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CITY LIFE

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Malta, along with its sister islands, Gozo and Comino, boasts a remarkable 8,000 years of history, three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, diverse culinary offerings, and an endless calendar of events and festivals, offering something to suit all interests. Malta is a safe destination where English is widely spoken and is a member of the EU.

Valletta, UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Maltese Capital, is an open-air museum that engulfs travelers in rich history and religious attractions. Built by the Knights of St. John, the city that is bustling day and night, will transport you back in time with its historic architecture and old world atmosphere. Exploring the narrow streets will lead you to historical landmarks, quaint coffee shops and elaborate churches.

Gozo - Calypso's Island A trip to Malta isn't complete without a visit to Malta's two sister islands, Gozo and Comino. Access to Gozo is by ferry only, a car ferry or a speed ferry directly from Valletta. Gozo is the perfect change of pace for those looking for a more rural, relaxed, and quaint stay. The island also comes complete with historical sites, forts, amazing panoramas, hidden beaches, as well as one of the archipelago's best-preserved prehistoric temples, Ġgantija, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Comino's famous Blue Lagoon is a short boat ride away.

Diverse Culinary Experience Malta offers travelers a diverse culinary experience, from the traditional plate of eclectic Mediterranean food curated by a relationship between the Maltese and the countless civilizations that occupied the island, to the never-ending vineyards delivering the finest exclusive wines. Malta continues to strengthen its presence on the gourmet cuisine map with the 2025 (sixth edition) MICHELIN Guide featuring Malta's two Michelin Star restaurants added in 2024, in addition to the six One MICHELIN Star restaurants (1 new). However, not to be missed, are the local street foods including the famous Maltese pastizzi (cheese or pea filled pastries).

Set Jetting In recent years, Malta has become one of Europe's most popular film and television locations. Now celebrating 100 years of film, the Maltese Islands are home to countless blockbusters like Gladiator I and II, The Count of Monte Cristo, Jurassic World Dominion, Napoleon and Popeye. Most famously, the city of Mdina was home to the filming of HBO's Game of Thrones first season, as the fictional city of King's Landing. The archipelago offers ancient walled cities and scenic landscapes that make it a timeless destination for filmmakers and film lovers alike.

This enchanting archipelago has something for everyone!

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Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Fernando Zerillo
Co-Founder/Creative Director

"Home is not a place, it' s a feeling"

— Cecelia Ahern

THE FEELING OF HOME

When we think of "home" we understand immediately that it is not merely a place. Home is where memories are made, where we celebrate family birthdays and anniversaries and experience our little daily triumphs. It is a refuge that we gratefully come back to after a long day at work and it is the place where we feel the freedom to pour our hearts out after our daily battles in the greater world. Our home is a place where we experience a sense of belonging, a feeling of safety — it is our sanctuary. So hearing about stories of violent and brazen home invasions — breaking and entering in the dead of night while the residents are asleep in their beds — is unnerving and puts fear into our hearts. While of course we would hope that no one ever experience such a traumatic event, we interviewed some key figures for our cover story, including Vaughan's Mayor Steven Del Duca, Kevin Nebrija of York Regional Police, Gillian Freeman of Victim Services of York Region and Toronto criminal lawyer Robert Rosenberg, to help shed some light on the reality of home invasions. We hope their insights can help you feel a bit more at ease or better prepared in the unfortunate event that you are ever caught in this terrifying situation. (Story on page 42.)

As you leaf through this issue you will see that home is a recurring theme. Such as the warm and welcoming home that Caroline Sidaros and Alain Desgagné have created in the quiet Quebec village of Frelighsburg. It's a house that respects the natural beauty of the forest that surrounds it and expresses the couple's shared values of warmth and simplicity and their appreciation of a real and simple life. You will not find any statement pieces here — quite the opposite. (Story on page 36.)

The article on Forest Hill House (on page 18) is the story of the modernization of a century-old home by Bill Dewson of Dewson Architects, a firm celebrated for its innovative and community-focused design and its skill in combining historic and contemporary features, and a revisioning that was accomplished with a deep appreciation for Toronto's architectural heritage.

Respect and dignity are the foundations of an organization we highlight on page 54 called Creating Alternatives. The organization has been serving the community for more than 25 years, since its founder and board president, Phyllis Santone, looking for opportunities for her daughter Rita, found few suitable options for her or other young people with developmental disabilities after high school. So much more than just a traditional day program, Creating Alternatives is a movement for community inclusion, one that builds relationships and challenges the status quo for people with diverse abilities, empowering them and challenging them to reach their full potential.

Sometimes all people need is to take a bit of time to really *see* that potential in others.

