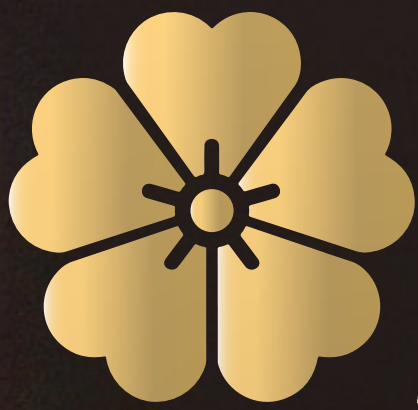




AMARENA

SUMMER ISSUE

ENGLISH

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MARILYN MONROE

FASHION
MIRIYA LOVE

BOGOTA FASHION WEEK

WENDELL'S WORLD

SEVILLE, THE SEDUCTIVE SOUL OF ANDALUSIA

POP CULTURE
NOLAN'S ODYSSEY

WORLD
NORMANDY, 1944

CREEDS
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A TOAST FROM THE DECK OF
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More than a MAGAZINE. A look at the shallow and the deep.

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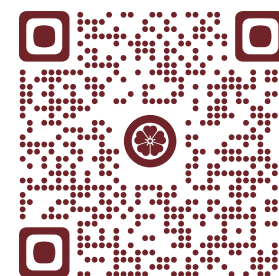


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EDITOR'S LETTER

Marco Guerrero



SUMMER RETROSPECTIVE AND REINVENTION

There is a distinct quality to summer light. It is a clarity that does not merely illuminate, but reveals; a warmth that invites us to slow our pace, take a deep breath, and look around through fresh eyes. For those of us who create **AMARENA**, this season is far more than just another page on the calendar—it is a true reflection of where we stand today: a period of maturity, renewal, and above all, a deeply cherished reunion.

Since we last connected this past May, we are officially marking our return. Reconnecting with you after a necessary pause reaffirmed our core purpose: to serve as a roadmap of inspiration, a sanctuary where fashion, art, design, literature, history, and lifestyle converge to tell stories that are truly worth reading. Returning was no scheduling coincidence; it was the answer to an unwavering desire to bring our community a living, honest platform attuned to the beauty of everyday life.

Yet no genuine return happens without transformation. Coming back means having evolved along the way, and this summer issue is tangible proof. Those who have journeyed with us over time will instantly feel how the pulse of **AMARENA** has grown. Over the past few months, we have undertaken a deep editorial restructuring spanning typography and page design to visual curation and our lineup of contributing voices.

We embraced a cleaner, bolder aesthetic, a reading cadence that allows more room for visual breathing space, and long-form features that delve deep into the origins, journeys, and identities shaping our culture. These changes are not the byproduct of fleeting trends, but of an steadfast commitment to delivering a premier sensory and aesthetic experience. We reshaped the form to revitalize the substance: presenting more intimate profiles, bolder visual essays, and a sharper eye on the world around us.

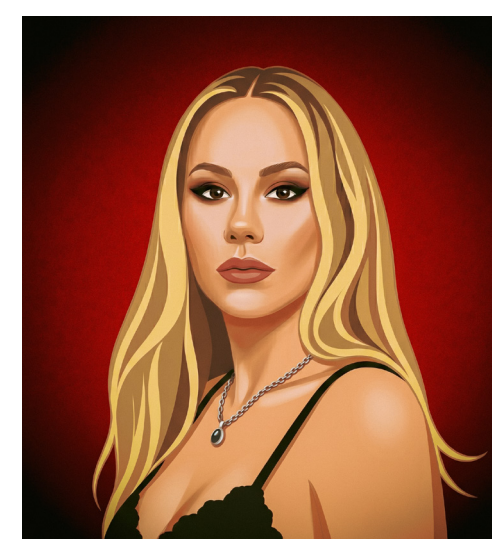
In this summer issue, we invite you to immerse yourselves in a meticulously curated volume. Within its pages, you will discover everything from tributes to historical memory and migration, to fashion editorials where style dialogues freely with open landscapes and natural sunlight.

Thank you for welcoming us back into your time. Thank you for walking alongside us through this chapter that began taking shape in May and now, beneath the peak of summer sun, takes hold with greater strength than ever.

Welcome to this new cycle of **AMARENA**.



editor-in-chief@amarenamag.com @marcoguerreroleon





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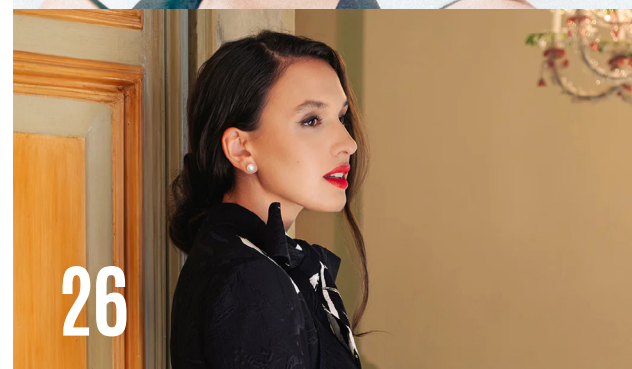
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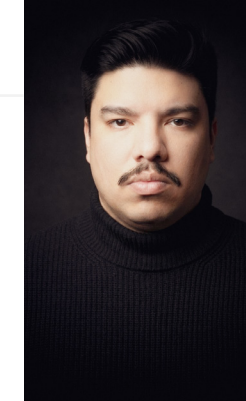
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MARCO GUERRERO



The Myth of Plagiarism and the Arrogance of Mediocre Creatives

BY Marco Guerrero © @marcoguerreroleon

IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY, a particularly noisy breed abounds: the creative with a deeply distorted sense of reality. These are figures who, granted, possess a certain talent and the ability to craft interesting pieces; however, they are light-years away from being the revolutionary, misunderstood masterminds the world was supposedly waiting for. Their greatest issue is not a lack of technique, but an outsized ego that leads to delusional self-aggrandizement, convinced that any aesthetic coincidence on someone else's runway is a conspiracy to rob them of their glory.

These are flaws that, in the hunt for easy clicks, fall into sensationalist yet dubious rhetoric—appealing to the good faith of the majority, but built on fallacies. In today's world, and even more so in fashion, nothing is truly ancestral, nothing is entirely authentic; everything is influenced by

everyone, and that is precisely how civilization has been built: on inspiration and, at times, imitation.

It is time to remember an elemental truth that many prefer to ignore: in fashion, as in virtually everything in this life, no one reinvents the wheel from scratch. Absolutely everyone—from the most nascent emerging creator to the creative directors helming the major international luxury conglomerates—has borrowed a silhouette, a palette, a concept, or a historical reference from someone else. Fashion is an ongoing dialogue, an infinite reinterpretation of the collective cultural archive, not an exclusive patent held by whoever discovered the bias cut yesterday.

That is why the spectacle of the run-of-the-mill designer is so pathetic: incapable of making their work stand out on its own merits, they resort to performative, moralizing activism just to stay relevant in the conversation. When the clothes cannot speak for themselves, the easy way out is to wrap

oneself in opportunistic rhetoric, point an inquisitorial finger at others' success, and loudly proclaim to the four winds that they have been the victims of plagiarism. It is something that happens constantly after every major platform or fashion week.

This calculated victimhood is not a defense of art; it is pure mediocrity disguised as grievance. Fabricating the narrative of a persecuted designer to cover up a lack of impact is undeniably one of the great blights of the contemporary industry. If your creations leave no mark on the runway or in the market, the problem was never that someone stole your formula: the problem is that your formula was never as brilliant as you led yourself to believe.

Less paranoia, fewer manufactured speeches for the gallery, and more work in the atelier. True transcendence is proven by cutting fabric, not by pointing fingers on social media. ■



Jose Carlos Illanes

The humorous bond between Spain and Mexico



BY Martha Phillips © @girdumonde

THERE ARE ARTISTS who cannot be confined to a single definition. José Carlos Illanes belongs to that category of creators who have built a career founded on stage discipline, yet driven by absolute versatility. As an actor, musician, comedian, and writer, his journey has spanned classical theatre, musicals, television, film, and stand-up comedy—always distinguished by a presence that blends technique, sensitivity, and a singular stage energy.

Trained in Madrid under techniques inspired by Michael Chekhov and mentored by masters affiliated with *La Abadía* and *Curtidores de Teatro*, Illanes developed an artistic foundation that extended far beyond acting. He also studied music at The Royal School of Music in London, achieving an advanced level in guitar and music theory—a discipline that would come to define much of his stagecraft. This synthesis of dramatic performance and musica-

lity has allowed him to move effortlessly between theatrical productions, musical stagings, and comedy shows.

In 2005, he founded his own street performance company in Galicia, Zancalino Producciones SL, alongside the theatre company UveDoble, with which he premiered Rodolf Sirera's *O veleno do teatro*. This marked the beginning of an enduring career in theatre and musical productions across Spain, working on projects such as *Galicia Canibal*, *Salomé*, *Mi Cuerpo es Mío*, and *A Matar el Tiempo*, as well as collaborating with prominent figures including Paloma Pedrero, Victoria Vera, and Jaime Chávarri.

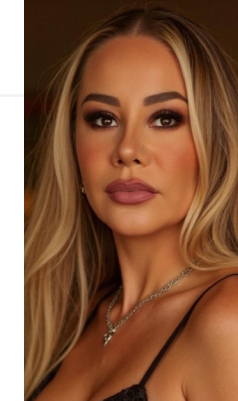
His career also carved out a significant space in Spanish television, appearing in series like *Casa Manola* and performing as a comedian on TVG and Mediaset networks. He later expanded his reach into international screen projects, including Telemundo's *Enemigo Intimo 2*, Warner DC's *Batman Azteca*, and Televisa's *Vencer la Culpa*.

Yet perhaps one of the most compelling facets of Illanes is his capacity to develop original work. He has written plays, short films, and theatrical formats that have earned notable accolades, including awards in micro-theatre and narrative competitions. He has also worked as a creative director, composer, and actor in advertising campaigns for international brands, cementing a career that relies not on a single artistic medium, but on continuous reinvention.

In recent years, José Carlos Illanes has focused much of his energy on comedy and stand-up, bringing his shows to stages across Mexico City and Monterrey—cities where his wit, stagecraft, and theatrical background have found a resonant audience.

Because beyond the credits and titles, what truly defines his work is that rare ability to transition from classical theatre to contemporary satire without ever losing his identity. ■





The Art of Clearing the Table **Assets, Liabilities, and the Deadweight of Your Network**

BY Kary Fernandez @karypher

NOT ALL CONTACTS ARE ASSETS... some are exquisitely disguised liabilities. As you well know, dear reader, I love addressing the elephant in the room. And the worst part is not merely that they exist; the worst part is that you carry them around as if they were equity, when in reality they are sheer ornamental deadweight.

In the world of high-end networking, there is a highly priced falsehood: that the more contacts you have, the more power you amass. False. What you actually accumulate is noise, needless obligations, and an inflated address book that rarely translates into tangible results. Having a high volume of contacts is easy... having the right ones is an entirely different league. It is a whole other level.

I learned the hard way something no one tells you out loud: not every relationship adds value, even if it looks impeccable in the photograph. There are people who look spectacular at your table, who carry the right pedigree, position, or visibility... but who move absolutely nothing. Neither decisions, nor capital, nor opportunities. They simply orbit, draining your space and your energy while you convince yourself that this represents social capital.

An asset in your network is someone who opens doors, makes connections, troubleshoots, and accelerates momentum. A liability is someone who observes, takes, and benefits from your access without ever offering their own. And here lies the sophisticated perversity of it all: liabilities are usually utterly charming. They are likable, they validate, they applaud, and they appear whenever the spotlights are on... only to vanish when actual execution is required.

The issue is not their existence, but the failure to identify them in time. We were conditioned never to "dismiss" anyone, to be inclusive, and to avoid viewing relationships through a transactional lens.

Highly idyllic in theory, but extraordinarily expensive in practice. At this echelon, every seat, every invitation, and every single minute carries a steep opportunity cost. If you fail to grasp this, you end up handing out privileged access to those who have not earned it.

The warning sign with a passive contact is unmistakable: they constantly need something, but rarely have anything to bring to the table. And I am not just talking about money; I mean actual value—intel, high-level connections, leverage, and timing. An asset contributes even before you ask; a liability sits back waiting for you to provide the context, the introduction, and the upside. And beware, because there are also dangerous liabilities: those who actively subtract. The indiscreet, the ones oblivious to unwritten codes, and those who mistake proximity for intimacy. One wrong guest at the wrong table can dismantle dynamics and alliances that took you years to build.

Yet let us admit the most uncomfortable truth of all: more often than not, you keep these liabilities around because they feed your ego. Because they flatter you, seek you out, and give you the illusion of relevance. And that is addictive—far more intoxicating than real power.

Real power is cold. It is selective. It is understated. It does not spend its day applauding you, but it translates into concrete outcomes. This is not about turning into a soulless calculator; it is about having discernment. It is about understanding that your network is an investment portfolio, not an emotional scrapbook—and certainly not your fan club! Like any serious portfolio, it demands constant curation.

I follow a simple rule: if a relationship has not generated value within a reasonable timeframe, it goes under review. It is not abruptly severed, burned, or publicly called out... it is repositioned. Not everyone belongs at your head table. Some are moved to the waiting room; others, frankly, are shown the exit.

This is precisely where many publicists fail: they mistake accessibility for strategy. They believe that saying yes to everything makes them indispensable, when in fact it simply makes them replaceable. If you are available to everyone, you hold no real value for anyone. The ultimate luxury in high-level networking is not how many people know your name, but how many simply cannot gain access to you.

That requires making uncomfortable choices. Leaving certain messages unanswered. Declining specific invitations. Not reciprocating every petty favor. Every time you say yes to a liability, you are stealing bandwidth and space from an asset that could redefine your board.

One must also know how to look: assets are not always glaringly obvious. Sometimes they are not the most media-saturated or the most popular figures in the room, but they hold the real ability to pull strings, allocate resources, and steer narratives. Those are the ones you need to identify, protect, and seat within arm's reach.

High-stakes networking is not democratic. It is not fair. It is not egalitarian. It is profoundly strategic. Whoever fails to see it through that lens remains trapped on the glossy surface where everything looks dazzling... but nothing ever happens.

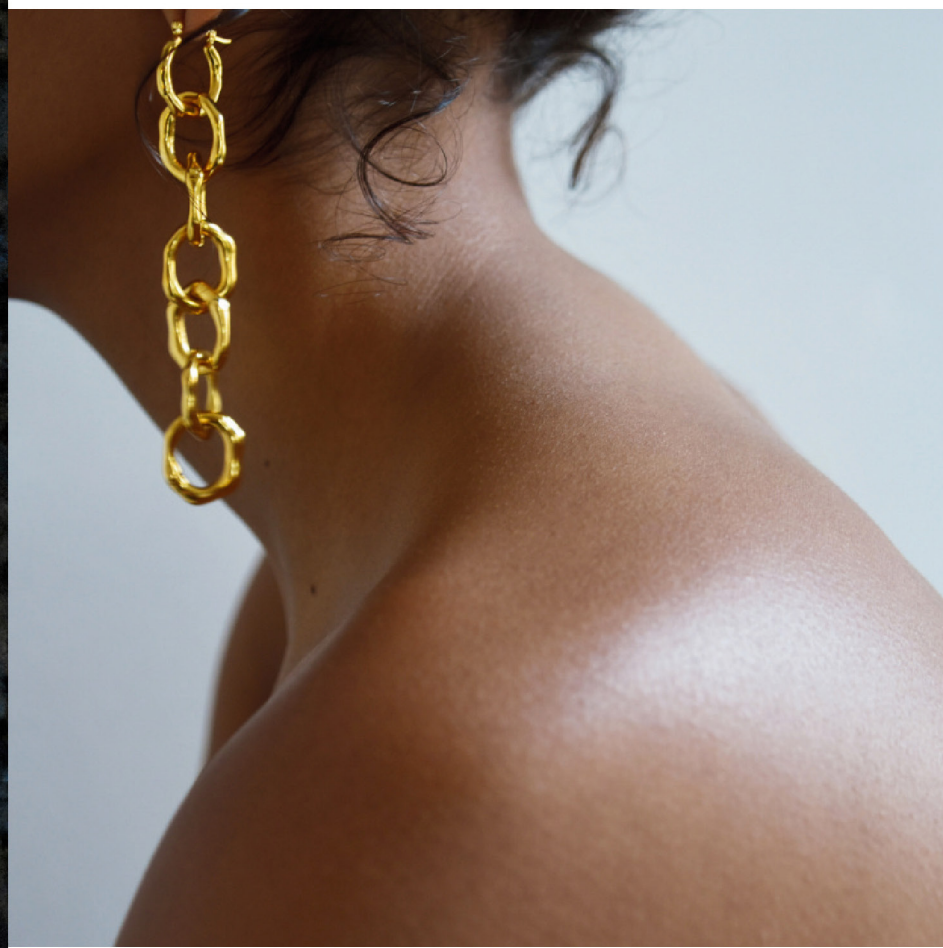
So the next time you review your agenda, your guest list, or your table, do not ask yourself how many names you know. Ask yourself how many of them actually move the needle. Or better yet: ask your PR!

Because in this game, it is never about collecting names, but about shedding the deadweight with poise and razor-sharp strategy. That is the true dividing line between those who merely socialize... and those who genuinely build power.

Just saying... ■



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The invention of Marilyn Monroe

The icon made flesh

A century after the birth of Hollywood's first bombshells, the legacy of the woman who revolutionized the film and beauty industries remains untouched. Transcending the decades, her influence continues to set the standard for contemporary fashion and aesthetics. Master of her own destiny, she seized the tools at her disposal to take full ownership of herself, cementing her place as one of the earliest It girls in global pop culture.

