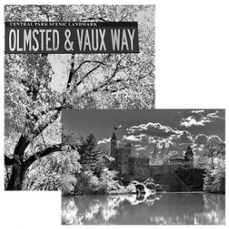
Andrew Jackson Downing memorial urn at the Smithsonian Museum

I searched out and found the often-overlooked Hillside Cemetery in Middletown, New York, that Vaux had designed. I also searched for HIS final resting place at Montrepose Cemetery in Kingston, where he lies next to his wife Mary McEntee Vaux and near her brother, Jervis McEntee. One of the first projects that Vaux worked on in Kingston was the painting studio of Hudson River School artist McEntee, which was later joined to another residence on West Chestnut Street.

Driving north on Route 9W last year, I discovered Downing's final resting place, just north of Newburgh at Cedar Hill Cemetery. In fact, I

became a bit of a cemetery lurker during Covid, organizing visits to Mount Auburn outside of Boston and Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Trinity Cemetery on Riverside Drive and 155th Street in upper Manhattan had been redesigned by Vaux, and is the final resting place for many prominent New Yorkers including the Astors.

Hillside Cemetery marker, Vaux's gravestone, Downing's gravestone (left to right)



Central Park and a view of Belvedere Castle

These early examples of landscape design were important in the evolution of the public parks movement in America. They followed the precedent set at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris and offered the general public much-needed respite from the city's chaos and filth before locations like Central Park were conceived.

Having grown up across the street from Central Park in Manhattan, I had profound childhood memories of this environment. I understood how to navigate the park and the joys inherent in its designs and architecture but had known very little about the team that created The Greensward Plan for what was referred to as The Central Park in 1857. The complexity of the design and implementation of the plan were part of my discovery. The name of Frederick Law Olmsted was familiar, but those of Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould were not.

Bethesda Terrace in Central Park

Carved detail and Cleft Ridge Arch in Prospect Park

Vaux and Olmsted also worked as a team on Brooklyn's Prospect Park, where I went to visit its newly restored Endale Arch

Details of the original Metropolitan Museum of Art building still visible in the Robert Lehman wing

This I eventually found odd as Vaux's role as architect, senior partner, and mentor to Olmsted in the beginning of their collaboration was even observed later by Olmsted. Looking at the park now, with more knowledge of the designers, my experience has been transformed and I see the genius that was necessary in the genesis and realization of this place. Today, the magnificent Bethesda Terrace Arcade that Vaux and Mould conceived in front of Bethesda Fountain has been restored by the Central Park Conservancy to its original condition and role as an architectural centerpiece of the park.

Bordering Central Park is the Museum of Natural History, its original structure designed by Vaux, and inside the park lies the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Here, the vestigial Ruskinian stonework designed by Vaux for the first museum structure is still visible once one knows where to find it.

Grace Church, Manhattan

National Arts Club, Manhattan

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I later discovered that the small but complex gem of a garden that I walked by dozens of times on Broadway and Eleventh Street was designed by Vaux for Grace Church so that the awkward navigation from the street to multiple entrances finally made sense.

I revisited my next-door neighbor, the National Arts Club, where I had been a member for ages, and saw, in a different light, the complex design that Vaux completed there for Samuel Tilden in the 1870s, when he combined two townhouses into one residence.

I walked around the corner from my home on Gramercy Park South and sleuthed out the site where Vaux had HIS home on East 18th Street. Here, he and Olmsted conjured up the Greensward Plan, working diligently in the evenings following their day jobs, and eventually winning the $2,000 prize in the competition that led to the creation of their masterpiece, Central Park. (Sadly, Vaux's home has been replaced by a nondescript apartment building.) Nearby, I identified the Mortimer Building at 935 Broadway. Built in 1862 and still standing, it housed the first offices of the American Institute of Architects, of which Vaux was a founding member.

I thought it important to discuss with our symposium guests the distinctions and nuances between the many terms used to describe landscapes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Intense debate ensued during this period through discourse about what constituted a "sublime" landscape, a "beautiful" one, or one that was "Picturesque." "Beautiful" and "gardenesque" were also terms that had been discussed historically, even argued about at length. Much of this vocabulary had a direct lineage starting in the eighteenth century in Great Britain and continued through the books and work of Andrew Jackson Downing and Vaux, who both brought these teachings over to America.