In our interview with actor, model and musician Ed Quinn, we learned that this had been the case for him when Gianni Versace told him after a show in Milan that he wasn't pretty enough to be a model: "You are handsome. And smart. You're an actor." Having made the transition from music to modelling to acting, Quinn's advice is not to be afraid of change, since it is inevitable. (Story on page 48.)

Indeed, since change *is* inevitable, the key is to embrace it and be aware of how you can learn and grow from it.

We hope you enjoy this May/June edition of *City Life,* whether in print at home or online, as you embrace the arrival of a new season, new growth, longer days — and with that you live, grow, and celebrate your best life.

Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **Michelle Zerillo-Sosa** • michelle@dolce.ca
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS **Angela Palmieri-Zerillo** • angela@dolce.ca
CO-FOUNDER/CREATIVE DIRECTOR **Fernando Zerillo** • fernando@dolce.ca

ART DEPARTMENT
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Christina Ban**
GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Soo Jin Oh**
SENIOR UI/UX DESIGNER **Yena Yoo**
WEB DEVELOPER **Jordan Carter**
UI/UX DESIGNER **Mariia Korolenko**
MULTIMEDIA ASSISTANT **Massimo Sosa**

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT
FASHION & HOME DECOR EDITOR **Michelle Zerillo-Sosa**
BEAUTY & WELLNESS EDITOR **Angela Palmieri-Zerillo**
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS **Kate Brynn, Marc Castaldo, Rick Muller, Bonnie Pop, Cece M. Scott, Isha Sharma, Massimo Sosa**
COPY EDITORS & PROOFREADERS
Samantha Acker, Barbara Feldman
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Lismery Loyola, Emad Mohammadi
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS & CONTENT CREATORS
Valentina Concu, Amanda Palazzo
PR MANAGERS & EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Marc Castaldo, Anastasiia Horbulova
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTANT **Holly Potts**

VIDEO DEPARTMENT
VIDEOGRAPHERS **Lismery Loyola, Emad Mohammadi**

PUBLISHER
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ADVERTISING
T: 905-264-6789 | info@mycitylife.ca
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING **Angela Palmieri-Zerillo** • angela@dolce.ca
DIRECTOR OF SALES **Christina Bono**
GROWTH MARKETING ASSOCIATE **Mario Balaceanu**

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DESIGN NEWS

Warmer weather is almost here, along with our stylish picks

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**
CURATED BY **MICHELLE ZERILLO-SOSA**