BY Tiff García © @_tiffgarcia



NORMA JEANE BAKER She was born in Los Angeles on June 1, 1926. Her mother, Gladys Pearl Baker, was born in Piedras Negras, Coahuila; her father, whose exact identity remains unknown, was said to have hailed from Rhode Island. Norma Jeane's childhood was deeply scarred by abandonment, shifting between orphanages and foster homes as her mother was unable to care for her due to mental health struggles. Although she moved in with a family friend in 1937, the arrangement was short-lived: changing family circumstances forced another relocation and, due to legal constraints, they could not take her along. Faced with only two options—marriage or returning to the foster care system—a 16-year-old Norma Jeane entered an arranged marriage with 21-year-old Jimmy Dougherty. The union ended in 1944 when he enlisted in the Merchant Marine and was deployed to the South Pacific.

It was during this period, while working at a munitions factory, that she caught the eye of photographer David Conover, who was documenting women contributing to the war effort for Yank magazine. That encounter ignited a modeling career that skyrocketed at breakneck speed; within just two years, her face was gracing magazine covers across the country. Concurrently, she began studying acting, enrolled in literature courses, and drew aesthetic inspiration from figures like Jean Harlow and Lana Turner. Following her divorce, she signed her first studio contract with 20th Century Fox in 1946. It was then, after testing nine different shades of blonde before landing on the perfect platinum and adopting her mother's maiden surname, that the name destined to change everything was born: Marilyn Monroe. The construction of an icon was underway.

Marilyn refused to let her turbulent past define her; instead, she transformed her femininity and style into instruments of reinvention. Her signature textured bob in soft waves framed a complexion that deliberately retained subtle peach fuzz to capture a velvety, dreamlike glow under studio lights. Her hypnotic gaze was crafted with white eyeliner along the waterline, strategic contouring, a flawless cat-eye, and lashes flared toward the outer corners. An impeccably arched brow, her trademark beauty mark—widely viewed at the time as a flaw—and lips permanently painted in vivid ruby red (alternated with fiery orange and coral tones) completed an aesthetic that cemented her as the definitive face of the 1950s.

Her screen debut came in *Dangerous Years* (1947), playing Evie, a

waitress. However, it was her appearances in *The Asphalt Jungle*—where she showcased one of her earliest and most memorable looks: an off-the-shoulder black dress, pearl necklace, and stilettos—and *All About Eve* that marked the true start of her ascent. By 1953, in *Niagara*, she portrayed a consummate femme fatale in a thriller that proved her dramatic range in a complex, dark role while solidifying her undeniable on-screen magnetism.

That same year, she starred in the film that definitively catapulted her into global superstardom: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. The picture immortalized the legendary sequence for “Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend”—a musical number whose satirical elegance masked a sharp social reality: an era when women could not yet open a bank account without a man's signature, turning to fine jewelry as financial security. Delivering biting lines such as “men grow cold as girls grow old” and “diamonds are a girl's best friend,” Marilyn performed the choreography in a bubblegum-pink satin gown with an oversized back bow, matching opera gloves, and dazzling gems. The design, created by William Travilla, has served as an enduring reference for fashion houses like Yves Saint Laurent and Moschino.

In 1955 came *The Seven Year Itch*, gifting collective pop culture the immortal image of the white pleated dress billowing over a New York subway grate. That piece, also designed by Travilla, holds such immense cultural significance that it occupies its own chapter in fashion history.

Toward the later chapters of her career, her wardrobe continued to push boundaries. In *River of No Return*, she experimented with green corsetry and textured red drapes, while in *Some Like It Hot*, she shattered formal dress codes. Off-screen, her everyday style was equally influential: she pioneered high-waisted trousers that accentuated her silhouette, merging mid-century glamour with an urban ease that foreshadowed the modern wardrobe. One of her final and most breathtaking style statements occurred in 1962, when she serenaded President John F. Kennedy with “Happy Birthday” in a sheer nude soufflé gauze gown embellished with thousands of hand-sewn crystals applied directly onto her body, ensuring a skin-tight, millimeter-precise fit.

Her tragic death on August 4, 1962, at her Brentwood home—ruled by the coroner as a probable suicide—shook the world. Yet the imprint she left behind proved indelible. Today, beauty houses continue to launch collections inspired by her visage, her personal artifacts fetch fine-art prices at auction, and new generations of celebrities and digital tastemakers endlessly replicate her aesthetic, persona, and words.

To reduce Marilyn Monroe to a mere “blonde bombshell” is a grave historical oversight. Behind the myth stood a profoundly sensitive, sharp-witted woman with an acute business instinct, becoming one of the earliest actresses to establish her own independent production company, Marilyn Monroe Productions, in 1955. Furthermore, she was an early and vocal critic of Hollywood's gender pay gap, an insatiable reader, and someone who never denied navigating a deeply patriarchal industry; instead, she mastered the craft of surviving and fighting back within it.

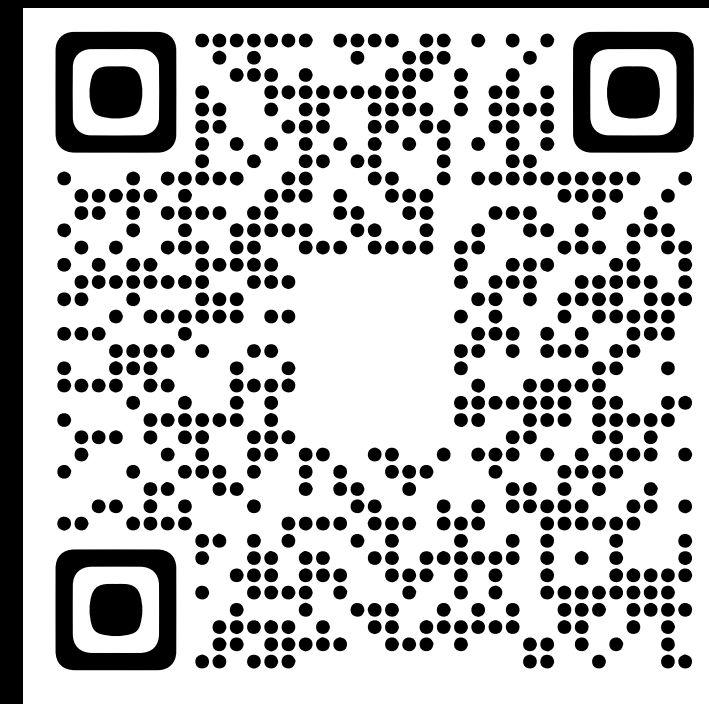
Marilyn Monroe was, above all, a multifaceted and dimensional force: an undisputed icon of fashion and pop culture, but also a woman of profound depth who was never afraid to disrupt the room.





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FASHION





MIRIYA LOVE



A Legacy of Elegance, Crafted with Heart

Designer Yana Ilyaich transforms family heritage, Italian craftsmanship, and timeless femininity into one of the most compelling emerging brands in the luxury landscape.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz @wendellfr

ONE OF THE GREATEST PRIVILEGES of my profession is discovering remarkable people before they become widely recognized. Every season brings introductions to talented designers, but only a few leave a lasting impression. I recently had the pleasure of meeting Yana Ilyaich, founder and creative director of MIRIYA LOVE, and I was immediately intrigued—not only by the understated sophistication of her designs, but by the sincerity and warmth with which she spoke about the journey that brought her here. In an industry often captivated by spectacle, hers is a story grounded in family, heritage and authenticity, making it exactly the kind of discovery I enjoy sharing with my readers.

What struck me most during our conversation was that Yana rarely spoke about fashion in commercial terms. Instead, she spoke about memories, the women who inspired her and the experiences that quietly shaped her creative vision. It soon became clear that MIRIYA LOVE was never conceived simply as another luxury label. Rather, it is the natural culmination of a lifetime surrounded by art, culture and craftsmanship, translated into clothing designed to outlive passing trends.

The brand's very name reveals that philosophy. MIRIYA combines the names of three women whose influence defines the house: her grandmother Mira, her mother Rita and Yana herself. It is a touching tribute that reflects the importance of family, continuity and gratitude. Every collection carries that emotional connection forward, reminding us that the finest luxury brands are often born not from marke-



ting strategies, but from deeply personal stories.

Listening to Yana describe her childhood, I understood how naturally fashion entered her world. Her grandfather, an acclaimed opera singer, introduced her to magnificent theaters where she became fascinated by the costumes as much as the performances themselves. While audiences admired the music, she found herself studying the embroideries, silhouettes and fabrics that transformed performers into unforgettable characters. Those early experiences taught her that clothing possesses its own language—one capable of expressing emotion, elegance and individuality without uttering a single word.

That appreciation for beauty continued at home. During his travels abroad, her grandfather returned with exquisite textiles collected from different corners of the world, while her grandmother transformed those fabrics into bespoke garments for family and friends. Watching those creations come to life instilled an early respect for craftsmanship and patience. It was an education rooted not in fashion schools, but in lived experience, where every stitch carried intention and every garment was made to be cherished.

Her mother, an accomplished singer, composer and choir conductor, added yet another layer to this artistic upbringing. Surrounded by music, creativity and culture, Yana developed an instinctive appreciation for harmony, proportion and beauty. Sketching clothing became a natural extension of that environment, eventually leading her to establish MIRIYA LOVE in 2021 as the expression of everything she had inherited from the remarkable women and artists who surrounded her. ▶



At the heart of MIRIYA LOVE, whose name embodies an acronym formed by three generations—grandmother, mother, and daughter—a fundamental question arises: why add “Love”? For the brand, love serves as the compass of its creative process, the bridge connecting art, music, nature, and fashion. Like a conductor before an orchestra, love orchestrates every design, weaving lines, rhythms, and textures into a symphony of elegance where each garment reflects devotion and passion.



Perhaps what I admire most is her commitment to timelessness. Rather than surrendering to fashion's relentless cycle of fleeting trends, Yana creates collections intended to accompany women through the years. Clean tailoring, refined silhouettes and elegant simplicity define garments designed to remain relevant long after seasonal fashions have disappeared. In today's luxury landscape, where longevity has become one of the highest expressions of quality, that philosophy feels both intelligent and refreshingly confident. Equally important is the house's dedication to Italian craftsmanship. Every MIRIYA LOVE piece is produced in Italy by skilled artisans whose expertise has been cultivated over generations. Yana speaks about these collaborations with genuine admiration, recognizing that exceptional design is only possible when paired with extraordinary craftsmanship. It is this respect for the people behind every garment that gives the brand an authenticity impossible to manufacture.

The same thoughtful approach extends to



sustainability. Rather than producing endless collections, MIRIYA LOVE embraces a more considered rhythm, creating beautifully made pieces intended to become lasting wardrobe companions. Responsible production, carefully selected materials and enduring design are treated not as fashionable buzzwords, but as fundamental values. It is a quiet philosophy that reflects the direction in which modern luxury is steadily evolving. As our conversation came to an end, I realized that what lingered in my mind was not a particular dress or silhouette, but the woman whose vision brought them to life. The finest luxury houses always possess a soul, and Yana Ilyaich has infused hers with memory, craftsmanship and genuine affection for the women who will wear her creations. In a world increasingly driven by immediacy, MIRIYA LOVE reminds us that true elegance is never rushed. It is cultivated, inherited and, above all, deeply felt. I have little doubt that this is only the beginning of a remarkable journey for both the designer and the house she has so thoughtfully created.ón. ■

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Bogota Fashion Week

WHERE LATINAMERICA
STOPPED WATCHING AND
STARTED TAKING THE WHEEL

Beyond the runway spectacle, the latest edition of Bogota Fashion Week cemented the Colombian capital as the epicenter where authorial design, commercial strategy, and regional identity converge to redefine the power of the fashion industry across the continent.

BY Martha Phillips @girlumonde





Bogotá possesses a rare quality when orchestrating a fashion week: everything moves at a relentless pulse. Not merely on the runways, but throughout the deals, conversations, alliances, and among the key players propelling Latin American fashion beyond its borders. That was the defining rhythm of Bogotá Fashion Week (BFW).

Over several days, Ágora Bogotá became the indispensable gathering ground. International buyers, executives, designers, editors, and industry leaders shared showrooms, meetings, and corridors where the sharpest exchanges often unfolded far from the spotlights. Discussions centered on international expansion, manufacturing, regional identity, brand scalability, and the commercial future of the sector across the Americas.

This is precisely where Bogotá outpaces other capitals: fashion cannot survive on optics alone; it demands structure, strategy, and business acumen.

The Bogota Chamber of Commerce has championed this approach for years. Under the executive leadership of Ovidio Claros Polanco, BFW has evolved beyond the traditional runway format to establish an ecosystem where local design matures, professionalizes, and links with global markets with discipline and rigor.

That maturity is evident in the curation of designers, the efficiency of the business matchmaking sessions, and the caliber of the attendees: people no longer travel to Bogotá simply to be seen, but to make strategic decisions.



MAZ by Manuela Álvarez: A Vision of Conscious Hispanic Luxury.



The ninth edition of Bogotá Fashion Week opened with Kika Vargas's return to Colombian runways after a ten-year hiatus. "SS/RESORT 27" is a collection that reaffirmed a creative vision built on sensitivity, detail, and rooted heritage.



La Petite Mort drew from traditional Colombian domestic architecture as a starting point to explore concepts of home, craft, and memory. Through tailoring, the brand elevated the act of dressing into an homage to the hands of the artisans who weave collective memory into form.



For the first time, Ayrré presented its "UMBRAL" collection on the Bogotá Fashion Week Swimwear Collective runway.

With "Dispersa," Eloísa explores the crossroads where motherhood and creation converge. The Santander-based brand captures the passage of emotions—such as confusion, nostalgia, and tenderness—through ethereal prints and watercolor finishes.

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Préciosité





MARCO CORRAL

*A career built behind the images
that defined an era*

BY Martha Phillips © @girlumonde



FEW PEOPLE can claim to have witnessed the transformation of Mexican fashion over more than three decades while actively shaping it from within. Marco Corral is one of those rare figures. His career has been woven into some of the country's most defining editorials, campaigns, productions, and projects, making him an essential reference in the realms of image, style, and visual communication.

What has always struck me about Marco is that he understands fashion far beyond the clothes. His craft lies in building complete visual narratives—finding the exact imagery for each individual, each brand, and each cultural moment. That refined sensibility has enabled him to collaborate with some of the most celebrated figures in entertainment across Mexico and Latin America, including

Lucero, Paulina Rubio, Thalía, María José, Anahí, Paty Cantú, Martha Higareda, Ana de la Reguera, Ludwika Paleta, Dominika Paleta, and Eva Longoria. What is truly admirable is that, despite working with personalities of such distinct styles and temperaments, he has consistently highlighted what makes each of them unique rather than imposing a formulaic look.

Throughout his extensive career, he has contributed to countless editorials, magazine covers, advertising campaigns, and special productions, leaving an imprint that extends well beyond fleeting trends. His creative vision has helped produce timeless imagery that endures in the collective visual memory of Mexican fashion.

Beyond his work as a stylist, Marco has remained a keen, constant observer of the industry. He has closely experienced its shifts, cycles, and transformations, grasping how luxury evolves alongside

the ways people consume fashion and construct their identities through it.

Enduring careers in fashion are increasingly rare. That is precisely why tracing Marco Corral's trajectory is so compelling: he has seamlessly adapted across generations, mediums, and evolving forms of communication without ever losing the essence of his craft—a razor-sharp eye for understanding the image and its cultural impact.

His legacy is defined not only by the figures he has dressed, but by the indelible images he helped create, which now belong to the modern history of Mexican fashion. Because if his career proves anything, it is that true influence does not always stand in front of the lens. Often, it operates from behind it—shaping how an entire era will be remembered. ■

TRENDS
FASHION WEEKEND
2026



PROGRAMA :

10 SEPTIEMBRE
JUEVES

19:50 | Inauguración
20:00 | Pasarela Jacobo Borge
20:50 | Pasarela Pineda Covalin
21:40 | Pasarela Diseñadores Emergentes
(VIKANDRA, NYNY'S COLLECTION, ALINE MORENO)
22:20 | Pasarela Si Quiero Brides!
22:50 | DJ y Cóctel

11 SEPTIEMBRE
VIERNES

20:00 | Pasarela Diseñadores Emergentes
(SISI MEGA, MEXICANA HATS, CIANNA JEWELRY)
20:45 | Pasarela Piel de Calidad
21:30 | Pasarela Elite Tuxedo
22:20 | Pasarela Cocó Garza
Rafael Zuñiga 30 años
22:45 | Cóctel Aniversario

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VALENTINA & GABRIEL HERNANDEZ

The Vision Behind Portrait Eyewear

I still remember when siblings Valentina and Gabriel Hernández came into my life in 2014. A mutual friend connected us because they were looking for someone to help develop the public relations strategy and international visibility for Portrait Eyewear—a brand they had already begun building with extraordinary sensitivity and vision. What I could not have imagined at the time was that this professional collaboration would blossom into one of those rare friendships that remain quietly steadfast across the years and the distance. To this day, they continue to honor me with their friendship, something I value deeply.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz @wendellfr





I STILL REMEMBER when siblings Valentina and Gabriel Hernandez first came into my life back in 2014. A mutual friend connected us because they were looking for someone to help guide the public relations strategy and international visibility of Portrait Eyewear, a brand they had already begun building with remarkable sensitivity and vision. What I did not know at the time was that what started as a professional relationship would eventually evolve into one of those rare friendships that quietly remains present through the years and distance. To this day, they continue to honor me with their friendship, something I value deeply.

Even now, after more than a decade, what I admire most about Valentina and Gabriel is not simply their aesthetic sensibility or their understanding of contemporary luxury within the world of eyewear, but the authenticity behind everything they do. In an industry frequently dominated by passing trends, noise, and excess, Portrait always felt different to me — more cultivated, more personal, and infinitely more intelligent.