Downing eventually combined many of these adjectives in his writings on what he referred to as "The Rural Arts" and in *The Horticulturist*, the magazine he started editing in 1846. Vaux later, in 1864, wrote of "The Hand of Improvement," adopting the same vocabulary when describing landscape design. Nomenclature was an important device for our young country as our identity evolved and how it was to be expressed through the subjects of design and landscape. My intention was that our guests would have an opportunity to become reacquainted with these terms and perhaps reference them with a stronger understanding when planning their own landscapes or viewing gardens in the future.

There was recently an interesting article by Margaret Roach in *The New York Times* titled "Why Gardening Offers a Psychological Lifeline in Times of Crisis." With all the chilling challenges that this moment in history has presented, we can each in our own way explore what the article refers to as the "restorative power of nature." My hope was that our weekend might help to contextualize the American evolution of the subject and illustrate how our outdoor spaces have offered these qualities throughout time.

Gardens heal, gardens teach, gardens humble and reward us, and give us unbridled opportunity to express ourselves. Perhaps most importantly, gardens require us to be present. I asked our audience to hone their senses as they listened to our speakers and visited the landscapes they had access to that weekend. It was a great opportunity for us all to explore what might inspire us from historic designs and to learn about the insight that informed the process.

The Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich defined "sublime" — a word often mentioned during the weekend — as being "about nature being greater than human politics with beauty at the heart." I invited our group to look through this lens for the weekend as they heard about and saw some truly magical locations.

Pieter Estersohn is on the Board of Directors of the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance and is the author and photographer of Life Along the Hudson: The Historic Country Estates of the Livingston Family.

Learn more about the Calvert Vaux Preservation Alliance at: https://calvertvaux.org/, *the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust at:* https://classicalamericanhomes.org/, *and The Garden Conservancy at:* https://www.gardenconservancy.org/.

ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

Photographer Pieter Estersohn Shares His Most Unforgettable Shots for *AD*

Get the behind-the-scenes details on Estersohn's favorite photos in the magazine

By Lindsey Mather

Photography by Pieter Estersohn

January 4, 2016

Acclaimed interiors and architecture photographer Pieter Estersohn has documented incredible spaces around the world—many of them for this magazine—with an artist's eye for the perfect natural light and composition. (In fact, in the February issue, he turned the camera on his own weekend home in upstate New York.) With so many gorgeous photo shoots in his portfolio, we had to ask: What are Estersohn's favorites? Here, he shares the inspiration and preparation behind his most unforgettable shots featured in the pages of *Architectural Digest*.

Pieter Estersohn

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1/11

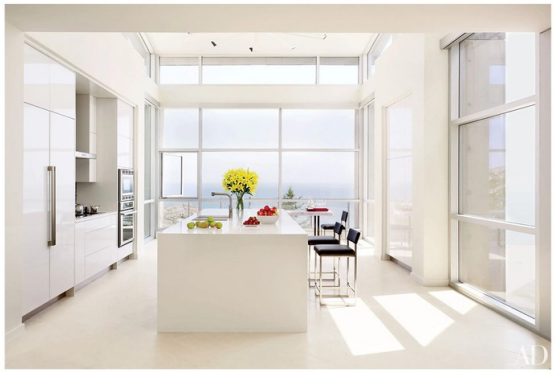
Philanthropists Jennifer and Billy Frist's Nashville, Tennessee, residence by architecture firm DA|AD and McAlpine Booth & Ferrier Interiors, February 2013

"I think a lot about history as I'm composing my pictures, and when I saw these two faux-shearling William Haines Designs slipper chairs, my mind went to French furniture designer Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann's rooms at the Musée Océanographique," says Estersohn. "It's the audacity of the proportions—something so scaled down under this insane soaring ceiling."