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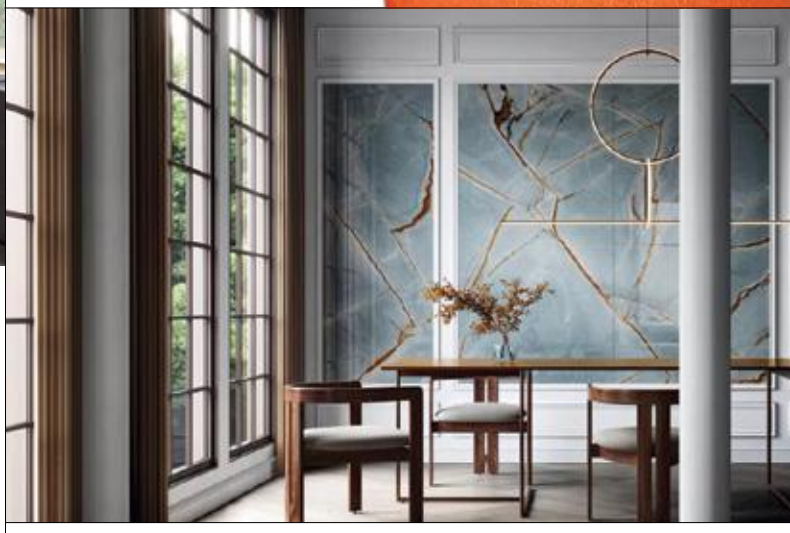
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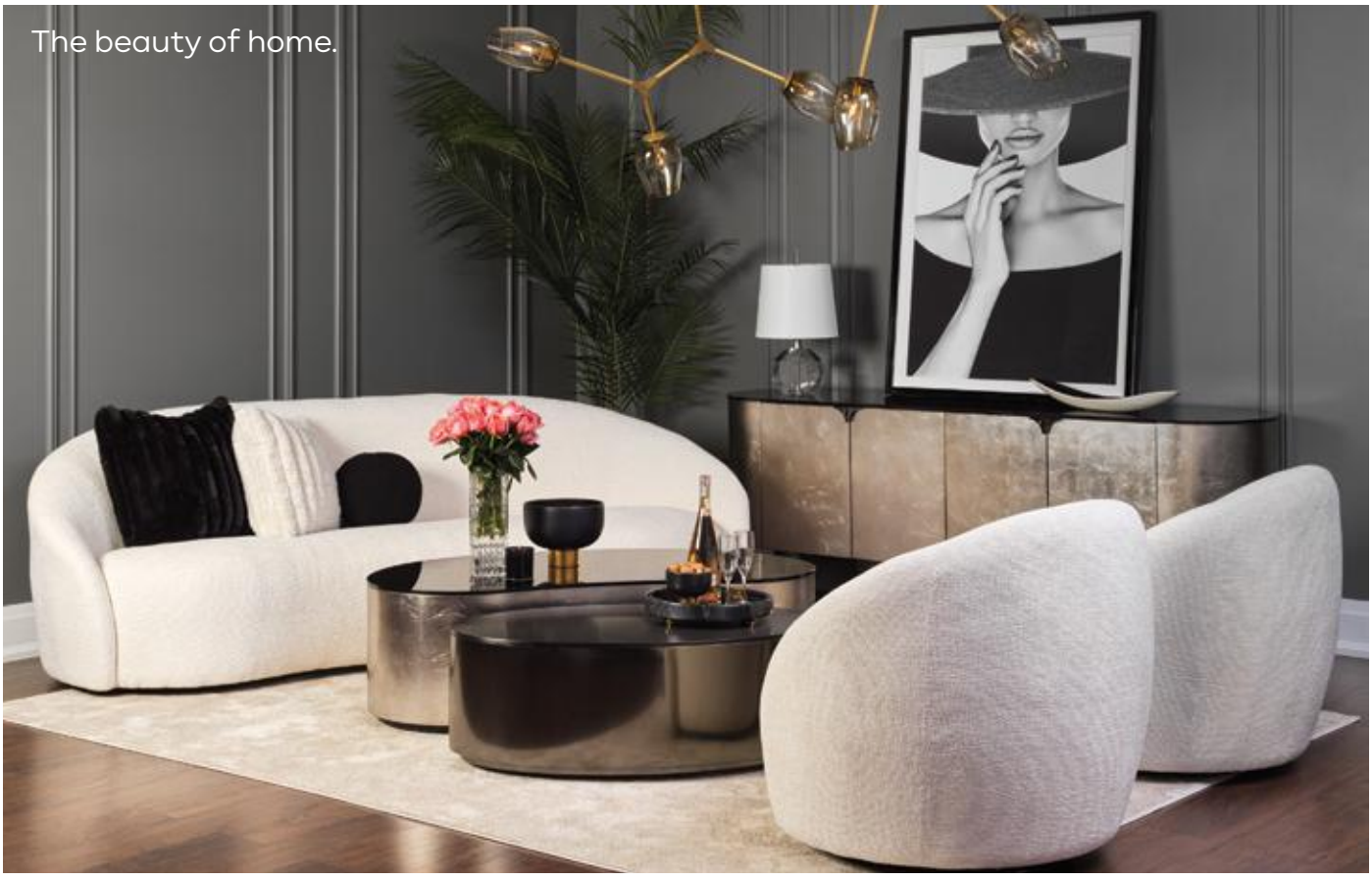
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DESIGN NEWS



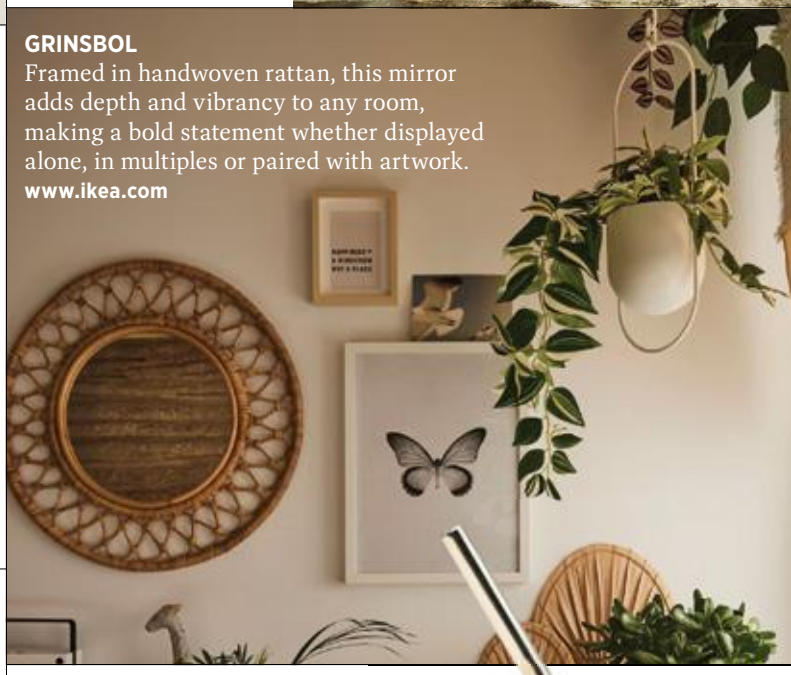
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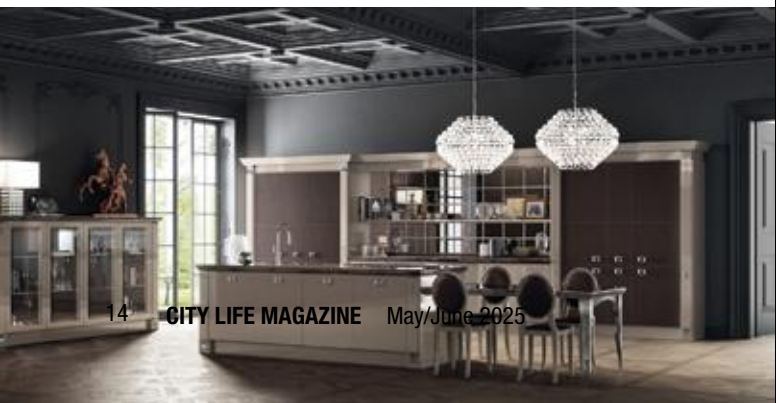