Officially founded in 2016, Portrait Eyewear reflects a distinctly cosmopolitan sensibility shaped by their Spanish-Venezuelan heritage, their upbringing in Caracas, and a life divided between Spain and Italy—particularly Bassano del Grappa—with France now also forming part of that personal and creative universe. That duality—the warmth of Latin culture balanced by Italian refinement and craftsmanship—ultimately became an essential part of the soul of the brand itself.

I have always believed that eyewear reveals far more about a person than almost any other accessory. A truly exceptional frame can transform not only a face, but also a presence, an attitude, even the energy someone projects when entering a room. Va-

lentina and Gabriel understood this long before independent eyewear became central to the luxury conversation. What they created never felt trend-driven to me. It felt cultivated—intelligently, patiently, and with genuine sensitivity toward individuality and personal style.

Even the name Portrait speaks to that philosophy. Inspired by the world of photography and portraiture, the concept of the brand has always revolved around perception and self-expression. Their approach has never been about simply selling glasses, but about revealing personality and character. Portrait understands that the right eyewear ultimately becomes part of how we are remembered and perceived. It softens, sharpens, conceals, reveals, and communicates without saying a single word.

Portrait's connection to the art world is equally inseparable from the identity of the brand. Its collections constantly draw inspiration from contemporary art, photography, architecture, and, most notably, the world of music. Many of the frames function almost as visual tributes to artists, cultural movements, and creative references that profoundly shaped Gabriel and Valentina's aesthetic sensibility.

Models such as Avalanche, for example, channel the mechanical pulse and dark energy of the 1980s underground scene and the legendary Doktor Avalanche drum machine associated with the darkwave movement. Other pieces, such as Cocteau, find inspiration both in the surrealist universe of Jean Cocteau and in the ethereal atmosphere of Cocteau Twins, reflecting Portrait's ability to transform cultural references into objects that feel deeply current and emotionally expressive.

That artistic connection also manifests itself in the closeness Portrait has consistently maintained with emerging artists and creatives who challenge conventional standards of beauty, lifestyle, and cultural expression. Behind the brand exists a clear admiration for individuals who use

creativity not to seek immediate validation, but to experiment, innovate, and contribute new perspectives to the modern cultural landscape.

The influence of Italy remains inseparable from Portrait's identity. Based in Bassano del Grappa, within one of the world's great centers of eyewear craftsmanship, the brand exists in close proximity to generations of artisanal excellence and technical mastery. Yet what continues to distinguish Portrait is the way this precision never feels cold or clinical. Behind the refinement exists sensitivity, personality, and a genuine understanding of how people wish to see themselves and be seen by others.

Over the years, Portrait Eyewear has attracted an international clientele that understands luxury through nuance rather than logos. Artists, collectors, creatives, travelers, and individuals with a strong sense of personal style naturally gravitate toward the brand because it offers something increasingly rare today: discernment. Nothing feels accidental. Every frame feels selected with intention, sensitivity, and aesthetic intelligence.

I also deeply admire the way Valentina and Gabriel have approached the concept of sustainability within luxury. Rather than following the logic of mass production or accelerated consumption, Portrait has defended from the beginning the idea of long-lasting, carefully crafted pieces designed to endure. In a market saturated with disposable products and visual excess, that decision requires conviction, discipline, and a genuine understanding of what it means to create something with cultural and emotional value.

Having lived in Italy for more than fifteen years, Valentina and Gabriel bring to Portrait a particularly compelling combination of entrepreneurial vision, aesthetic sensitivity, and strategic understanding of contemporary luxury. Gabriel possesses an extraordinarily refined visual instinct and a profound understanding of proportion and balance. Over the years, he has also been the person choosing many of my own frames

and, honestly, he always seems to find exactly the right one for me. Together, they have built far more than an eyewear brand. They have created a universe where fashion, art, music, architecture, travel, and culture coexist with complete naturalness.

What I perhaps appreciate most is that Portrait never lost its humanity. Despite operating within the world of luxury, the brand has always maintained intimacy and sincerity. Clients are not simply guided toward fashionable objects, but toward pieces that genuinely reflect who they are. That emotional intelligence is far rarer than most people realize.

In many ways, Portrait Eyewear reflects the evolution of contemporary luxury itself: more personal than ostentatious, more curated than excessive, and increasingly centered around individuality rather than status alone. That philosophy resonates deeply with me, perhaps because true elegance has never depended on excess. It has always depended on sensitivity and discernment.

Ultimately, what Valentina and Gabriel Hernandez have created transcends eyewear. Portrait represents a way of seeing the world—through culture, craftsmanship, sensitivity, confidence, and the quiet sophistication that never needs to announce itself loudly.

Readers of my cover stories already know that each feature is traditionally accompanied by my ten-questionnaire—a more intimate glimpse into the personalities behind the public image. Beyond their work, achievements, and creative universe, I have always been interested in discovering what inspires people, what moves them, how they see the world, and what brings them joy. In the following pages, Valentina and Gabriel Hernandez share reflections on creativity, travel, identity, beauty, music, daily life, and the passions that continue to shape both who they are and the evolving world of Portrait Eyewear. ■



Avalanche, Editorial Collection

Numan, Editorial Collection



The Dropper

1. You seem to have it all: beauty, talent, youth... What's missing? Do you feel you still need something more?

Valentina: First of all, Wendell, thank you for the generous compliments. I believe one of the most challenging—and ultimately most enriching—aspects of building a company is that it constantly forces you to question yourself: your abilities, the relevance of what you create, and the impact you have on others. Keeping a team united and motivated, navigating daily complexities, and making decisions that generate real value requires far more than sheer ambition; it demands solidity, sound judgment, and deep sensitivity. Over time, I've come to realize that the only genuine way to evolve through this process is by cultivating wisdom. It is a virtue people rarely speak of today, yet for me it is perhaps the most essential, both in life and in business. If I could wish for anything beyond what I have, it would be precisely that: greater wisdom. That way, through PORTRAIT and across every role we inhabit—as founders, collaborators, or partners—our decisions will always leave behind something purposeful and enduring.

2. When did you realize what career path you wanted to pursue?

Gabriel: Very few people know their exact trajectory from day one. More often, things unfold organically and you make sense of them as you go. Before PORTRAIT, I studied film, worked on documentaries, and built a career as a portrait photographer. Along the way, I began collecting eyewear and noticed a distinct lack of designs that resonated with my personal aesthetic. That was the spark: a very visual, instinctive idea taking shape in my head. Valentina was based in Italy and I was in Madrid, and the timing aligned perfectly: we both had solid professional experience behind us, coupled with a burning drive to build something entirely our own. We started deliberately—touring factories, meeting artisans, researching relentlessly, and learning on the ground. As you mentioned, that was right when we crossed paths. A decade has passed, and we are still learning every single day. A brand behaves much like a living organism: it shifts, matures, and evolves alongside you. That balance is easily the most demanding yet rewarding part of the journey.

3. Who—or what—inspires you?

Gabriel: Our creative references stem from contemporary art, 1980s post-punk and new wave, Nordic minimalism, cinema, fashion, and photography. When describing PORTRAIT, we often return to the concept of “tension.” We are drawn to the dialogue between soft, romantic silhouettes and sharp, architectural lines—a subtle dark-romantic aesthetic fused with musical rhythm and modern design. Over the years, we’ve developed a recognizable creative language. We might encounter an image, a painting, a garment, or a track and instantly recognize: “This feels unmistakably PORTRAIT.” That instinctive clarity anchors our entire creative process.

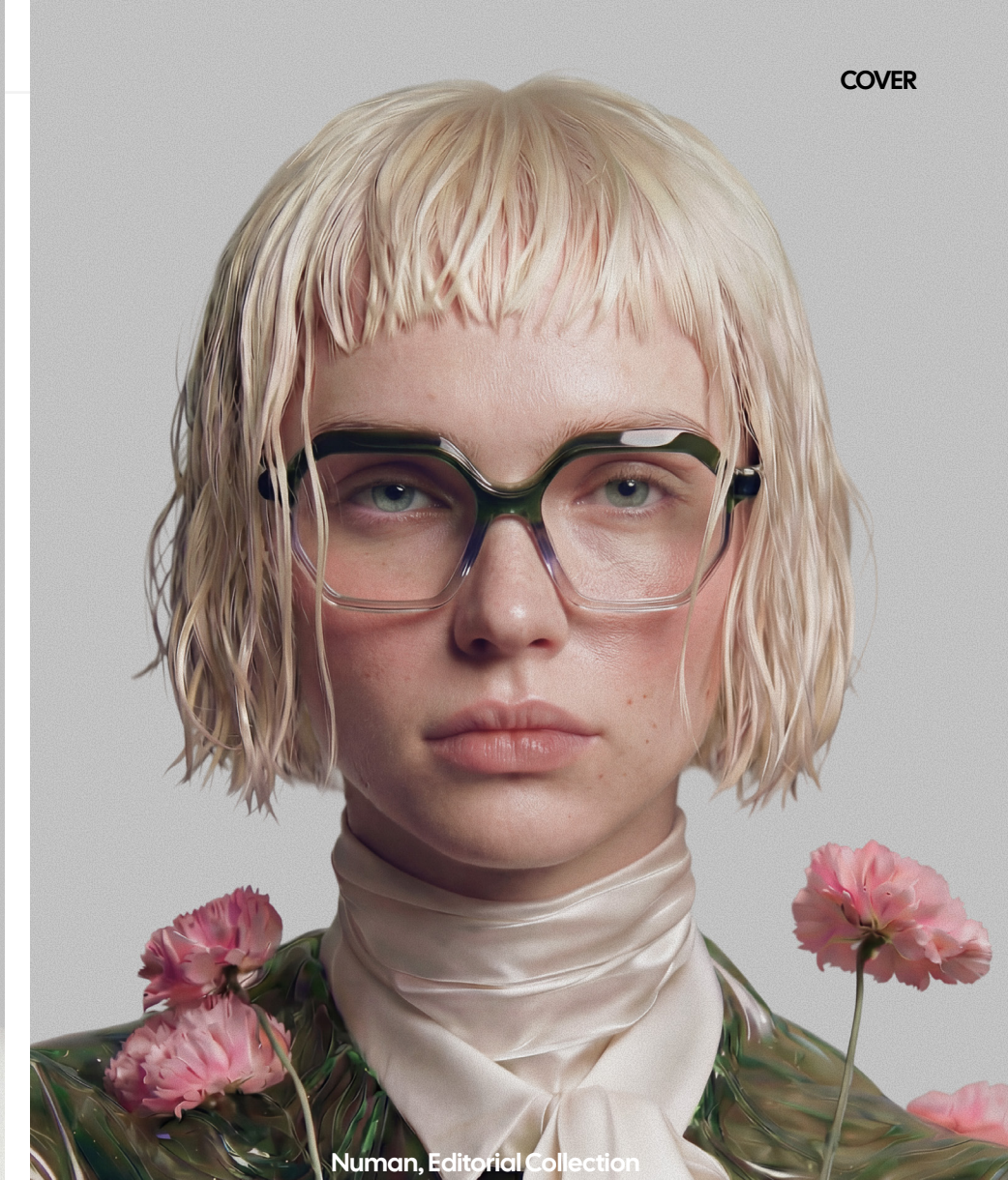
4. If you weren't who you are today, what other path would you have chosen?

Valentina: We occasionally play that “sliding doors” game—imagining alternative paths had we made different choices. But the one constant across any alternate reality (laughs) would undoubtedly be creativity. I speak for both of us when I say that, had we not founded PORTRAIT, we would still inhabit the creative sphere: fashion, architecture, interior design, industrial design, or creative direction. What makes this journey interesting is that PORTRAIT already allows us to wear all those hats. We design products, direct campaigns, construct visual narratives, and design exhibition spaces. Even our homes echo this sensibility. In many ways, we are already living those alternate iterations of ourselves. The other non-negotiable anchor is the human dimension. Neither of us could ever commit to a project or company whose ethics and cultural contribution we didn't fully stand behind. That clarity has always guided us.

5. What do you enjoy doing when you're away from work?

Valentina: When you run a creative studio, the work never truly switches off. Ideas surface unexpectedly and weave their way into everyday life. Because of that, carving out dedicated time for family and our circle of close friends—our chosen family—is essential. Gabriel treasures time with his wife and baby, while I love being with my husband and his children, and we both remain very close to our extended families. We love traveling, visiting galleries, watching films, discovering music, dining out, and nurturing personal passions like interior styling and design. Ultimately, all those life experiences feed straight back into the creative universe of PORTRAIT.





The Dripper

6. What is your favorite destination, and why?

Gabriel: I would probably say Copenhagen. I am drawn to its blend of design, minimalism, and a mature approach to daily living. The Danish vision of progress closely mirrors my idea of an ideal society: a balance between individual freedom, collective well-being, and genuine quality of life. The cultural landscape—from architecture to museums—is deeply inspiring. That said, I have a strong affinity for cities like London and New York. There is real magic in chaos—an underlying current that fuels curiosity and broadens your perspective. Valentina: I had the privilege of living for twenty years in my absolute favorite place: Italy. It is impossible to pick just one city because its magic lies in its regional contrast. From the warmth and character of the south to the kinetic energy of Rome, the sheer monumentality of Florence, or the quiet mystique of the Dolomites in Trentino-Alto Adige. Why Italy? It is hard to put into words—a natural chemistry. The richness of the language, that effortless tension between disorder and romantic beauty, the culinary heritage that reflects it all, the human warmth, and an innate reverence for craftsmanship. Who doesn't fall for Italy? Beyond that, I am fascinated by the cultural identity of the UK—the pulse of its cities contrasted against the quiet nostalgia of its countryside. I also feel an instinctive pull toward tropical landscapes, rooted in my Venezuelan upbringing, where raw nature is central to life.

7. What is your favorite cuisine? Do you like to cook?

Gabriel: Naming just one cuisine feels limiting. Our multicultural path has shaped an open, curious palate. We love discovering new spots, exploring global flavors, and gathering family and friends around the table over aperitivos and long meals. Valentina: But if there is one flavor profile that strikes a deep emotional chord, it is Venezuelan cuisine. Tasting a dish from your childhood has an unmatched power to ground you, sparking equal parts comfort, nostalgia, and pure joy. Gabriel: I do enjoy cooking, though for me it is less about rigid recipes and more about the ritual of bringing people together. Valentina: I cook well, though lately I rarely do—my husband could easily run a professional kitchen, so the bar at home is impossibly high (laughs).

8. What does a typical day look like for Valentina and Gabriel?

Gabriel: Mornings at the studio are fast-paced with multiple projects running in parallel: tracking production orders, prototyping new collections, liaising with suppliers and artisans, updating brand content, producing events, and supporting our commercial network. The rhythm shifts fluidly depending on the season and where our focus is most critical. Valentina: Our dynamic developed organically. Gabriel spearheads creative and product direction: from initial concepts and material sourcing to close collaboration with Italian artisans, overseeing prototyping, custom colorways, and final production. I oversee commercial strategy and business development—coordinating our global sales network, marketing initiatives, client relations, financial planning, and operational growth. In independent luxury, nothing runs on autopilot. While our responsibilities are clearly defined, we remain deeply hands-on across every facet. True quality and distinct detail only emerge when you stay intimately involved.

9. What brings you genuine happiness?

Gabriel: Witnessing people connect with our universe is uniquely rewarding. When artists, musicians, or niche creatives discover PORTRAIT organically and choose to wear our pieces, it reaffirms that what we create holds real artistic value and resonates with like-minded individuals. Valentina: The team and community that have grown alongside the brand. Knowing our work resonates with those who share our ethos is deeply fulfilling. On a personal level, I find joy in disciplined craftsmanship—bringing precision and care to the smallest details, and ending the day knowing we gave our absolute best.

10. How would you define yourselves?

Gabriel: I am relentlessly driven by the pursuit of the distinct. I constantly seek new creative avenues, guided by an impulse to break away from conventions. I am fascinated by why aesthetics hold such transformative power over us, approaching design with genuine curiosity and a nonconformist edge, never pretension. Above all, I want our pieces to have distinct character while feeling intimate, human, and wearable. Valentina: I am structured, pragmatic, and oriented toward strategic execution, yet I strongly believe in empowering teams with the autonomy to experiment and grow. My past career taught me how vital trust and creative freedom are to personal and professional development. I am deeply guided by integrity, accountability, and clarity of purpose. I have a strong, decisive character—a lifelong work in progress—and I consciously strive to balance rigorous leadership with empathy, respect, and a commitment to creating lasting value.





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WITNESSING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH OUR UNIVERSE IS UNIQUELY REWARDING. WHEN ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, OR NICHE CREATIVES DISCOVER PORTRAIT ORGANICALLY AND CHOOSE TO WEAR OUR PIECES, IT REAFFIRMS THAT WHAT WE CREATE HOLDS REAL ARTISTIC VALUE AND RESONATES WITH LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS.

— GABRIEL HERNANDEZ



“

I AM DEEPLY GUIDED BY INTEGRITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CLARITY OF PURPOSE. I HAVE A STRONG, DECISIVE CHARACTER—A LIFELONG WORK IN PROGRESS—AND I CONSCIOUSLY STRIVE TO BALANCE RIGOROUS LEADERSHIP WITH EMPATHY, RESPECT, AND A COMMITMENT TO CREATING LASTING VALUE.

— VALENTINA HERNANDEZ



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Wendell's WORLD THE JOURNEY CONTINUES





SEVILLE

The Seductive Soul of ANDALUSIA

Amid the scent of orange blossoms, monumental architecture, and the visceral pulse of Triana, the Andalusian capital refuses to be merely a destination. Far more than a travel chronicle, this personal journey through Seville is a reunion with memory, gastronomy, and a kind of beauty that isn't just observed—it is inhabited.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz © @wendellfr

Plaza de España, the epicenter of Hispanidad. PHOTO by David Changoluisa via UNSPLASH



La Giralda vista desde el Patio de las Banderas

Donde el aroma a azahar se encuentra con la historia. Un paseo inolvidable por los rincones que hacen única a Sevilla.