2/11

Architect Jim Joseph and theater composer Scott Frankel's house in New York's Hudson Valley, February 2014

"Two very dear friends of mine live in this house; it's about five miles from my home in the country, and it still completely has its soul," Estersohn says. "There's something almost minimalist about shooting architecture in the snow—it becomes more linear, like a drawing, due to the high contrast. This shot was about catching an ephemeral moment. The next day, the snow was melting off the trees. It was the perfect temperature; the snow was fluffy on the branches."



3/11

A secluded Nova Scotia retreat by Alexander Gorlin Architects, February 2014

"This photo is about the pristine modern architecture of Alexander Gorlin," says Estersohn. "When you're dealing with impeccably detailed architecture, it's like working with a supermodel, as opposed to dealing with another kind of portrait, where it becomes about concealing and hiding and tricking things out a bit."

4/11

Fashion designer and art collector Kasper's Manhattan apartment, April 2011

"I grew up collecting 19th- and 20th-century photography. When I was 18, I bought a portrait of Edith Sitwell by Cecil Beaton. I often find myself consciously—or unconsciously—referencing historic imagery. When I saw Kasper, I knew we had to shoot him in a similar profile. He is so elegant, so refined. He's an erudite aesthete who has collected this cross-section of 17th- through 21st-century photography, paintings, and drawings. I hoped this portrait expressed that."

Pieter Estersohn

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5/11

Decorator Sara Story's SK Ranch in Texas, by Lake|Flato Architects, April 2014

"I think we did 120 shots in two days in 110-degree heat, but this property was so inspiring," Estersohn says. "You walk into this huge compound and there's not one moment where your eye is distracted by less-than-perfect craftsmanship. I'm obsessive about details, and when there are no mistakes to conceal, I can just play with composition. For me, the poetry is in the contrast between the informal gravel driveway and the impeccable architecture."

6/11

Las Vegas home by architect William Hablinski and design firm Atelier AM, September 2012

"It's a very livable home—I didn't feel uptight there. There was a magical tension between the Anish Kapoor sculpture and the Roman mosaic panel. It's exciting for me to look at design and see a very careful curation of modern and antique."

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7/11

Music-world consultant Andrea Anson's Manhattan townhouse, October 2013

"This is a close friend of mine's house—I've been there many times as a guest. It's wonderful for me to go into a space where I have warm memories," says Estersohn. "I find this space to be profoundly sophisticated and personal, a pure expression of the homeowner. When the books are not styled, I'm impressed—we didn't move them, and you really get that the books are used. We left the candles in the chandelier wonky. It's a sublimely inviting space."

8/11

A Cape Dutch–style home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, by architect Bobby McAlpine and interior designer Ray Booth, October 2014

"This Dutch-inspired house really blew my mind. I love the historically correct fenestration. It's transformational for me when a new house uses old materials," Estersohn says. "I think floors are very important as you navigate a space—think about how often your eyes are on the floor. They brought in this beautiful historic marble tile and the patina, age, and texture lend themselves to photography and change the experience of being in the space."

Pieter Estersohn

Art Department

9/11

A Bay Area residence by architect Lewis Butler and interior decorator Steven Volpe, November 2011

"This is a very edited interior, and everything in it is spectacular: the Zaha Hadid Dune table, the Jeff Zimmerman chandelier, the distinct tone of the Tobia Scarpa chairs, the photograph on the right. The intentional offness of the composition of the room is gutsy and different. It draws the eye to spend a little more time looking at it."

10/11

A boldly geometric property in Los Cabos, Mexico, by Olson Kundig Architects and designer Terry Hunziker, November 2012

"This shot was about two things: linear, single-point composition juxtaposed with the beautiful colors of the ocean outside," says Estersohn. "I remember being obsessed with the roof jutting out on the left and making sure that aggressive line going out into the center of the picture above the water was in the right place."

11/11

Philanthropists Amy and John Phelan's Aspen, Colorado, chalet by Stone Fox Architects, November 2015

"It's a simple white room architecturally, but there is a spectacular personal art collection. I loved this rootlike chandelier by sculptor Donald Lipski, how it played with the snow-covered trees outside. I'm always looking at subtleties, like that triangle of light on the wall, which we timed so it hit the installation without breaching its integrity. The glass tables were six inches thick, and we set up backlight to give them that shimmery quality."

Pieter Estersohn

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