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CANADA'S FIRST HARD ROCK HOTEL

London, Ont., is home to Canada's first Hard Rock Hotel, and it is now accepting reservations

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**

The wait is almost over! Hard Rock Hotel London, Ontario, is officially accepting reservations, and it's bound to become a must-visit spot for anyone looking for a unique entertainment experience. Nestled in the heart of the city's Old East Village, the hotel is part of Canada's largest indoor entertainment complex, which includes The Factory, making it the perfect place to stay and play.

"The debut of Hard Rock Hotel London, Ontario, marks an exciting milestone as we bring our iconic brand to this vibrant city," said John Rees, senior vice president of hotel operations at Hard Rock International. "Guests can expect the signature Hard Rock vibe, where music, entertainment and hospitality come together to create something truly special. We look forward to sharing the unmistakable energy that defines Hard Rock Hotels and offers unforgettable experiences for travellers and locals alike."

Featuring 164 stylish rooms, the hotel offers everything from family-friendly suites with bunk beds to the ultimate Rock Star Suite, complete with a private kitchenette and a plush living area. With floor-to-ceiling windows, every room immerses you in the vibrant energy of the complex. But it's not just the rooms that will make your stay memorable. Expect a delicious array of dining options that include the GMT-5 bar, Sessions Restaurant & Bar, and a speakeasy inspired by the Kellogg's Factory's 1913 opening.

The Hard Rock Hotel London infuses every moment with music, from curated playlists to in-room guitars. And for those looking to unwind, try the Rock Om program or the Body Rock Fitness Centre. Whether you're here for the music, the luxury or both, Hard Rock Hotel London is ready to make your stay unforgettable.

"Signing the agreement for the creation of Hard Rock Hotel London, Ontario, marked the start of what has proven to be an extraordinary partnership between Dora Hotel Company, Hard Rock International, The Cribbage Group, and the City of London," says Tim Dora, president of Dora Hotel Company. "We are eager to bring to life the unparalleled energy of Hard Rock. There is no doubt this hotel will be a game-changer for Canadians and those travelling from around the globe to Ontario for this unforgettable Hard Rock Hotel experience."

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DEWSON ARCHITECTS: A CENTURY-OLD HOME BECOMES A BEACON OF SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Introducing the Forest Hill House – a space where history and eco-conscious innovation meet in aesthetic sophistication

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**

The story of the Forest Hill House began when a family of five relocated from British Columbia to Toronto, drawn to the elegance of the stately century-old home nestled in Toronto's prestigious Forest Hill neighbourhood. Determined to maintain the building's character while incorporating modern, nature-inspired elements, they knew there was only one firm they could turn to, Dewson Architects, a firm celebrated for its innovative and community-focused designs, its skill in blending contemporary and historic features and its deep appreciation for Toronto's architectural heritage.

But the customer's vision is just a vision until it becomes embedded in a blueprint and a budget.

"We had certain challenges beforehand," explained the homeowner. "The existing garage was blocking most of the rear yard view. We also needed an architect to achieve the West Coast vibe we envisioned — a space that embraced an open garden design."

Dewson Architects provided a creative solution to ensure the home's sustainability and aesthetic appeal while preserving both budget and green space: a side driveway.

"Within half an hour of meeting Bill Dewson on-site, he sketched a solution that completely transformed the concept," says the homeowner.