PHOTO FROM WENDELL'S ARCHIVE

I HAVE LOST COUNT of how many times I have returned to Seville throughout my life, and yet the city never loses its effect on me. Some places eventually become familiar. Seville somehow continues feeling both familiar and intoxicating at the same time.

Over the years, I have also been fortunate enough to build dear friendships there, which perhaps explains why returning to Seville stopped feeling like simple travel a long time ago. In many ways, it feels closer to reconnecting with a version of myself that only seems to exist there.

Seville has always possessed a very particular kind of beauty—warm, sensual and deeply alive. Not polished in a cold or calculated way. Not designed to impress artificially. The city breathes. You feel it in the late-afternoon light washing over centuries-old facades, in the scent of orange blossoms drifting through hidden plazas, in the sound of heels crossing narrow stone streets at night, in a flamenco guitar echoing somewhere deep inside Triana long after midnight. Even silence in Seville seems to carry atmosphere. And perhaps that is precisely what continues to fascinate me after all these years: Seville never feels performative despite being one of the most visually beautiful cities in Europe. Life still unfolds naturally here. Conversations spill out into the streets. Families remain gathered late into the evening. Church bells interrupt long lunches. Music appears unexpectedly. The city still feels profoundly inhabited.

Architecturally, few cities in Spain possess Seville's emotional grandeur. No matter how many times I return, I still find myself pausing almost instinctively before the breathtaking Plaza de España.



PHOTO. Nicolo Bettoni via UNSPLASH

LA REAL MAESTRANZA DE CABALLERÍA

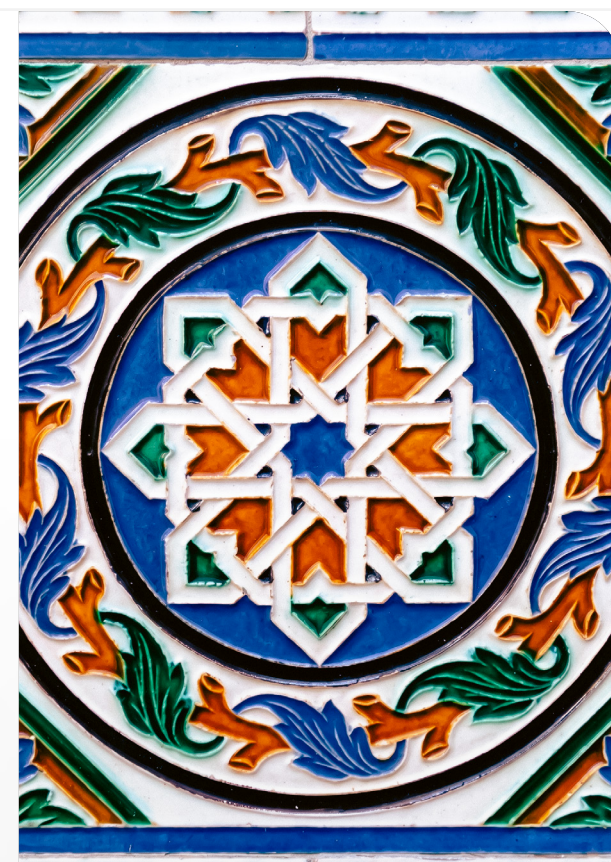
Founded in 1670 under royal patronage to train the military nobility, the Real Maestranza stands as a cultural and historical pillar of bullfighting. In the 18th century, the noble corporation championed the construction of its bullring in the El Arenal district. Spanning 120 years, its build produced an architectural icon characterized by an irregular polygonal layout. Within its ring, the art transitioned from aristocratic mounted combat to popular bullfighting on foot; it was across its golden sands that the aesthetic canon of modern tauromachy was forged. Through the Puerta del Príncipe—reserved exclusively for triumphant masters—, its tiered stands, and its heritage preservation efforts, the Maestranza perpetuates a living legacy uniting early modern military nobility with the highest expression of bullfighting art.

Everything about it feels cinematic: the sweeping semi-circular structure, the bridges crossing over the canal, the painted ceramic alcoves representing Spain's provinces and the warm terracotta tones glowing beneath the Andalusian sun. It remains one of the most visually seductive urban spaces anywhere in Europe. ▶



Fresco of the Domestic Chapel in the Church of San Luis de los Franceses.

A hidden gem of the Andalusian Baroque. Built prior to the main church (consecrated in 1712), it served as a private sanctuary exclusively for Jesuit novices. It features an altarpiece by Pedro Duque Cornejo and frescoes by Lucas Valdes.



Typical Andalusian mosaic featuring geometric patterns and Mudéjar style, a vivid reflection of eight centuries of Islamic presence in Andalusia.



Monument to the 4th Centenary of the Discovery of America, in the Murillo Gardens.

Inaugurated in 1892, more than a commemoration of Columbus's voyage, it stands as a symbol of Seville's pivotal role (where Columbus wandered in search of funding for his expedition) in the defining event that forged our shared culture: Hispanidad.

PHOTOS FROM WENDELL'S ARCHIVE



Tomb of Christopher Columbus in the Cathedral of Seville



ART, FAITH AND ROOTS

Nearby, the monumental Cathedral of Seville continues to dominate the historic center with extraordinary presence. Built atop the former Great Mosque after the Reconquista, it remains one of the largest Gothic cathedrals in the world, while the Giralda Tower—originally constructed as a minaret during the Almohad period—still stands as one of the city’s great emotional symbols. The climb to the top continues to reward visitors with one of the most beautiful views in Andalucía: rooftops glowing terracotta at sunset, hidden courtyards, domes, palm trees and that unmistakable Sevillian light that softens everything it touches.

Religion and aesthetics remain deeply intertwined in Seville in ways that feel increasingly rare today. Churches here are not merely historical monuments; they remain emotionally active spaces integrated into the daily rhythm of the city itself. During Semana Santa (Holy Week) especially, Seville transforms into something almost impossible to fully explain to anyone who has not experienced it personally. Sculpture, incense, silence, devotion and music merge into something far more emotional than spectacle.

One of the city’s lesser-known treasures, and perhaps one of the most visually overwhelming churches in southern Spain, remains the Iglesia de San Luis de los Franceses (Saint Louis of the French). Hidden discreetly away from the more touristic routes, this extraordinary baroque church envelops visitors in gold leaf, theatrical light, ornamentation and spiritual intensity. Walking inside always feels momentarily disorienting, as though time itself had shifted.

The Guadalquivir River remains inseparable from the identity of Seville. Quietly crossing the city, it once connected Andalucía to the immense commercial and cultural networks of the Spanish Empire, transforming Seville into one of Europe’s most important ports during the 16th and 17th centuries. Standing beside the river at sunset, watching the fading light reflect against the façades of Triana, it becomes impossible not to feel the historical weight the city still carries so effortlessly.

Few structures embody that relationship with history more poetically than the Torre del Oro. Rising beside the Guadalquivir since the 13th century, the tower formed part of the city’s defensive walls before later becoming tied to Spain’s maritime expansion toward the Americas. Even now, it remains one of Seville’s most quietly beautiful symbols.

Seville’s importance to the history of the Americas cannot be overstated. Following the voyages of Christopher Columbus, the city became the principal gateway between Spain and the New World, concentrating commerce, navigation and imperial administration for centuries. The magnificent Archivo General de Indias still safeguards thousands of documents connected to the colonization of the Americas, preserving a historical memory that forever linked Seville to the cultural formation of Latin America itself. ▶

FROM THE BAETIS TO THE GUADALQUIVIR. FROM HISPALIS TO THE NEW WORLD

Since Hispano-Roman times, when the river was known as the Baetis and the city flourished under the name Hispalis, the Guadalquivir has served as Seville’s main artery and, until relatively recent times, its connection to the world. A vital trade route for olive oil, wine, and grain across the Roman Empire, its waterway transformed the city into a strategic inland port. Later, the Arabs renamed it Wādī al-Kabīr (“Great River”), cementing its significance leading up to the Renaissance, when Seville became the Port of the Indies and the gateway to the New World—welcoming the naos and galleons towed from the Atlantic estuary at the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda for as long as vessel drafts allowed. Without this river, the history, wealth, and soul of Seville and the entire Hispanic world simply would not exist.



Main Altarpiece of the Seville Cathedral. Begun by the Hispano-Flemish sculptor Pedro Dancart in 1481, it is the largest altarpiece in Christendom. Spanning over 400 m² of surface area, it brings together more than 200 figures illustrating scenes from the Gospels. PHOTO FROM WENDELL'S ARCHIVE



Courtyard of the Maidens (Patio de las Doncellas) in the Royal Alcázar of Seville



Chorizo ibérico, chicharrones de Cádiz and lomo en manteca.



The historic Antigua Taberna de Las Escobas on Álvarez Quintero Street.



PHOTO by Lothar-Boris Piltz via UNSPLASH

TRIANA. EARTHIER. MORE INSTINCTIVE. MORE INTIMATE

Traditionally associated with flamenco, ceramics, bullfighting and Gypsy culture, the neighborhood possesses an emotional rhythm entirely its own. Crossing the Puente de Isabel II into Triana has always felt, to me, like entering another emotional layer of the city altogether. Life unfolds differently there—more musical, more spontaneous, more visceral. Seville without Triana would lose part of its soul.

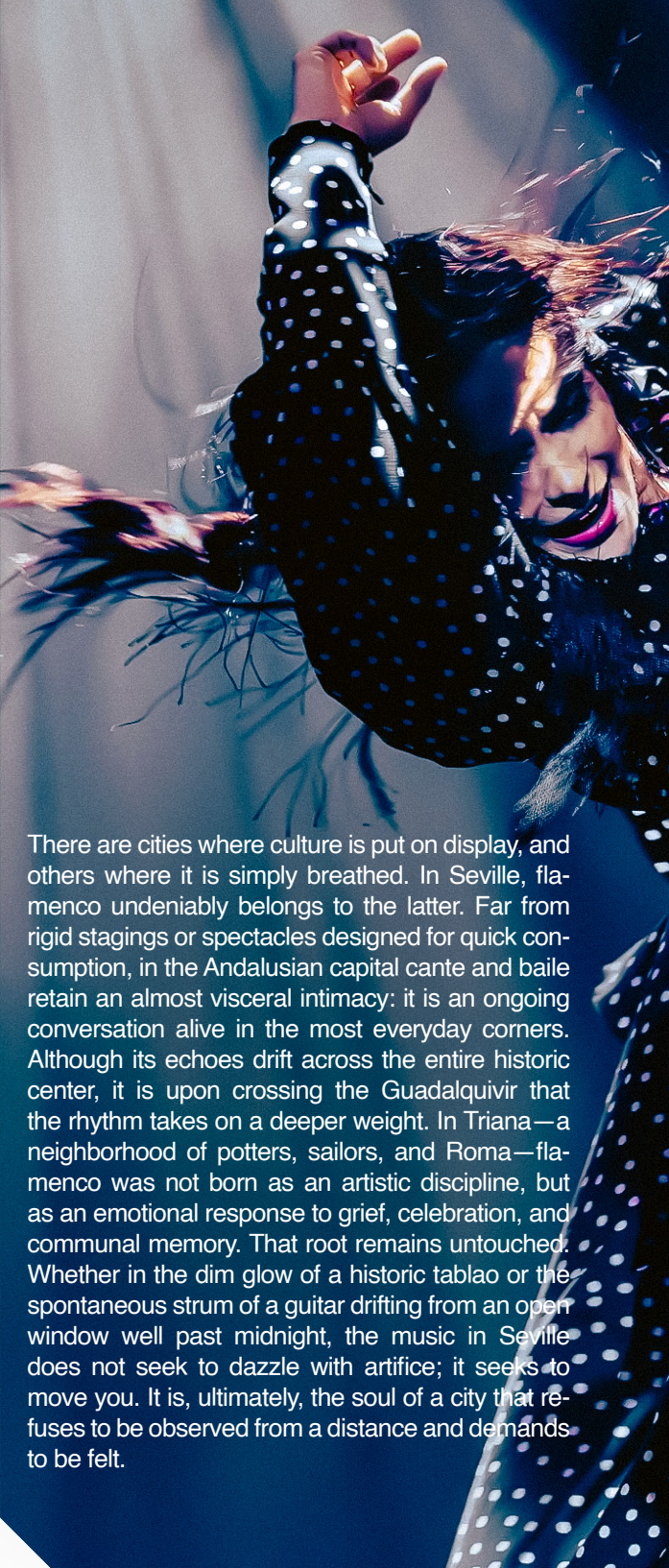
The city’s connection to flamenco remains equally inseparable from its identity. Seville does not experience flamenco as performance designed for tourists. Here, flamenco still feels deeply personal—tied to memory, pain, celebration and cultural identity itself. Whether inside Triana or within one of the intimate tablaos hidden throughout the old city, music continues to function almost like an emotional language.

I have always believed that Seville should be experienced slowly and with appetite. This is not a city for rigid itineraries or hurried schedules. It is a city for wandering without urgency, for long lunches that become late dinners, for wine and conversation stretching endlessly between friends, for disappearing into tapas bars that seem untouched by time.

Among my longtime favorites remains Casa Robles, whose timeless Sevillian atmosphere and traditional cuisine continue to embody the city’s historic elegance. For tapas, I inevitably return to Casa Morales, one of those wonderfully authentic places where enormous wine barrels, crowded counters and generations of loyal locals create the kind of atmosphere impossible to fabricate artificially.

For exceptional jamón ibérico and what I still consider some of the finest pork chops in the city, few places rival Cinco Jotas. Meanwhile, Bodega Antaño Romero remains one of my essential stops every

FLAMENCO: THE PULSE OF SEVILLE



There are cities where culture is put on display, and others where it is simply breathed. In Seville, flamenco undeniably belongs to the latter. Far from rigid stagings or spectacles designed for quick consumption, in the Andalusian capital cante and baile retain an almost visceral intimacy: it is an ongoing conversation alive in the most everyday corners. Although its echoes drift across the entire historic center, it is upon crossing the Guadalquivir that the rhythm takes on a deeper weight. In Triana—a neighborhood of potters, sailors, and Roma—flamenco was not born as an artistic discipline, but as an emotional response to grief, celebration, and communal memory. That root remains untouched. Whether in the dim glow of a historic tablao or the spontaneous strum of a guitar drifting from an open window well past midnight, the music in Seville does not seek to dazzle with artifice; it seeks to move you. It is, ultimately, the soul of a city that refuses to be observed from a distance and demands to be felt.

time I return to Seville. There is something deeply comforting about its simplicity and authenticity—Seville without unnecessary reinvention.

And then there is the Isla de la Cartuja (Cartuja Island), whose transformation over the decades reveals another side of Seville entirely. Once home to monasteries and later reinvented during Expo '92, the island reflects the city’s fascinating dialogue between history and modernity, tradition and reinvention.

What continues to move me most about Seville is that, despite its extraordinary beauty and international popularity, it still preserves intimacy. It has never lost the feeling of being genuinely lived-in. The city continues to belong first to the people who inhabit it rather than to the people who visit it.

Perhaps that is why I never tire of returning. Because Seville does not simply stay in your memory. Somehow, it eventually becomes part of who you are. ■



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The Elcano anchoring in New York along the Hudson.
ARMADA ESPAÑOLA (SPANISH NAVY)

JUAN SEBASTIÁN DE ELCANO

ARMADA ESPAÑOLA A-71

AN EVENING ABOARD A LIVING LEGEND

After nearly three decades of attending the world's most exclusive events, there are still invitations that manage to move me deeply. Crossing the gangway of the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, docked in Manhattan during the United States Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) celebrations, immersed me in an unforgettable evening where naval elegance, haute cuisine, and the warmth of reunion transformed New York Harbor into a truly sublime setting.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz © @wendellfr



The future queen set sail.

The Princess of Asturias, Leonor de BorbOn, completed the Navy training course as part of the crew of the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, within the framework of her military training in the Spanish Armed Forces. CASA DE S.M. EL REY

EVEN AFTER nearly three decades of attending receptions in some of the world's most remarkable settings, there are still invitations capable of making me genuinely excited. Stepping aboard the Juan Sebastián de Elcano was unquestionably one of them.

Moored in Manhattan during New York's celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the United States, the legendary training ship of the Spanish Navy had just taken part in the spectacular International Parade of Sail, joining more than one hundred tall ships and naval vessels from around the world in one of the largest maritime gatherings ever seen in New York Harbor. Against that historic backdrop, crossing the gangway of the Elcano felt less like attending a reception and more like stepping aboard a living chapter of Spanish history.

There is a certain reverence that comes with standing on the decks of a vessel that, since 1928, has trained generations of Spanish naval officers while proudly carrying the Spanish flag to ports across the globe. Between the soaring masts, the intricate web of rigging and the beautifully maintained teak decks, it was impossible not to pause and appreciate the extraordinary legacy that surrounded us. Some ships impress because of their beauty; others because of what they represent. The Juan Sebastián de Elcano possesses both qualities in abundance.



The reception brought together an exceptional cross-section of New York's international community. Prominent members of society mingled with ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, business leaders, financiers, and distinguished figures from the worlds of culture, the arts and the media. Among the evening's most touching moments, however, were the quiet reunions between several young sailors and their parents, who had travelled from Spain simply to spend a few precious hours together while the ship was in port.

A warm summer evening, accompanied by occasional showers, only added to the charm of the celebration. Beneath the towering masts, guests enjoyed an outstanding selection of Spanish wines and traditional delicacies while a lively band provided the soundtrack throughout the evening. The young sailors, finally able to relax after days of official engagements, moved easily among the guests with warmth, pride and genuine enthusiasm, creating an atmosphere that felt refreshingly authentic.