During excavation, another, more unexpected, challenge presented itself when a leaking fuel-oil tank was discovered, temporarily halting construction. Addressing this environmental hazard became a priority. The contaminated soil was swiftly removed, and the outdated heating system was replaced with a high-efficiency model. In a further commitment to sustainability, the old tank was recycled, and every effort was made to minimize the project's environmental footprint.

"The sustainable measures we've integrated not only enhance the home's functionality, but also ensure its legacy for generations to come," says Bill Dewson, principal architect of Dewson Architects whose studio is renowned for preserving the integrity of its projects with sustainability, innovation and aesthetics.

But this project truly set a new standard in architectural innovation. Design features, including a green roof

PHOTOS BY VALERIE WILCOX PHOTOGRAPHY



The fireplace is encased in natural stone for a warm yet minimalist feel







The kitchen island and backsplash have a contemporary and earthy design aesthetic.
A dramatic staircase that ascends a two-storey atrium welcomes everyone at the main entrance

and the use of recycled materials, large windows and an open floor plan to invite natural light, establish a deep connection between indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance the home's environmental efficiency.

"Our goal was to blend innovation with tradition, creating a space that honours the past while embracing the future," says Dewson. The firm has redefined what it means to live in a historic space, demonstrating that sustainability and tradition can coexist beautifully. By embracing energy-efficient upgrades, sustainable materials and a community-conscious design, Dewson Architects and the homeowners have set a new benchmark for eco-friendly living in historic neighbourhoods.

dewson.com

@dewsonarchitects

A lush garden with a fresh walkway entrance accompanied by a side driveway and garage optimize space and allow for a rear yard extension





Bill Dewson
Principal Architect of
Dewson Architects

Bill founded Dewson Architects in 1996 to blend beauty with sustainability, crafting eco-friendly designs that last. With a Master's in structural engineering from the University of Illinois, he's mastered high-performance construction and environmental certifications including LEED and Passive House. His work focuses on reducing carbon footprints while creating timeless architecture. A Toronto native, Bill travelled the world, refining his craft before returning home to build in the city he loves. Backed by an expert team, he's all about pushing boundaries of net-zero, carbon-neutral buildings — proving that sustainability and style can go hand in hand.

EVENT

A NIGHT INSPIRED BY ITALY

CIBPA Supports Culinary Excellence at George Brown Event

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**

On Thursday, April 10, 2025, the Chef's House Restaurant hosted a special evening celebrating culinary education and international experience with the help of the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association (CIBPA). George Brown College Dean Rudi Fischbacher and George Brown College Foundation Executive Director Allan Penning joined honoured guests CIBPA Vice President Sabrina Marrelli, Estefania Perez and Dolce Media Group Co-founder Michelle Zerillo (CIBPA's 2025 Women in Leadership Champion) for the event. George Brown College students, recently returned from studying in Italy, prepared masterful dishes inspired by regional Italian cuisine. During the evening, the CIBPA Education Foundation presented a donation to support the school's augmented learning and culinary hospitality program, reinforcing its commitment to education and its valued partnership with Famous People Players.

www.georgebrown.ca | **www.cibpa.com**
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Top (left to right): Chef Filomena Da Costa Teles, Chef Joey Lin, Chef Arjoyce Pansoy and Chef Samarth Kapoor standing proud. The three young chefs showcased their culinary skills by creating dishes inspired by specific regions: Chef Lin represented Le Marche, Chef Pansoy represented Tuscany and Chef Kapoor represented Sicily.
Bottom photos: Highlights from the evening showcase a successful event, where attendees enjoyed engaging company, exquisite flavours and a welcoming ambiance.







PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

BLOOMING BY THE SEA

From quintessential must-haves to cult favourites – these vintage silhouettes, sun-washed hues, and artisanally charming items help set the table for slow, seasonal living inspired by the Mediterranean coast

WRITTEN BY **MASSIMO SOSA**



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EVENT

LUMINATO FESTIVAL 2025

Luminato Festival returns June 4 - 22 for its 19th edition to ignite Toronto with bold, playful and momentous art experiences that transform the people, places and possibilities of the city

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**



CELIA SMITH AND **OLIVIA ANSELL**

Luminato Festival returns to Toronto from June 4 to 22, ushering in its most ambitious edition yet. Under the bold leadership of CEO Celia Smith and Artistic Director Olivia Ansell, the 19th annual celebration will transform the city with dynamic, inclusive and unforgettable art experiences. This year's theme, DAY:NIGHT, explores how we live, connect and evolve within a 24-hour cycle — inviting audiences to discover Toronto from dawn to dusk and beyond.

"Luminato presents once-in-a-lifetime inclusive art experiences that showcase the best of Toronto, our country and the world," says Smith, who is also an expert in urban transformation. "We create moments that inspire and connect us and lead to positive change in our everyday lives."

Spanning three blockbuster weeks, the festival will engage audiences around the clock with a vibrant mix of music, theatre, dance and immersive public installations. With over 1,000 artists from Canada and around the world, Luminato animates every corner of the city — from outdoor parks and transit stations to theatres and galleries. The 2025 lineup will feature 12 world premieres, eight commissioned works and 14 exclusive performances from 10 countries. With many family-friendly and free events, Luminato invites everyone to reimagine Toronto through the transformative power of art.

www.luminatofestival.com

@luminatofestival

www.mycitylife.ca
SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR THE EXCITING PROMO VIDEO



PHOTO BY ABDULLAH BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY

1

THAW: Australian company Legs On The Wall perform for 8 hours on a 2.7-tonne melting ice sculpture suspended 20 metres in the air, a potent dramatization of humankind's environmental impact on the planet

THAW by Legs On The Wall

2

DANDYISM

Four Australian performers channel the spirit of the Sapeurs — Congo's style revolutionaries, who began turning fashion into freedom during the colonial era



PHOTO BY LUKE WADDINGTON

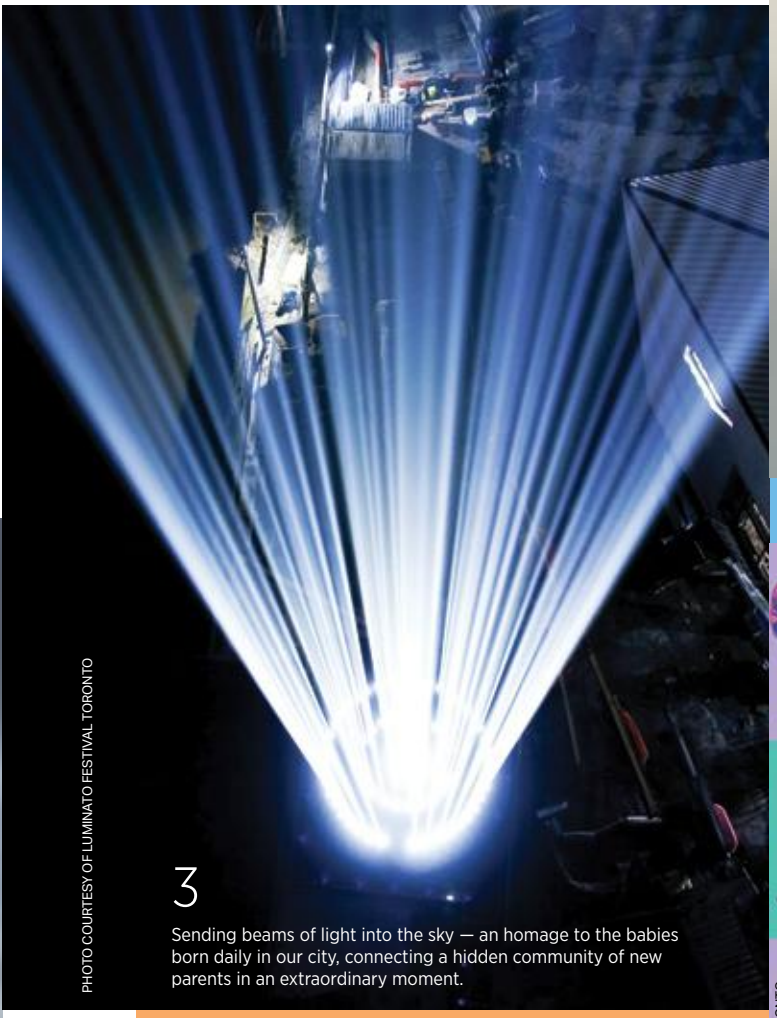


PHOTO COURTESY OF LUMINATO FESTIVAL TORONTO

3

Sending beams of light into the sky — an homage to the babies born daily in our city, connecting a hidden community of new parents in an extraordinary moment.

FIRST BREATH, by Luke Jerram



PHOTO BY NATHALIE STERNALSKI

4

The stage erupts with energy as they launch into gravity-defying leaps and powerful geometric forms that seem to defy physics itself.