As I left the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, I couldn't resist pausing for one final look. Her towering masts, beautifully illuminated in red and yellow—the colors of the Spanish flag—rose into the New York night with quiet majesty, creating an unforgettable image that seemed to embody the history, traditions and enduring spirit she has carried across the world's oceans for nearly a century. It was a fitting conclusion to an extraordinary evening and a genuine privilege to have been welcomed aboard one of Spain's greatest national treasures. ■



Wendell Figueroa Ruiz & Jose Angel Abad



Carmen Garcia Conde, Petty Officer Carlos David Munoz & PO3 Ana Hernandez



Cristobal Pera Roman & his sons Valerie & Nicholas



Adrian Barbensi & Midshipman Nieves Rodríguez



José Angel Abad and guests



Midshipman Carlos Gil, Jazmin Lara, Lt. Fernanda Valenzuela & Midshipman Ignacio Garcia Lobaton



Cristina López-Quesada and her son Midshipman Pedro Lopez-Quesada



Nacho Sandoval & Commander Jose Maria de la Puente Mora-Figueroa



Ylenia Cendon, Marta de Blas Mayordomo, and Adrián Barbensi



Marta de Blas Mayordomo, Consul General of Spain and Jose Angel Abad

THE MAN OF THE FIRST CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF THE WORLD

Born in Getaria around 1487, Juan Sebastián de Elcano went down in history for taking command of the expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan following Magellan's death at the Battle of Mactan (Philippines) in 1521. Aboard the carrack Victoria—and after enduring extreme conditions, famine, disease, and uncharted seas patrolled by Portuguese ships on the voyage back to the Iberian Peninsula—Elcano completed the first circumnavigation of the Earth in September 1522 upon arriving in Sanlúcar de Barrameda and ultimately Seville. This marked the greatest milestone in the history of human exploration up to that point, a feat only surpassed centuries later by the Space Race from the 1950s to the 1970s. Upon his return to Spain, King Charles I granted him a coat of arms bearing the celebrated Latin motto: *Primus circumdedisti me* ("You were the first to encircle me"). A fitting namesake for the training ship of one of the oldest and most consequential maritime forces in history.





Fr. César Meca, chaplain of the Elcano, Wendell Figueroa Ruiz, and Martha Phillips.

SPAIN'S Finest Table in New York

During an unforgettable evening aboard the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, the cocido madrileño proved once again that Spain's history, hospitality, and traditions can also be told through its gastronomy.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz © @wendellfr

LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS after my previous visit, I once again crossed the gangway of the Juan Sebastián de Elcano. The setting was familiar, yet the evening promised an entirely different experience.

Where history and maritime tradition had taken center stage the night before, Spain's extraordinary culinary heritage now took the spotlight as more than 150 invited guests gathered aboard for an exclusive reception celebrating the cocido madrileño—Madrid's iconic slow-cooked stew of chickpeas, meats and vegetables, widely regarded as the city's signature dish. Organized by the Brotherhood of the Cocido Madrileño (Cofradía Gastronómica del Cocido Madrileño), whose mission is to preserve and promote one of Spain's most cherished culinary traditions while showcasing the Community of Madrid as a premier gastronomic destination, the evening formed part of New York's celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the United States. More than a gastronomic gathering, it was a remarkable exercise in cultural diplomacy. Having already been recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage Asset (Bien de Interés Cultural Inmaterial) in Spain, the cocido madrileño was presented not simply as a beloved regional specialty, but as a symbol of Spanish identity, tradition and hospitality. For one memorable evening, the legendary training ship of the Spanish Navy became much more than an ambassador of Spain's seafaring heritage; she also became a showcase for the country's rich culinary identity, transforming her decks into what the organizers aptly called the Espacio del Cocido Madrileño.

The reception was graciously hosted by the ship's commanding officer, Commander José María de la Puente Mora-Figueroa, together with Nacho Sandoval, Grand Master (Cofrade Mayor) of the Brotherhood. During his welcoming remarks, Commander de la Puente Mora-Figueroa invited guests to raise their glasses in a heartfelt toast to Spain and to His Majesty King Felipe VI. It was an elegant and deeply symbolic gesture that immediately established the tone of an evening celebrating not only one of Madrid's most cherished culinary traditions, but also the history, values and generosity that Spain proudly shares with the world.

I had the pleasure of attending alongside my friend Martha Phillips, Amarena's Fashion Editor, as diplomats, business leaders, prominent members of New York society, celebrated chefs, entrepreneurs, and distinguished figures from the worlds of culture, the arts and the media gathered aboard one of the world's most iconic sailing ships. Among those in attendance were Spain's Consul General in New York, Marta de Blas Mayordomo; Professor Nuria Morgado, Director of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language (ANLE); Angélica and Marco Intrigo of DESPAÑA Brand Foods; Carlota Andrés of José Andrés Group; entrepreneur Bisila Bokoko; José Ángel Abad, the highly respected U.S. correspondent for Antena 3 Noticias; and many other distinguished personalities from Spain and the United States.



The reception opened with magnificent Jamón Ibérico de Bellota from Embutidos Fermin, expertly carved by master cortador Jaime Serra, before guests began enjoying the evening's eagerly anticipated cocido madrileño. The dish was prepared by Antonio Cosmen, Iván Plademunt, Felisa, of Casa Repinaldo, and Luis Manuel, working alongside the ship's culinary brigade. Behind every serving lay an extraordinary logistical achievement. Chickpeas from Madrid had crossed the Atlantic aboard the Spanish Navy's amphibious assault ship Castilla, while the remaining ingredients were sourced in New York through the invaluable collaboration of DESPAÑA Brand Foods—a remarkable demonstration that gastronomy, much like diplomacy itself, depends upon cooperation, commitment and a shared vision.

As guests enjoyed generous servings of cocido madrileño throughout the standing reception, conversations flowed as naturally as the excellent Spanish wines. People moved effortlessly from one conversation to another beneath the towering masts of the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, creating the kind of relaxed and convivial atmosphere that has long distinguished Spain's finest gatherings. Beyond the ship, the lights of Manhattan shimmered across the Hudson; aboard the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, however, it felt as though a small corner of Madrid had quietly anchored in New York. The warmth of the gathering, the pride of the organizers and the unmistakable aromas of one of Spain's most beloved dishes created an atmosphere no protocol alone could ever achieve.

In his remarks, Grand Master Nacho Sandoval described the cocido madrileño as a gastronomic ambassador for Spain. Looking around that evening, it was difficult to imagine a more convincing demonstration. This was far more than a celebration of an iconic recipe. It was a vivid reminder that few expressions of a nation's identity possess the power to preserve tradition, strengthen friendships and build bridges between cultures as naturally as a shared culinary heritage.

Before leaving the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, I had the pleasure of spending time with Fr. César Meca, the ship's Catholic Chaplain, and Commander Carlos Carrasco Marín, the vessel's Second-in-Command. Their genuine warmth, gracious hospitality and infectious enthusiasm made the evening even more memorable. Our conversations about life aboard the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, its traditions and the remarkable voyage that continues to carry this legendary ship around the world were among the moments I will remember most fondly. Encounters such as these remind us that, beyond the grandeur of historic ships and official ceremonies, it is the people who give them their soul.

As I left the Juan Sebastián de Elcano, I found myself reflecting on how few experiences manage to bring together a nation's history, gastronomy and hospitality with such effortless harmony. That evening, the true protagonist was not simply the cocido madrileño, but the extraordinary people who had prepared it, preserved its traditions and shared it with such genuine generosity. The finest memories of any journey are not always found in grand monuments or official ceremonies; more often, they are born from a conversation, a heartfelt toast and a single dish capable of telling the story of an entire nation. ■



Nacho Sandoval and Martha Phillips



Wendell Figueroa Ruiz, Martha Phillips and Nuria Morgado director of ANLE



Fr. Cesar Meca, chaplain of the Elcano, and José Angel Abad, US correspondent for Antena 3.



Angelica Intrigo of DESPAÑA, Nacho Sandoval and D. Carlos Carrasco Marin



Wendell Figueroa Ruiz and Nacho Sandoval

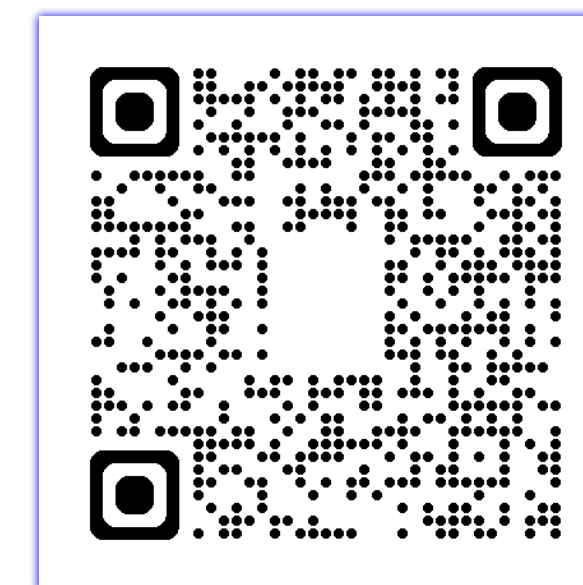


«Viva España! Viva el Rey»
Captain De la Puente, commanding officer of the Elcano, leads the toast to H.M. King Felipe VI alongside members of the Cofradía del Cocido



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From Lima to Miami

THE REMARKABLE RISE OF JUAN CHIPOCO

More than merely building a culinary empire in South Florida, Juan Chipoco managed to elevate Peruvian cuisine onto the world's most competitive stages without losing the warmth of his roots. An intimate portrait of the founder of CVI.CHE 105, his human-centered vision of business, and the power of the table to unite cultures.

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz @wendellfr





LONG BEFORE BECOMING one of the most influential figures in Peruvian gastronomy across the United States, Juan Chipoco was simply a young immigrant arriving from Lima at nineteen, just days shy of his twentieth birthday. Like so many before him, he landed carrying uncertainty, sacrifice, and a quiet ambition whose true horizon he could not yet fully fathom. Little did he know then that he would go on to forge one of South Florida's most successful and culturally resonant culinary empires.

Today, the name Juan Chipoco is synonymous with Peruvian cuisine in the American dining landscape. Yet reducing his trajectory to mere commercial success misses the essence of a journey rooted in discipline, resilience, and an extraordinary gift for turning nostalgia and memory into hospitality.

Born in Lima, Chipoco recognized early on that food could transcend commerce. In his hands, Peruvian cuisine became a vessel for identity, national pride, cultural diplomacy, and emotional storytelling. What stands out most about his path is not just the scale of what he has built, but the uncompromising clarity behind it: elevating Peruvian gastronomy onto the world's most competitive stages without diluting its authenticity, warmth, or human spirit.

When the flagship CVI.CHE 105 opened its doors in Downtown Miami in 2008, Peruvian cuisine had yet to achieve the global acclaim it commands today, and Miami was only just emerging as the culinary powerhouse it has become. Chipoco foresaw what others overlooked—that Peruvian culinary traditions held every quality needed for universal resonance: depth, boldness, history, technical refinement, and an inherently soulful sense of hospitality.



Commitment to his homeland.
Juan Chipoco regularly carries out humanitarian work in his home country of Peru.

Yet behind that bold vision lay real fear and doubt. As he shared with me, there were grueling nights of labor and quiet moments of questioning whether he could build lasting stability for his family. *“There was always something stronger than fear,”* he reflected. *“The commitment to my dreams and the duty to honor the sacrifices made by my parents and my country.”* Perhaps no words better distill the heart of his journey.

What followed was far greater than the rise of a single restaurant; it was the steady shaping of a culinary universe anchored in consistency, heritage, and pride. Today, the CVI.CHE 105 group spans multiple thriving locations alongside sister concepts like Pollos y Jarras, standing as one of the region's defining hospitality triumphs.

Even amidst this growth, the experience never feels detached or corporate. Chipoco's spaces hum with a vitality that directly reflects his philosophy: warm, vibrant, generous, and unmistakably Latin. That ethos is rooted in his own beginnings. *“Being an immigrant teaches you the true value of feeling welcomed,”* he told me. It is an instinct felt at every table, where diverse cultures, generations, and stories naturally converge. ■



DOLCE & GABBANA

AND THE EMOTIONAL POWER OF ITALIAN CRAFTSMANSHIP

More than an haute couture retrospective, Dolce & Gabbana: From the Heart to the Hands at the ICA Miami is a visceral tribute to human mastery, Baroque devotion, and Italy's inexhaustible cultural memory.

By Wendell Figueroa Ruiz @wendellfr



I HAPPENED TO BE in Miami visiting my dear friend Conrad Bon when we decided to dedicate part of my short stay in the city to visiting Dolce & Gabbana: From the Heart to the Hand, an exhibition neither of us wanted to miss. I expected beauty, craftsmanship and spectacle, of course. What I did not expect was the overwhelming emotional impact the exhibition itself would have on me.

From the moment we entered, both of us were completely absorbed by what surrounded us. Room after room revealed an extraordinary universe of Italian artistry, fantasy, theatricality and craftsmanship executed at a level that at times felt almost impossible. The experience felt less like walking through a fashion exhibition and more like stepping directly into the imagination of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana.

Presented at Miami's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), the exhibition unfolds not as a traditional retrospective, but as an immersive journey through the emotional and aesthetic universe that has defined Dolce & Gabbana for decades. Sicily, opera, religion, cinema, Venetian craftsmanship, baroque ornamentation and Mediterranean sensuality reveal themselves continuously throughout the exhibition, creating spaces that feel intensely theatrical, emotional and unmistakably Italian.

What struck me most throughout the experience was understanding that these were not garments conceived simply to be worn. They were masterpieces designed to communicate fantasy, memory, emotion and cultural identity. Embroidery, hand-painted details, beadwork, corsetry, mosaics and extraordinary textile techniques transformed many of the creations into something far closer to museum-quality art than conventional haute couture.

And yet, despite the extraordinary opulence, the exhibition never felt cold or inaccessible. There was warmth inside the excess. Humanity inside the fantasy. One could feel the presence of artisans behind every detail—the patience of the hands that embroidered, stitched, sculpted and constructed each creation over countless hours.

That emotional relationship between craftsmanship and identity is perhaps what Dolce & Gabbana have always understood better than almost anyone else in fashion. Their work has never been about minimalism or restraint. It is about emotion, memory, sensuality, family, religion, theater, seduction and, above all, *italianità* (Italian identity) in its most passionate expression.





As Conrad and I moved through the exhibition, we found ourselves repeatedly stopping in disbelief before certain pieces. Some gowns seemed almost impossible in their construction. Others resembled Byzantine mosaics transformed into couture. Entire rooms glowed with gold embroidery, hand-applied crystals, velvet, lace and religious iconography executed with astonishing precision. At moments, the experience felt closer to walking through an operatic dreamscape than a fashion exhibition.

The city of Miami itself somehow made the experience even more appropriate. Few American cities understand visual spectacle, sensuality and glamour quite like Miami. And yet, the exhibition transcended spectacle entirely because beneath all the drama existed something increasingly rare within contemporary luxury: true craftsmanship.

The title itself—From the Heart to the Hand—perfectly captures the philosophy behind the exhibition. These creations are not born from algorithms, trend forecasting or corporate calculation. They emerge from emotion, heritage, instinct, artistry and an almost obsessive dedication to hand-made excellence. In an era dominated by speed and disposable fashion, the exhibition functions as a powerful reminder of what luxury originally meant: human mastery, beauty and cultural storytelling.

For me personally, the experience resonated on an even deeper level. Having spent so much of my professional life connected to the world of Italian luxury, communication and craftsmanship, I immediately recognized the extraordinary depth of cultural references woven into every room. Sicily, Catholicism, Italian cinema, opera, artisanal tra-

dition and Mediterranean sensuality are not merely aesthetic devices for Dolce & Gabbana; they form part of the emotional language that defines the brand itself. By the time Conrad and I finally left the exhibition, several hours had passed almost without noticing. From there, Conrad drove me directly to the airport for my flight back home to New York, and even during the drive we continued talking about specific pieces, entire rooms and the extraordinary level of artistry we had just witnessed. It felt as though neither of us was quite ready to leave that world behind yet.

Many fashion exhibitions attempt to impress visually. Very few succeed in moving people emotionally.

Dolce & Gabbana: From the Heart to the Hand accomplishes both with extraordinary force. ■



Gifts for the SUMMER

EVERY MONTH, I have the privilege of inviting you to travel with me through Wendell's World. Sometimes our journey leads us to an extraordinary destination; other times it introduces us to remarkable people, exceptional craftsmanship and discoveries that deserve to be shared. To me, those experiences have always been inseparable. Travel awakens curiosity, and curiosity inevitably leads to finding something beautiful, inspiring or unexpectedly unforgettable. This month, our journey begins in the enchanting city of Seville, one of Spain's most captivating destinations. Rich in history, magnificent architecture, vibrant traditions and

an unmistakable passion for life, it is a city that continues to fascinate visitors from around the world. Yet every memorable journey extends far beyond the places we visit. It lives on through the people we meet, the stories we collect and the extraordinary discoveries that become part of our lives long after we have returned home. That same spirit inspires this month's collection. The pages that follow bring together many of the discoveries that have accompanied me over the past several months. Among them are fragrances that capture the unmistakable spirit of the Mediterranean, handcrafted creations inspired by the beauty of the natural world, remarkable textiles that celebrate generations of Indian craftsmanship, elegant accessories designed to become

trusted companions, thoughtful additions for the home and gourmet specialties that remind us that some of life's greatest pleasures are often the simplest. Each one represents a memorable encounter, a fascinating story or an exceptional example of creativity that I felt deserved a place in these pages. What unites these discoveries is not a particular style or country of origin, but a shared commitment to authenticity, craftsmanship and thoughtful design. Some come from internationally celebrated luxury houses whose names are recognized around the world; others are the work of independent designers, artisans and visionaries whose extraordinary talent deserves far greater recognition.