What The Day Owes To The Night

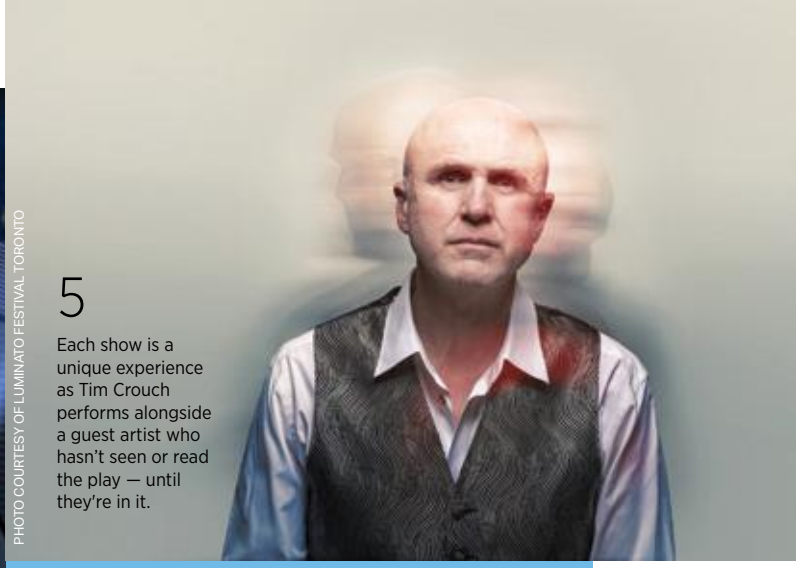


PHOTO COURTESY OF LUMINATO FESTIVAL TORONTO

5

Each show is a unique experience as Tim Crouch performs alongside a guest artist who hasn't seen or read the play — until they're in it.

AN OAK TREE, by Tim Crouch



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUMINATO FESTIVAL TORONTO

6

The 52 Live: Stories of Women Who Transformed Toronto

Hidden in archives and city streets, the untold stories of the women who shaped Toronto come to life in this powerful performance.



PHOTO BY ALAN PARKINSON

7

Luminato at Harbourfront

www.mycitylife.ca

TAFELMUSIK
THE ART OF PLAYING WITHOUT A CONDUCTOR

Immerse yourself in a world of passion & beauty for Tafelmusik's 2025/26 concerts and events

WRITTEN BY **KATE BRYNN** | INTERVIEW BY **MARC CASTALDO**

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra is redefining the orchestral experience, bringing together a unique blend of historical accuracy, artistic innovation and visceral emotion. In a recent interview Brandon Chui, a viola player and one of the artistic co-directors of the group, shared insights into what makes Tafelmusik stand out in the world of classical music. "When you come to watch Tafelmusik, you really get the sense that people are playing like they're playing the last concert of their lives," Chui says, describing the passion that defines the ensemble's performances.

Tafelmusik's concerts are marked by their intimate connection with their audience. Performances at their home venue, the Trinity St. Paul Centre in downtown Toronto, invite audiences into close proximity with the musicians, creating a powerful shared experience. As Chui puts it, "You can see up [our] nose[s]." This closeness fosters an



Canada's baroque orchestra and chamber choir, Tafelmusik, has performed in more than 350 cities in 32 countries and garnered award-winning and international acclaim

PHOTOS BY DAHLIA KATZ

emotional feedback loop between the orchestra and the audience, with each performance feeling uniquely personal.

What truly sets Tafelmusik apart, however, is their unconventional approach to conducting. Unlike most orchestras, Tafelmusik performs without a conductor, relying on the group's ability to communicate and make collective artistic decisions. "It raises your listening skills," Chui notes, highlighting how this collaboration elevates the intensity and excitement of their performances. "It's just easier if you and I talk together one-on-one," he adds, likening the experience to a conversation without a moderator, where every participant is fully engaged.

The group's resilience was also tested during the pandemic, when COVID-19 forced many arts organizations to halt performances. Tafelmusik's smaller size allowed them to adapt quickly, launching a digital series that kept them connected to their audience. "We were able to recoup in the summer and start doing recordings," Chui says. Today the digital series remains a part of Tafelmusik's ongoing outreach, showing their ability to innovate and evolve in challenging times.



Brandon Chui — Viola player and Artistic Co-director

> "THE MUSIC WE PLAY EXPLORES A DEEPER EMOTIONAL PALETTE"

For Chui, Tafelmusik's commitment to historical authenticity and musical exploration is what truly defines the group. "The music we play explores a deeper emotional palette," he explains, encouraging listeners to embrace the profound connection that Tafelmusik offers. Their concerts are more than just performances; they are journeys into the heart of music itself.

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Family-friendly resorts where style and connection meet, courtesy of Design Hotels

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**





↑ **SEASIDE FINOLHU BAA ATOLL**

An idyllic island retreat in the heart of the Maldives offering 125 private villas amid breathtaking natural beauty. Indulge in global culinary delights, from Middle Eastern and Japanese cuisine to fresh seafood and artisanal coffee. Curated by Muza Lab with architecture by Kulor Group, this sustainable paradise invites exploration through spa indulgence and land-to-sea adventures. Perfect for honeymoons, families or wellness escapes, Finolhu blends luxury and laid-back charm.