Every recommendation has earned its place here for one simple reason: it surprised me, inspired me or reminded me that true luxury is ultimately defined not by a logo, but by the passion, skill and imagination of the people who create it. Whether one of these discoveries becomes a thoughtful gift for someone special or simply a well-deserved indulgence for yourself, I hope these pages encourage you to look beyond the object itself and appreciate the story behind its creation. After all, the finest souvenirs we bring home from our travels are not always the ones that fill our suitcase, but those that continue to inspire us long after the journey has ended. It is a pleasure to share a few of those discoveries with you. ▶

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz © @wendellfr



COSECHA SHIRT \$2160 MXN



JARDÍN SHIRT \$2160 MXN



XOCHIMILCO SHIRT \$2160 MXN



AMATLÁN DRESS \$2000 MXN



TENANGO DRESS \$3480 MXN

KACTUSTYLE f

One of the greatest rewards of traveling is discovering artisans whose creations capture the spirit of a destination. During one of my trips to Mexico, I discovered KactuStyle, and I immediately knew I had found something truly special. Its creations are far more than beautifully embroidered garments—they are wearable expressions of Mexico's rich artistic heritage. The KactuStyle shirt I own is the Pajarito de la Suerte ("Lucky Little Bird"), a rose-pink linen design embroidered with exuberant flowers and two beautifully stylized birds. It is one of those pieces I find myself reaching for time and again, not only because it is exceptionally comfortable, but because it never fails to start a conversation. People don't simply admire it—they almost always ask where I found it, giving me the perfect opportunity to introduce them to this remarkable Mexican brand. Every KactuStyle shirt and guayabera is handcrafted in Mexico with extraordinary care. Some are embroidered entirely by hand, while others combine traditional hand embroidery with machine embroidery, preserving techniques that have been passed down through generations. Spend just a few moments looking closely and you'll immediately appreciate the craftsmanship behind every stitch. The result is a collection in which no two pieces are ever exactly alike. What I admire most about KactuStyle is its effortless use of color. Inspired by Mexico's extraordinary artistic traditions, the designs are vibrant without ever feeling overwhelming, elegant without trying too hard, and surprisingly easy to wear. The collection also includes beautifully embroidered dresses for women, each created with the same joyful spirit and meticulous craftsmanship that first drew me to the brand. In a world where so much fashion has become predictable, KactuStyle is a reminder that the most memorable pieces are still those made by skilled hands. To me, true luxury has never been about owning more—it has always been about surrounding ourselves with things created with talent, passion and heart.



THE JONES



THE PAYTON

MANNISH
www.mannishco.com

Some of the most interesting brands I come across are those built not only on good design, but also on personal history and authenticity. MANNISH is certainly one of them. The label's debut unisex collection, artists+immigrants, is a thoughtful reinterpretation of classic American workwear, honoring the functionality and endurance of garments originally designed for laborers and tradespeople while celebrating heritage, craftsmanship and individuality.

Among my favorite pieces from the collection are The Dean jacket and trousers, The Peace Corp trousers, The Jonesjacket and The Payton jeans—pieces that effortlessly blend utility with a distinctly modern sensibility. Inspired by the enduring spirit of workers, immigrants and the American West, artists+immigrants offers a refreshing reminder that the most compelling fashion often comes with a sense of purpose and a story to tell.

In an age dominated by fleeting trends and disposable clothing, these are beautifully made garments designed to be worn, lived in and enjoyed for years to cXome.

Pieces from the collection are priced from US \$70 to US \$200.



THE DEAN & THE JAMES



THE JAMES



SADDLEBACK LEATHER
<https://saddlebackleather.com>

I have written about Saddleback Leather before, and with good reason. In a world increasingly filled with objects designed to be replaced, there is something deeply refreshing about a brand committed to creating pieces meant to last for decades, age beautifully and become more personal with every passing year.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, Saddleback Leather has introduced an extraordinary limited-edition bundle celebrating both American history and the enduring appeal of craftsmanship. The collection brings together some of the company's most beloved pieces, including the Paul Revere Messenger Bag, crafted in dark blue leather and lined in red as a subtle tribute to the American flag, and ingeniously designed to convert into a backpack for work, school or travel. Also included are the Benjamin Franklin Cash Box for the home or office, the George Washington Toiletry Bag for travel, a set of John Adams coasters and a Thomas Jefferson keychain, all named in honor of some of the most prominent figures of the American Revolution and the early history of the United States.

Crafted from the company's signature full-grain leather—which proudly retains its natural grain and markings rather than concealing them—these pieces possess the quiet confidence that has earned the brand such a devoted following. Valued at more than US \$900 and backed by Saddleback Leather's legendary 100-year warranty, the bundle is offered for US \$499 and includes membership in the Saddleback Club, entitling its owner to a ten percent discount on all other purchases for an entire year.

Designed to be used, cherished and eventually passed on, this commemorative collection is a fitting tribute to American craftsmanship and to the kind of objects that only grow richer in character and meaning with time.



US \$40

RIEGER KANSAS CITY WHISKEY – RAISE A CUP EDITION
<https://jriegerco.square.site>

Some bottles capture a moment in history. The limited-edition Raise A Cup Edition from J. Rieger & Co. celebrates the arrival of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Kansas City, transforming the distillery's award-winning Kansas City Whiskey into a collectible keepsake for both whiskey lovers and football enthusiasts alike. The striking bottle features artwork by Kansas City artist Jadie Arnett, whose design was also selected as the city's official FIFA World Cup host city poster. Inside is the celebrated Kansas City Whiskey, a distinctive blend finished with a touch of fifteen-year-old Oloroso sherry that imparts notes of dried fruit, warm spice, and a velvety finish. Bottled at 92 proof, it is a sophisticated and approachable spirit equally suited for savoring neat or raising a celebratory toast among friends. Part exceptional American whiskey and part commemorative treasure, the Raise A Cup Edition is the perfect gift for collectors, sports aficionados, and anyone who appreciates beautifully crafted spirits. It is, quite simply, a bottle designed to be opened, enjoyed, and remembered long after the final whistle has blown.



BRUNO MAGLI
Amazon

Italian style has long been defined by its effortless ability to marry elegance with restraint, and this leather bracelet from the iconic house of Bruno Magli embodies that philosophy beautifully. Crafted from genuine leather and finished with a sleek stainless-steel clasp, it is a piece that feels both contemporary and timeless—an understated expression of confidence rather than conspicuous luxury. Whether worn with a crisp linen shirt on a summer evening or paired with a perfectly tailored suit, this refined bracelet adds a touch of masculine sophistication to any ensemble. It is the kind of accessory that quietly elevates a look and a thoughtful gift for the gentleman who appreciates fine craftsmanship and the enduring allure of Italian design. Also available in gold finish.



LEATHER WALLET \$ 31.88 USD

BULL GUARD
<https://my-bullguard.com/>

There are very few things we use as consistently as a wallet. It is one of those everyday companions that quietly becomes part of our routine, so choosing the right one is far more important than most people realize. Over the years I've owned more wallets than I can remember, and I've learned that the best ones are rarely the flashiest. They are simply the ones that never let you down. That is why I carry the Bull Guard Leather Wallet. The first thing that caught my attention was the quality of the leather. It feels wonderfully soft in the hand and, over time, develops the kind of character I have always appreciated in well-made leather goods. I also admire how thoughtfully it has been designed. It comfortably holds everything I need—credit cards, identification and cash—while maintaining a slim profile that slips easily into my pocket. As someone who spends a considerable part of the year traveling, I also value its built-in RFID protection, which helps safeguard credit cards and personal information from unauthorized digital scanning. It is one of those features I hope I'll never have to put to the test, but one that gives me added peace of mind every day. What I admire most, however, is its honesty. Bull Guard isn't trying to impress with oversized logos or unnecessary extravagance. Instead, it delivers exactly what I believe a good wallet should: quality materials, intelligent design and reliability, day after day. At just over US \$31, it is one of those purchases that reminds me that genuine quality doesn't always announce itself with a famous name or an extravagant price tag. Sometimes it simply earns your confidence, one day at a time. Mine certainly has.



EAU D'ITALIE

www.beautyhabit.com

There are certain destinations I never grow tired of returning to, and Positano has always been one of them. Perched above the Mediterranean, it delights every sense—the sea, the golden light, the scent of citrus drifting through its narrow streets and the relaxed rhythm of life. Long after the journey ends, those memories have a remarkable way of staying with you.

That is exactly what Eau d'Italie has captured with its new Acqua di Positano Candle. More than a home fragrance, it recreates the unmistakable atmosphere of one of Italy's most enchanting coastal villages through luminous notes of citron, orange blossom, delicate marine accords and warm woody notes. With approximately 40 hours of burn time, it is perfect for bringing a touch of the Amalfi Coast into your home, whether during a quiet evening, a dinner with friends or simply a well-deserved moment of relaxation.

For those who have experienced the magic of Positano, this candle instantly rekindles memories of one of Italy's most captivating destinations. For those still dreaming of visiting, it offers a beautiful glimpse of the Amalfi Coast and its unmistakable charm. Few home fragrances succeed in transporting us so effortlessly to a place we love—or inspiring us to discover one for the very first time.



ACQUA DI POSITANO CANDLE US \$84

J. RIEGER & CO. MEMBERSHIP

<https://www.privatestockociety.vip/#become-member>

For the discerning whiskey enthusiast, a membership at J. Rieger & Co. is an invitation into the inner circle of one of America's most celebrated distilleries. Members enjoy exclusive cocktails at the Tasting Room and The Hey! Hey! Club, complimentary pours during every visit, priority reservations, early access to VIP events, and invitations to members-only experiences. They also receive complimentary Heritage and Whiskey tours and a 20 percent discount on bottles, merchandise, and private event rentals.

At the heart of the program are the coveted Private Stock bottles, rare and limited releases available only to members. As co-founder Ryan Maybee explains, "Every quarter, I, along with Master Distiller Nathan Perry and our expert Tasting Panel, hand-select rare, extremely limited whiskey from a small lot of barrels set aside exclusively for members."

The extraordinary bottlings speak for themselves. Recent releases have included the distillery's first-ever 10 Year Single Barrel Straight Rye Whiskey, drawn from one of the earliest rye barrels overseen by legendary Master Distiller Dave Pickerell, and a breathtaking Barrel Proof Straight Bourbon Whiskey, blended from three exceptional barrels and bottled at an astonishing 161 proof. More than a membership, it is a passport to some of the rarest and most remarkable whiskeys being produced in America today. Membership price: Individual US \$ 799 per year; Family US \$ 1,199 per year



ANDRÉ'S CONFISERIE SUISSE X J. RIEGER & CO.

<https://andreschocolates.com>

Two Kansas City icons come together in one irresistible confection. André's Confiserie Suisse has partnered with J. Rieger & Co. to create a sophisticated Swiss interpretation of the classic bourbon ball. Staying true to tradition, the recipe begins with the timeless trio of pecans, bourbon, and dark chocolate, then introduces roasted almonds and André's signature Swiss white chocolate for a rich, creamy sweetness accented by delicate notes of vanilla.

Freshly ground roasted almonds, pecans, sugar, and local raw honey are blended with bourbon-soaked roasted pecans and Swiss white chocolate, which acts as a natural binder and allows for an even more generous pour of J. Rieger's Straight Bourbon Whiskey. The confection is then topped with additional roasted pecans and enrobed twice in André's signature Swiss dark chocolate, creating a decadent bite that is at once rich, nutty, and unmistakably bourbon-forward.

Presented in an elegant 1.5-ounce box containing four pieces, these exquisite chocolates are a delightful gift for both whiskey aficionados and lovers of fine confectionery—and proof that some of the sweetest collaborations happen when two local legends share a passion for craftsmanship.



US \$10.95



SOCCER SHOES US \$28.99

DREAM PARIS

Amazon

Few sporting events capture the world's imagination quite like the FIFA World Cup. For several unforgettable weeks this summer, millions of people planned their days around kickoff times, celebrated spectacular goals and were reminded why football remains the world's most beloved sport. Although the tournament has recently come to an end, its excitement continues to inspire players of every age to lace up their boots and head to the nearest pitch. That is precisely why the Dream Pairs Soccer Shoes earned a place in this edition of Wendell's World. Designed for play on firm natural grass surfaces, they combine a lightweight synthetic leather upper with a textured finish that enhances ball control, while strategically positioned TPU studs provide the traction and stability needed for confident movement. A breathable mesh lining, cushioned EVA insole and traditional lace-up design complete a package that is both comfortable and dependable. What I appreciate most is that Dream Pairs focuses on the essentials. Rather than promising revolutionary technology, these cleats deliver exactly what most players want: comfort, reliable performance and excellent value. Whether for a young footballer discovering the sport or an experienced player looking for dependable footwear, they are a reminder that every great match begins with the right pair of boots.



\$39.99 USD



RUNNING SHOES US \$ 79.99

ALLSWIFT

Amazon

Whether you're training for your first 5K, keeping up with a daily fitness routine or simply looking for a comfortable pair of sneakers for everyday wear, the right footwear can make all the difference. That is exactly what drew my attention to the ALLSWIFIT Running Shoes. Designed with runners in mind, they combine a breathable jacquard mesh upper with responsive cushioning that helps soften impact while maintaining excellent energy return. Lightweight yet supportive, they also feature contoured arch support, an EVA stability plate and a durable rubber outsole that provides dependable traction on a variety of surfaces. The result is a shoe that feels equally at home on a morning run, at the gym or during a busy day on your feet. What I appreciate most is their versatility. Instead of focusing solely on performance, ALLSWIFIT has created a running shoe that comfortably transitions into everyday life. For anyone seeking reliable comfort, thoughtful engineering and excellent value, these sneakers are well worth considering.



SEA URCHIN LAPEL PIN US \$245



SEA URCHIN CUFFLINKS US \$295

PHARAOUN

www.pharaoun.com

Nature has long been the world's greatest jeweler. From the perfect symmetry of a snowflake to the graceful curve of a seashell, it has inspired artists for centuries. The Sea Urchin Collection by Pharaoun is a beautiful reminder that some of nature's most extraordinary creations often remain hidden beneath the surface. Inspired by the intricate skeleton concealed beneath a sea urchin's protective spines, the collection transforms this remarkable natural form into contemporary jewelry of striking elegance. The lapel pin and matching cufflinks reinterpret the sea urchin's delicate geometry in sterling silver set with brilliant cubic zirconia, creating miniature sculptures that feel both timeless and modern. Each piece is handcrafted in the Pharaoun workshop and is available in sterling silver or with finishes plated in 22-karat yellow gold, 18-karat rose gold or black rhodium. What I appreciate most is that these designs never feel literal. Even without knowing their inspiration, they captivate with their sculptural beauty; once the story behind them is revealed, they become even more meaningful. They are pieces for those who appreciate thoughtful design, exceptional craftsmanship and the extraordinary beauty that nature so often keeps hidden from view.



PEASANT BLOUSE CYNTHIA ROSE

CYNTHIA ROSE

www.cynthiarose.com

There is something particularly appealing about giving beautiful things a second life, and Cynthia Rose does so with remarkable style. The designer has begun re-imagining vintage Hermès, Ferragamo and Gucci scarves as magnificent peasant blouses that are as effortless as they are chic. Fresh, breezy and deeply feminine, these one-of-a-kind creations immediately bring to mind the bohemian glamour of Yves Saint Laurent in the 1970s. Because each blouse is fashioned from a different vintage scarf, no two are ever alike, making every piece entirely unique. They seem made for summer days, whether worn in the Hamptons, on holiday by the sea or simply paired with a favorite pair of white jeans. At a time when so much fashion feels interchangeable, Cynthia Rose reminds us that true style often lies in owning something that no one else in the world will ever have. Available at Jimmy's New York and the Hamptons.



UNISEX BADAAL US \$225



UNISEX SURAJMUKHI USD \$450

JIWYA

www.jiwy.com

One of the greatest rewards of traveling the world is discovering that true luxury often exists far from the famous boutiques of Paris, Milan or New York. I have found it in small workshops, in traditions passed from one generation to the next, and in the hands of artisans whose extraordinary talent deserves far greater international recognition. Few countries embody that spirit more beautifully than India, whose remarkable textile heritage continues to inspire me every time I return. That is precisely why Jiwy immediately captured my attention. Founded in 2022 by two textile scientists who left successful careers in the United States, the brand was born after an extraordinary 19,000-kilometer journey across India in search of traditional knowledge at risk of disappearing. Today, Jiwy collaborates with more than 150 artisan communities, preserving centuries-old techniques while creating clothing that feels thoroughly contemporary. Every garment reflects the brand's distinctive soil-to-soil philosophy. Crafted entirely from plant-based fibers and natural dyes, without plastics, synthetic colorants or animal-derived materials, each creation begins in nature and is ultimately designed to return to it. Even more remarkable is the time devoted to every piece: depending on the design, each jacket requires between 120 and 250 hours of meticulous craftsmanship, transforming clothing into something far closer to wearable art than fast fashion. The three jackets featured here—the elegant Baadal, the sculptural Rann, and the vibrant Surajmukhi—beautifully express that philosophy, each interpreting India's rich textile traditions through a distinctly modern lens. Their understated sophistication is matched by Jiwy's commitment to caring for every garment long after it leaves the workshop through its Re:Jiwy program, which encourages owners to repair, reinvent or responsibly return their pieces rather than discard them. In a fashion industry often driven by constant consumption, Jiwy offers a refreshing reminder that the finest luxury has never been about owning more, but about choosing pieces whose beauty, craftsmanship and story will endure for years to come.



RAAN US \$225

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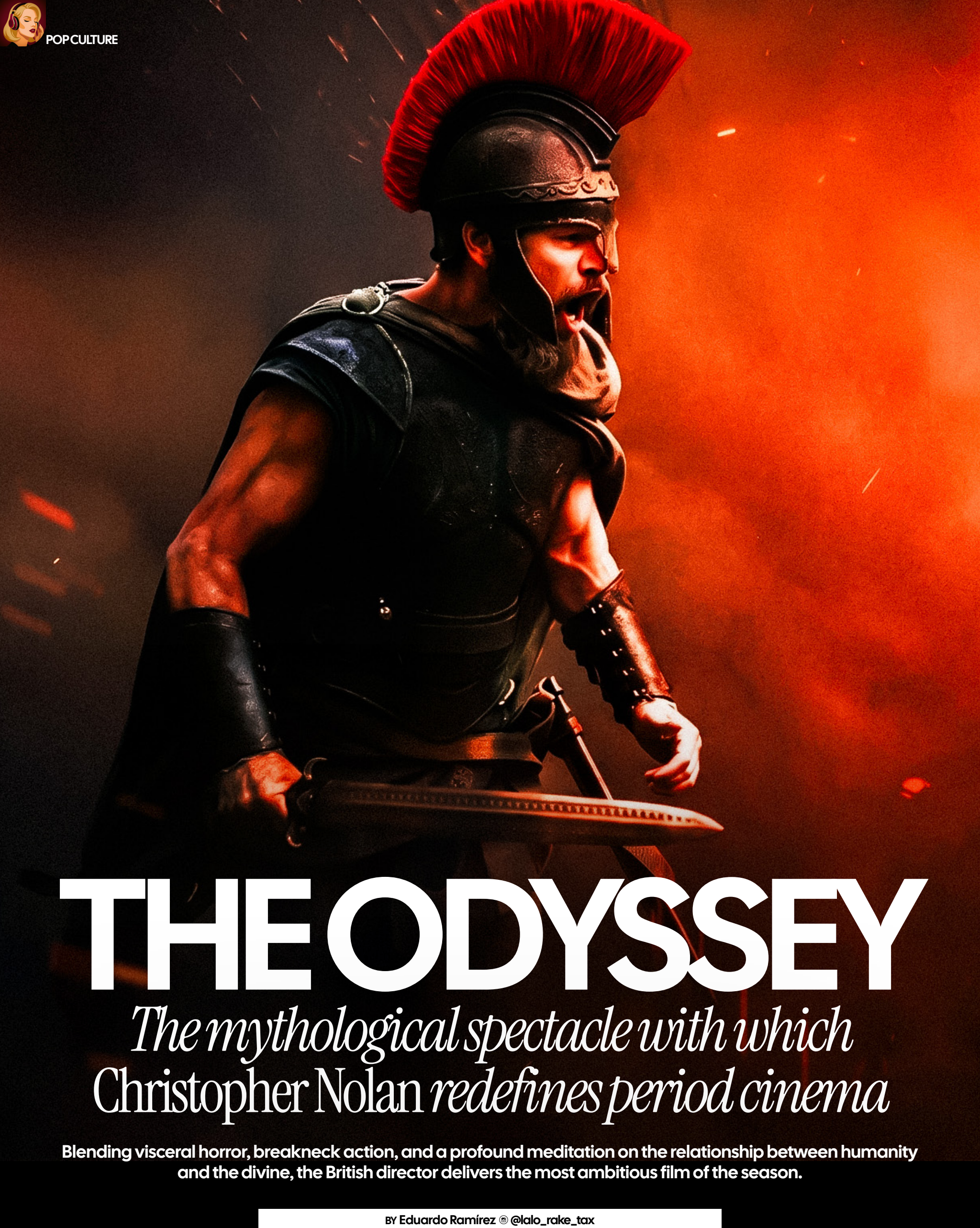
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POP CULTURE





THE ODYSSEY

The mythological spectacle with which Christopher Nolan redefines period cinema

Blending visceral horror, breakneck action, and a profound meditation on the relationship between humanity and the divine, the British director delivers the most ambitious film of the season.

BY Eduardo Ramírez © @lalo_rake_tax



SURPASSING THE CULTURAL and commercial impact of *Oppenheimer* seemed an unattainable feat. Yet, three years after that phenomenon, Christopher Nolan returns to the big screen to prove that his technical and narrative ambition knows no bounds. By adapting one of world literature's greatest epics for the screen, the filmmaker not only revamps his visual language, but also delivers an epic tale that instantly earns a place at the very peak of his filmography.

One of the script's greatest strengths lies in the psychological depth of its lead character. Brought to life by a brilliant Matt Damon, Odysseus does

not defy the deities out of hubris, as he pays them the respect their hierarchy commands at every turn. Instead, his rebellion stems from a profound discontent with how the gods govern the mortal realm, manipulating human destiny as if the world were a mere game board. Joining this moral conflict are Anne Hathaway's magnetic presence as Penelope and a standout performance by Robert Pattinson, who commands the screen by channeling a ruthless, layered villainy.

Across its nearly three-hour runtime, the film maintains a brisk pace and unrelenting tension. Nolan settles old scores with hand-to-hand combat, delivering battle sequences of astonishing scale and clarity.

Furthermore, the narrative catches viewers off guard with a daring tonal shift: at a pivotal juncture, the high epic dissolves to make way for pure psychological horror.

This tour de force is backed by a seamless blend of practical and digital effects, elevated by Hoyte van Hoytema's cinematography and an immersive score by Ludwig Göransson that heightens every confrontation.

In a year when major summer blockbusters have fallen short on both substance and spectacle, *The Odyssey* emerges as a monumental work that not only rescues the 2026 box office, but demands to be experienced in the largest cinema format possible. ■





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WORLD



NORMANDY: SUMMER OF '44

The battle that shattered the Third Reich
and shaped geopolitics to this day.

Eighty-two years after D-Day, the Normandy invasion remains the greatest logistical feat in military history—a decisive turning point that not only dismantled the Third Reich's Western Front, but served as the defining catalyst of the twentieth century. Dispelling ideological myths and tracing the strategy from the landing beaches to the Falaise Pocket, we analyze the day Europe began its liberation and the world ushered in the global order that governed us up to the threshold of our modern era.

BY Marco Guerrero © @marcoguerreroleon



Into the Jaws of Death. Photograph by Robert F. Sargent depicting the landing of U.S. troops at Omaha Beach (June 6, 1944).

THE ECHOES OF THE 1942 Dieppe disaster still resonated strongly within the minds of the Allied high command, who understood that assaulting a fortified French port was strategic suicide. Consequently, during the Trident Conference held in Washington in May 1943, the decision was made to devise an alternative plan that would cross the English Channel and set its true stage along the coast of Normandy. Under the supreme command of U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower and with ground forces directed by British General Bernard Montgomery, the Normandy shoreline was divided into five key sectors that would dictate the course of the invasion. The beaches codenamed Utah and Omaha were assigned to American troops, while Gold and Sword were designated as British objectives, leaving the Juno sector in the hands of Canadian contingents. To overcome the fierce enemy defenses and the total absence of port facilities, Allied engineers developed floating artificial harbors known as Mulberries, as well as specialized armor adapted to clear minefields and negotiate cliffs. Meanwhile, in the shadows, one of the war's most elaborate deception strategies, Operation Bodyguard, employed phantom radio traffic and the cunning work of double agents to convince Adolf Hitler that the main assault would occur weeks later at the Pas-de-Calais, successfully leading the Germans to hold their primary reserves far from the actual landing zone.

The weather nearly unraveled months of absolute secrecy, forcing a postponement of the original June 5 date due to gale-force winds and heavy seas that made landing craft navigation impossible. However, after meteorologists identified a brief and vital break in the storm, Eisenhower issued the definitive order to proceed the following morning. In the early hours of June 6, 1944, the historic D-Day commenced with the drop of thousands of paratroopers behind enemy lines, followed at 05:45 by an intense naval bombardment unleashed by a colossal fleet of battleships and destroyers. At 06:30, the initial waves of infantry began touching down amidst heavy German defensive fire. While the advance on Utah Beach was relatively smooth and casualties were light, Omaha sector rapidly devolved into a bloodbath due to the unyielding resistance of the Wehrmacht's 352nd Infantry Division, strategically entrenched atop the bluffs. Only close-range naval gunfire support and the raw grit of the infantry broke the deadlock by midday.

A few miles away, the 2nd Ranger

Battalion executed one of the day's most celebrated feats by scaling the sheer cliffs of Pointe du Hoc to silence an artillery battery that threatened the entire invasion fleet.

On the eastern flank, British and Canadian forces secured their beachheads despite treacherous surf and successfully repelled a counterattack by the 21st Panzer Division that threatened to split the Allied front in two.

Securing the coast was merely the opening phase of a campaign that became a grinding war of attrition once forces pushed into the Normandy bocage—a labyrinth of ancient hed-

French interior and execute a sweeping encirclement, trapping fifty thousand enemy troops in the Falaise Pocket. By August 25, the French capital celebrated the jubilant Liberation of Paris, and five days later the last surviving German divisions beat a retreat across the Seine, marking the formal conclusion of Operation Overlord.

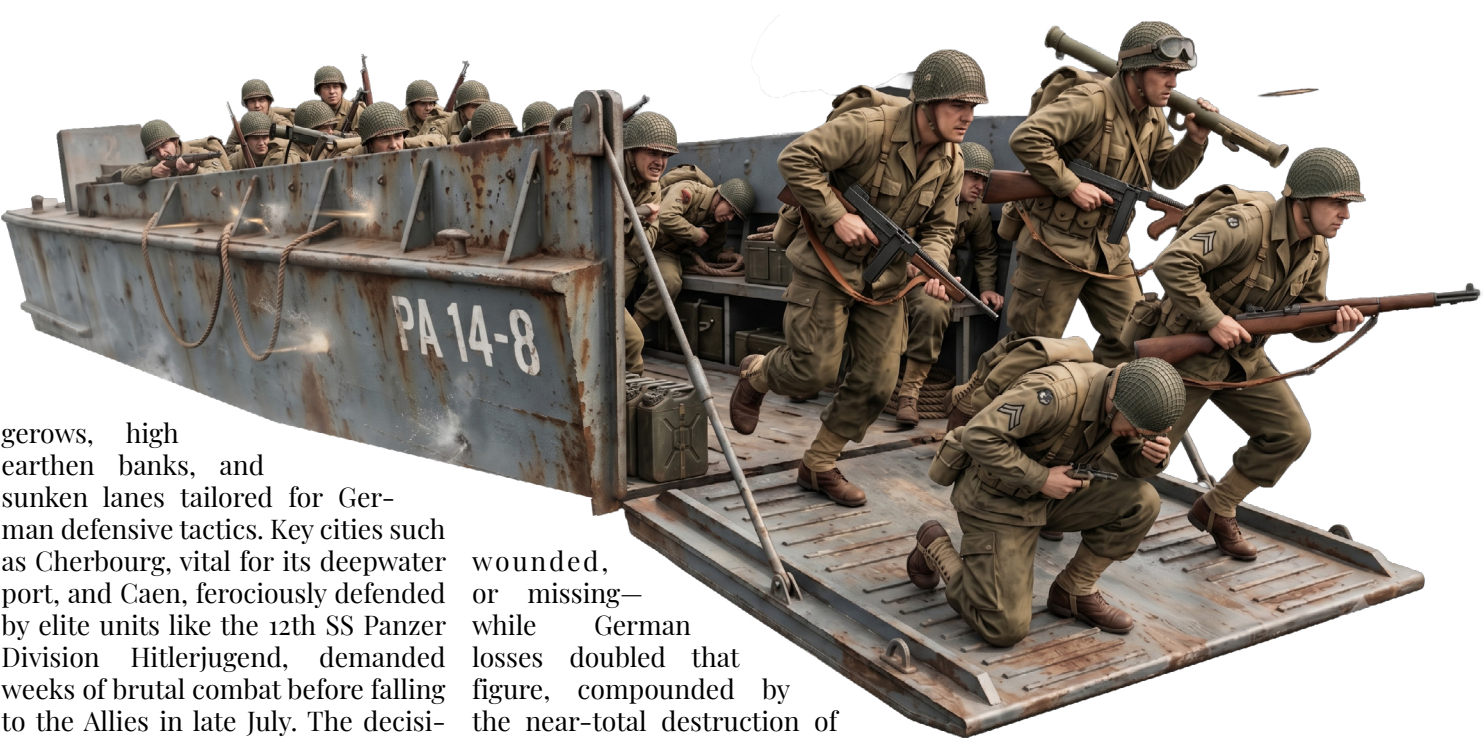
By the end of the campaign, over three million Allied soldiers had crossed into France, yet the human cost of victory was staggering on both sides. Western armies suffered more than 225,000 casualties—killed,

ve preparatory Allied bombardments and the ground combat that reduced entire towns and historic landmarks to rubble. Today, the beaches still bear the codenames that reshaped the destiny of World War II, and the region's sprawling cemeteries and memorials hold the remains of over 110,000 fallen soldiers. These resting grounds stand as an enduring testament to the military clash that not only opened the European second front to crush the Third Reich, but also—contrary to the mantras repeated by leftist historiography and obsolete Soviet apologists—accelerated and facilitated the Red Army's advance toward Berlin, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War.

It was there, in June 1944 on the cold, windswept shores of Normandy, that the pivotal military campaign forged the geopolitical paradigm governing the world for the rest of the twentieth century. Today, global developments already point to the emergence of a new international order; but that, without question, is a subject for future installments.

“
YOU ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK
UPON THE GREAT CRUSADE,
TOWARD WHICH WE HAVE
STRIVEN THESE MANY MONTHS.
THE EYES OF THE WORLD ARE
UPON YOU...

GEN. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



growers, high earthen banks, and sunken lanes tailored for German defensive tactics. Key cities such as Cherbourg, vital for its deepwater port, and Caen, ferociously defended by elite units like the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend, demanded weeks of brutal combat before falling to the Allies in late July. The decisive turning point arrived in August with the launch of Operation Cobra, a devastating armored breakout that allowed General George Patton's Third Army to surge deep into the

wounded, or missing—while German losses doubled that figure, compounded by the near-total destruction of their armored and air assets on the Western Front. The worst brunt of the war fell upon the civilian population of Normandy, which paid a toll of up to 39,000 lives lost to massi-



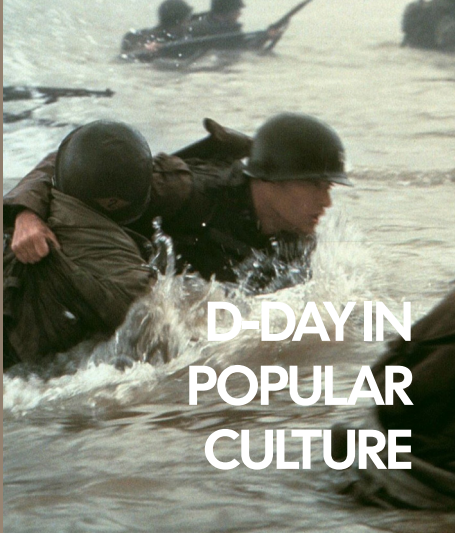
BAND OF BROTHERS

Hours before the June 6, 1944 landings, more than 24,000 paratroopers dropped into the darkness of Normandy to secure the foundations of Operation Overlord. The U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions operated on the western flank across the Cotentin Peninsula, while the British 6th Airborne Division took the eastern flank. Their mission was vital: capture strategic bridges, silence enemy artillery, and sever German counterattack routes toward the beaches.

The initial drop bordered on catastrophe as heavy cloud cover and intense anti-aircraft fire scattered the sticks across the countryside; barely 10% of the American troops landed in their designated drop zones, and many drowned in fields intentionally flooded by Erwin Rommel. Yet this very chaos evolved into an unforeseen tactical advantage: the widespread dispersion of Allied soldiers utterly bewildered Wehrmacht commanders, paralyzing their decision-making during the critical pre-dawn hours.

Despite the initial disarray, elite training won out. Ad-hoc squads banded together to secure key objectives, such as the town of Sainte-Mère-Église and the bridges spanning the Orne River. By cutting off the landing sectors and checking the arrival of Third Reich armored reinforcements, the airborne forces shielded the fragile Allied beachheads—paying a steep toll in human lives, but ensuring the ultimate triumph of the largest amphibious invasion in history.

The Battle of Normandy reshaped collective memory by transforming the trauma of war into a cornerstone of contemporary entertainment. This seismic shift began in 1998 with *Saving Private Ryan*, in which Steven Spielberg dismantled the romanticized tropes of traditional war cinema through a visceral hyperrealism so raw it triggered PTSD in actual combat veterans. Shortly thereafter, in 2001, Spielberg teamed with Tom Hanks to bring this blueprint to television with *Band of Brothers*, a miniseries that humanized the conflict by focusing on the brotherhood and psychological scars of Easy Company. Ultimately, this audiovisual impact served as the foundational mold for interactive entertainment, inspiring blockbuster video game franchises such as *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty*. In doing so, Normandy evolved from a mere chapter of history into a modern myth of sacrifice, permanently cementing the priceless cost of freedom in the popular imagination.

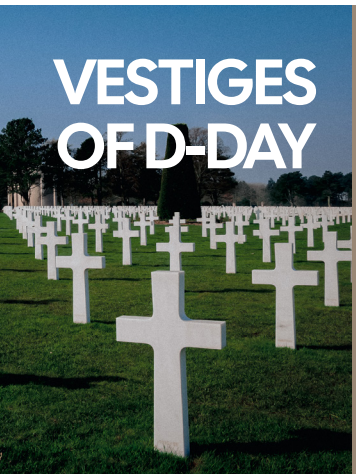


OMAHA BEACH: A HELL OF SAND AND BRINE

On June 6, 1944, the landing at Omaha Beach turned into a bloodbath that nearly caused the Allied front to collapse. Beginning at 06:30, the plan unraveled due to strong coastal currents that scattered landing craft and the failure of preparatory bombardments, which left the German defenses virtually intact.

As the ramps dropped, troops from the U.S. 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions were left completely exposed to interlocking machine-gun crossfire from the Wehrmacht's 352nd Infantry Division, heavily entrenched atop the bluffs. Dozens of soldiers drowned under the weight of their gear or in sinking amphibious tanks, while survivors found themselves pinned down on the tidal flats among fallen comrades, blood-tinged surf, and the mined obstacles erected under Erwin Rommel's orders. The chaos was so severe that by 08:30, the landing of follow-up waves was temporarily halted.

The stalemate only began to break toward midday, when several Allied destroyers risked running dangerously close to shore to provide direct naval gunfire against enemy strongpoints, enabling small groups of soldiers—driven by sheer survival instinct—to scale the bluffs. With more than three thousand casualties in just a few hours, Omaha was etched into history as the grimmest symbol and the heaviest price paid on D-Day.D.



The beaches of Normandy still bear the codenames of the historic 1944 invasion and are home to plaques, memorials, and boutique museums commemorating the campaign. Among the most imposing vestiges are the German fortifications at Pointe du Hoc, which remain virtually intact, and the visible remnants of the Mulberry artificial harbor at Arromanches. Additionally, the region holds twenty-seven military cemeteries where more than 110,000 fallen service members of various nationalities rest. Chief among them is the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer, overlooking Omaha Beach, the final resting place for U.S. forces. Meanwhile, the German war cemetery at La Cambe is the largest in the area with 21,222 graves—part of a grim overall toll that includes 77,866 German, 17,769 British, 9,386 American, 5,002 Canadian, and 650 Polish soldiers who perished in this decisive battle.



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CORPUS CHRISTI

THE CELEBRATION OF THE
MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

This solemnity stands as the pinnacle in celebrating the Eucharistic mystery. Unlike the penitential introspection of Holy Week, this feast joyfully brings the doctrine of Christ's real, true, and substantial presence out into the streets, becoming a crossroads where biblical typologies, dogmatic development, and popular piety have conversed across the centuries.

BY Marco Guerrero © @marcoguerreroleon



THE MYSTERY of the Eucharist reaches its liturgical zenith in the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, a feast instituted with the explicit aim of joyfully proclaiming and celebrating the doctrine of Christ's real presence in the central sacrament. Unlike the commemorations of Holy Week, which are steeped in an atmosphere of sobriety and contemplation, this celebration detaches itself from the sorrow of the Passion to focus entirely on the joy of receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. This mystery is deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture under the concept of "thanksgiving" (eucharistia; Psalms 9:1; Isaiah 12:1, 4; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18), an act of blessing that, in Second Temple Judaism, formed the essential core of prayer in the Temple, the synagogue, and daily life in Israel. Furthermore, the Old Testament presents several prefigurations that anticipate the Eucharist in its sacramental dimension, such as Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine (Genesis 14:18–20), the Passover (Exodus 12:1–14), and the manna that sustained the Israelites in the desert (Exodus 16:13–17). Jesus Christ Himself gave thanks to His Father in moments that prefigured the forms of worship of the New Covenant: the wedding at Cana (John 2), where He transformed water into wine; the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13–21; 15:32–39), where He multiplied matter to feed the multitude; and the Bread of Life discourse (John 6), where He laid out the teaching He would ultimately institute at the Last Supper as the perpetual memorial of His Paschal sacrifice on Calvary, commanding us to repeat it until His return (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

From the earliest days of the Church, the faithful believed in this mystical presence, initially without the framework of a formalized systematic doctrine. While Saint Paul warned the Corinthians against receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord unworthily, it was not until around 160 AD that Saint Justin Martyr offered the first theological explanation in his First Apology addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius, noting that these offerings are not received as ordinary bread or wine, but as the flesh and blood of the incarnate Christ. During the Middle Ages, theology delved considerably deeper into this mystery, particularly through the formulations of Saint Thomas Aquinas—a conceptual development that later culminated in the Council of Trent. There, in response to the Protestant Reformation, the Church reaffirmed that the Holy Eucharist

is the preeminent among the seven sacraments, and that in it the Savior is truly, really, and substantially present. This doctrine defines His presence as real because His being exists objectively and not merely as a mental concept; true because the Sacrament is the very person of Christ and not a mere symbolic representation; and substantial because, although the senses perceive the outward accidents of bread and wine, the underlying substance is entirely transformed—Christ remaining present in Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in

revealed to her as the absence of a liturgical feast dedicated exclusively to the Blessed Sacrament. After she confided this vision to her confessor, the cause gained the backing of local ecclesiastical authorities, leading Bishop Robert of Thourotte to order the first diocesan celebration in 1246. The universal propagation of the feast was achieved through Jacques Pantaléon, who had encountered the devotion while serving as Archdeacon of Liège; upon ascending to the papacy as Pope Urban IV, he promulgated the papal bull Transitus de hoc mundo

the Clementines by Pope John XXII in 1317.

The theological rationale for establishing this new feast lay in the liturgical constraints inherent to Maundy Thursday—a day dense with mysteries in which the institution of the Eucharist shared prominence with the washing of the feet, the institution of the priesthood, and the agony in Gethsemane. The austere sobriety of Holy Week precluded a full, unserved expression of jubilant thanksgiving, a gap filled by Corpus Christi, situated safely outside Lent and Eastertide on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday (or observed on the following Sunday depending on local ecclesiastical calendars). Its defining hallmark became the public procession, where clergy carry the consecrated Host through the streets in a monstrance—a ritual enriched by popular piety through elaborate flower carpets and decorated windows to invoke blessings upon the home. With the advent of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, the celebration became a major theological flashpoint. Martin Luther criticized the processions as deviating from the original mandate, though Lutheranism retained the feast in certain regions until around 1600 under its doctrine of the sacramental union. By contrast, the Calvinist and Presbyterian traditions abolished it entirely, upholding a purely spiritual presence, while the Church of England, having suppressed it in 1548, reintroduced the observance in 2000 under the title "Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion." Even within Eastern Christendom, the Italo-Albanian Byzantine communities of Southern Italy and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church organically adopted this Western feast, weaving its liturgy with the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas and making Corpus Christi a living testament to the enduring dialogue between faith, mysticism, art, beauty, and truth across the centuries.

Corpus Christi stands not only as the culmination of centuries of theological refinement and liturgical evolution, but as the living reflection of Christian identity centered on its most vital sacrament. This solemnity endures as a dynamic, authentic witness to how faith shapes culture and embeds itself within the human experience—reminding believers that, through transubstantiation, that consecrated Bread remains the very heart of their spirituality and the unbroken bond of their eternal communion with the divine.. ■

“

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.
WHOEVER COMES TO ME WILL
NEVER GO HUNGRY, AND
WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL
NEVER BE THIRSTY.

— JOHN 6:35

every consecrated host and particle through the words of priestly consecration.

The institutionalization of this feast into the liturgical calendar did not stem from a top-down hierarchical decree, but rather from a profound mystical movement that arose during the 13th century in Liège—then part of the Holy Roman Empire and today a major Belgian city—led by Saint Juliana of Cornillon. For two decades, the Norbertine canoness experienced recurring visions of a full moon bearing a dark spot, a symbol Christ

in 1264, spurred in large part by the impact of the Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena, where a consecrated Host bled before a doubting priest. To provide the solemnity with a fitting liturgy, the Pope commissioned Thomas Aquinas, whose pen yielded enduring hymns such as the Pange Lingua—whose concluding verses form the Tantum Ergo—the O Salutaris Hostia, and the sequence Lauda Sion Salvatorem. Although the feast took half a century to become widespread, it achieved definitive global adoption when the bull was incorporated into



SAINT THOMAS AND THE CRAFTING OF A FOUNDATIONAL LITURGY



The Solemnity of Corpus Christi stands not only as one of the Catholic Church's most profound liturgical celebrations, but also as a testament to the theological and poetic genius of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In 1264, following the Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena, Pope Urban IV officially instituted the feast through the papal bull Transitus de hoc mundo and entrusted the Dominican scholar with the monumental task of composing its liturgy. Aquinas, the pinnacle of Scholasticism and one of history's greatest theologians, merged rigorous doctrinal precision with exquisite lyrical sensibility and a keen pastoral insight that infused the feast with its joyful, celebratory spirit. For the Divine Office and the Mass of Corpus Christi, the Dominican thinker composed enduring hymns such as Pange Lingua (whose concluding verses form the celebrated Tantum Ergo), Panis Angelicus, and Adoro Te Devote. In these works, Aquinas—canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323—rendered the complex mystery of transubstantiation (the conversion of the entire substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ) in rich visual and poetic terms, making it profoundly accessible to popular devotion.

In doing so, Saint Thomas Aquinas transformed an abstract theological definition into a living, cultural, and deeply spiritual experience. His compositions not only provided the Church with a rock-solid dogmatic foundation against contemporary dissenting movements, but also helped shape the very identity of Western Christendom. Through his sacred poetry, Corpus Christi was cemented as an enduring witness to how faith molds culture, offering a timeless testament to the preeminence of Catholicism's most sacred sacrament.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION: SUBSTANCE AND MATTER

Transubstantiation is a central dogma of Catholic theology that articulates the mystery of the Eucharist. According to this doctrine, during the consecration at Mass, the entire substance of the bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, while their physical appearances or accidents (taste, texture, smell, and shape) remain unchanged. The term came into formal theological use during the 12th century and was dogmatically defined by the Church at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and later reaffirmed at the Council of Trent (1551). To deepen this explanation, Scholastic theology—most notably through Saint Thomas Aquinas—drew upon Aristotelian philosophical frameworks, drawing a distinction between “substance” (what a thing is in its fundamental reality) and “accidents” (the physical properties perceived by the senses). In contrast to other Christian interpretations that emerged during the Protestant Reformation, such as consubstantiation (where the Body of Christ coexists alongside the physical bread and wine) or pure symbolism, Catholicism upholds the real, true, and substantial presence of Christ on the altar, cementing this liturgical miracle as the very core of its faith and devotion.



BREAD OF LIFE: THE THEOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Bread of Life Discourse (John 6:22–59) is a pivotal Christological passage set immediately following the multiplication of the loaves and Jesus walking on water. In this passage, Jesus reveals Himself as the true heavenly nourishment sent by the Father—the “Bread of Life” (from the Greek *artos tēs zōēs*)—proclaiming that whoever comes to Him will never hunger and whoever believes in Him will never thirst, thus surpassing the manna provided through Moses in the Exodus narrative. Although the Gospel of John does not recount the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, Christian tradition has historically regarded this discourse as its theological cornerstone. Illustrating this, Saint Ignatius of Antioch—a disciple of John the Apostle and Evangelist, a first-century author, and Patriarch of Antioch—articulated the early Church's shared understanding of the Eucharist as the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in an epistle penned around 110 AD.

Within the theological architecture of the Fourth Gospel, this metaphor is not an isolated statement; rather, it connects directly with other solemn declarations of identity, much like Jesus' proclamation as the “Light of the World” (John 8:12). Both statements rest upon the same Christological foundation: the reality that Jesus possesses life in its fullness just as the Father possesses it, wielding the divine authority and power to bestow that eternal life upon all who choose to follow Him.

CORPUS CHRISTI: FAITH, ART, AND TRADITION

Over the centuries, the traditional procession with the monstrance has adapted to the local identities of diverse regions around the globe. A prime example can be seen in the monumental, ephemeral carpets woven from fresh flowers and dyed sawdust that communities across Spain and Latin America craft along the streets to mark the sacred path. In contrast, in parts of Venezuela and Panama, the feast takes on a striking syncretism through the Dancing Devils (*Diablos Danzantes*), who dance to the beat of drums before falling prostrate in surrender before the Blessed Sacrament, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. Meanwhile, in Central Europe, the celebration retains an intensely solemn character; in the lake regions of Bavaria, the procession even takes to beautifully adorned boats gliding across the water to the sound of traditional hymns—demonstrating how a single devotion can channel art and foster deep community cohesion across cultures.



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FASHION WITH A PURPOSE

An Evening with Evie Evangelou

BY Wendell Figueroa Ruiz @wendellfr



THERE IS SOMETHING refreshingly different about an evening where conversation takes precedence over ceremony. That was precisely the atmosphere at the elegant Fasano Fifth Avenue Private Club, where Evie Evangelou welcomed a select group of guests for an intimate gathering celebrating the continuing work of Fashion 4 Development. Thoughtfully moderated by Vogue editor Lilah Ramzi, the discussion featured Dorrit Moussaieff, Former First Lady of Iceland, whose longstanding support of the organization reflects a relationship that has endured since its earliest years.

Among those in attendance were philanthropist Barbara Winston, Yvonne Beri, Nina Gill-Mileszczyk, Beatriz Galliano and other distinguished figures from New York's diplomatic, philanthropic and cultural communities. The intimate scale of the evening encouraged genuine dialogue, allowing conversations to continue naturally long after the formal program had concluded. Dorrit Moussaieff's presence served as a reminder of the enduring relationships that have helped shape Fashion 4 Development into one of the world's leading platforms at the intersection of fashion, diplomacy and philanthropy.

While the evening provided the perfect setting to celebrate another milestone in Evie Evangelou's remarkable career, it also offered a glimpse into the vision that has guided her work for more than a decade. Under her leadership, Fashion 4 Development has evolved into an internationally respected platform that brings together heads of state, members of royalty, diplomats, business leaders, designers and global institutions in support of initiatives aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It is a vision that has consistently demonstrated how fashion can become a catalyst for education, sustainability and meaningful social impact.



Barbara Winston, Evie Evangelou, Emilia Penna & Yana Ilyach



Evie Evangelou



Yvonne Beri & Dorrit Moussaieff



Beatriz Galliano



Jose Luis Puche, Nina Gill-Mileszczyk, Wendell Figueroa Ruiz, Mar Segura & Yana Ilyach

Perhaps Evie Evangelou's greatest achievement lies not only in the organization she has built, but in her remarkable ability to create meaningful connections among people whose lives and careers might otherwise never intersect. That unique gift continues to distinguish Fashion 4 Development, ensuring that every initiative remains firmly rooted in collaboration, shared purpose and a genuine commitment to creating opportunities for others.

As guests lingered over conversation well into the evening, it became evident that the success of gatherings such as this is measured less by the number of invitations extended than by the quality of the relationships they strengthen and the ideas they inspire. In that respect, the evening was a fitting reflection of Evie Evangelou herself: gracious, purposeful and quietly influential. ■

ART FOR IMPACT MEXICO



Kary Fernandez and Martha Phillips



Martha Phillips, Mar Segura, Jose Luis Puche & Wendell Figueroa Ruiz



A night where art found purpose

BY Martha Phillips © @girlumonde

ASA DESIGN HUNTER opened its doors to welcome collectors, artists, designers, gallerists, and art lovers for an evening that demonstrated how creativity can reach far beyond mere contemplation. Art for Impact México brought together a curated selection of international talent in an exhibition held to support the programs of Glasswing International, an organization dedicated to empowering community-transforming initiatives across Latin America. The showcase was made possible through the vision of Vicky Alianelli NYC Art Gallery, renowned art dealer Carola Pino, and gallery director David Solís, who succeeded in crafting a space where contemporary art engaged with social commitment in an authentic and sophisticated manner. Among the featured artists were José Luis Puche, Alberto Murillo, Cecilia Avendaño, Pamela Bell, Ricky Crespo, Angels Grau, Jesús Isnard, and Laura Lacambra, whose works introduced diverse perspectives, visual vocabularies, and sensibilities that enriched the visitors' experience. What made the night truly exceptional was not just the pieces on display, but the diverse crowd gathered around them. Established collectors,

emerging buyers, interior designers, cultural advocates, leading figures from the design world, and passionate art enthusiasts shared conversations, ideas, and experiences in an atmosphere that captured the vitality of today's art scene. Events like this serve as a reminder that true luxury is not always found in exclusivity, but in the capacity to foster meaningful connections. Art for Impact México was a celebration of talent, generosity, and the conviction that art remains one of the most powerful instruments for inspiring tangible change. ■

JOSE LUIS PUCHE

A Year to Celebrate in *NEW YORK*



Jose Luis Puche



Wendell Figueroa Ruiz & Beatriz Galliano

THERE IS SOMETHING wonderfully reassuring about discovering that, in a city as dynamic as New York, evenings centered around art can still bring together an extraordinary mix of people. Such was the case at Cosentino's beautiful Manhattan showroom, where Spanish painter José Luis Puche and his wife and art manager, Mar Segura, welcomed friends to celebrate the first anniversary of their life in New York and the culmination of *Welcome*, a project especially close to their hearts. I was delighted to accept their invitation and join a gathering that reflected the very best of the city's cultural life.

Throughout the evening, distinguished collectors mingled with artists, familiar faces from New York's social scene exchanged conversations with personalities from the worlds of fashion, design, culture and the press, while the elegant surroundings encouraged the kind of meaningful dialogue that too often gets lost amid today's crowded social calendar.

Although José Luis's latest body of work provided the inspiration for the evening, it was the warmth of the gathering that left the deepest impression.

There was an unmistakable sense of gratitude, friendship and shared enthusiasm among those in attendance, making the celebration feel less like the closing of one chapter and more like the be-

ginning of another.

Later reflecting on the evening, José Luis wrote: *"We couldn't have celebrated our first year in New York in a better way than alongside our dear friends at Cosentino, with the culmination of a project that is very special to us. Welcome. It was a night surrounded by friends, collectors, and all the wonderful people who have become part of this incredible experience."* In a city that offers countless invitations every evening, only a few remain with you long after you have gone home. This was one of them—a celebration not only of artistic achievement, but of friendship, generosity and the enduring ability of art to bring people together. ■



Luis Villabon, Tom Kochan, Roopa Unnikrishnan, Mar Segura, Twilla Duncan, Bettina Covo, Jose Luis Puche, Cheryl Stern



Andreas Petterson, Lukas A. Semla, Robin Cofer, Kanyon Williams



Jose Angel Abad, Marimar Segura Cruz & Jose Luis Puche



Kayon Williamns, Bernardo Revilla & Jose Angel Abad



Jon Harari, Marlies Dikkers & Beatriz Galliano

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