→ **THE SLATE**

A bold fusion of industrial design and tropical fantasy, The Slate is Phuket, Thailand's most imaginative family escape. Set beside Nai Yang Beach, this resort, designed by architect Bill Bensley, draws on the island's tin-mining heritage, blending raw materials, art and luxury. Families enjoy spacious suites and villas, a kids' club filled with creativity and a family pool shaded by palms. Teens can participate in Muay Thai classes or island adventures, while younger children can engage in daily activities at the Tin Box kids' club. Parents can indulge at the award-winning Coqoon Spa or savour contemporary Thai cuisine beneath the trees.



PHĀEA CRETAN MALIA

Rooted in the rhythms of Crete, Phāea Cretan Malia is a modern, village-style retreat where slow living and mindful design create a serene, family-friendly escape. Minimalist architecture, native landscaping and organic textures foster a tranquil, low-impact setting near the sea. Children enjoy eco-conscious activities like gardening and crafts while parents unwind with yoga, wine tastings or seaside relaxation. Spacious suites and open layouts offer the perfect blend of freedom, comfort and connection.

For reservations, please refer to **www.designhotels.com**

ALMYRA

Set along the seafront in Paphos, Cyprus, this resort pairs sleek Mediterranean minimalism with warm, natural luxury. Surrounded by landscaped gardens and ocean views, it offers understated elegance through clean lines, cool marble and sea-glass hues. Designed with families in mind, it features children's menus, a kids' club and interconnecting rooms. Thoughtful touches that include toddler pools and sensory play cater to kids of all ages while adults can unwind in the spa wing, infinity pool or Aeras lounge.





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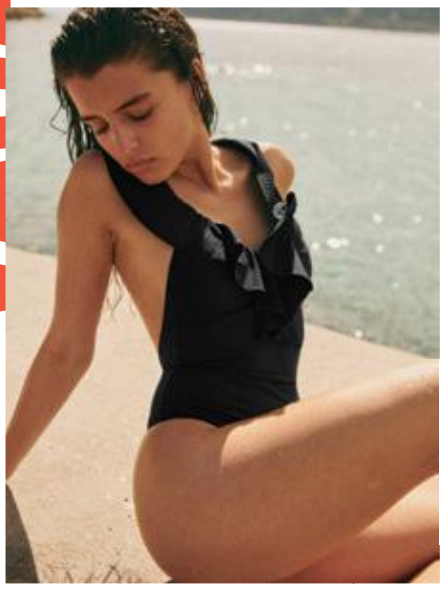
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VACATION

FASHION

Get ready for summer with Sézane's chic swimwear and accessories

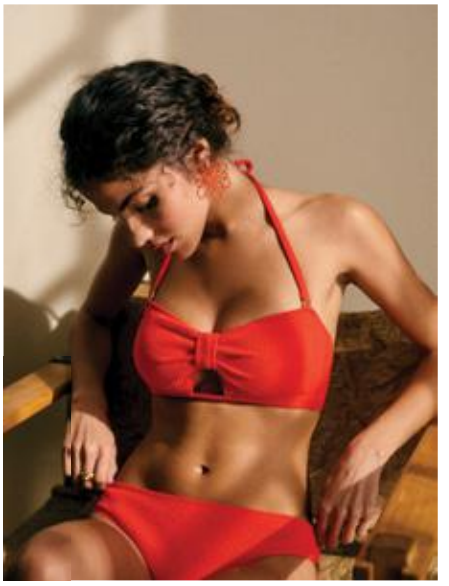
WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**



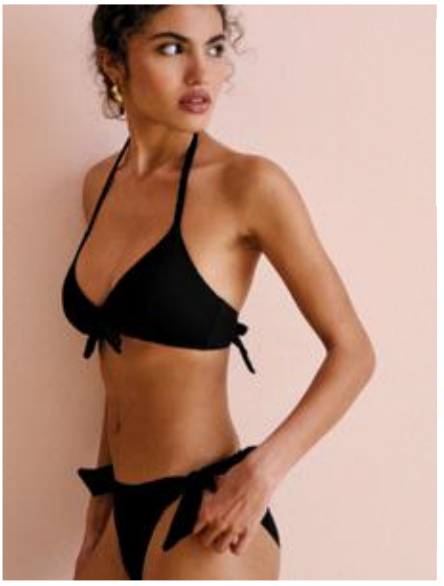
SWIMSUIT VERS LE SUD
One-piece black swimsuit with ruffled straps and a ruffled V-neckline, crafted from textured fabric and fully lined for lasting comfort and support.

JUSTINE RAFFIA MAXI BASKET BAG WITH GREEN STRIPES
Hand-woven maxi basket bag in green-striped raffia with smooth leather details and dual carry options. Handmade in Madagascar using traditional artisanal techniques.





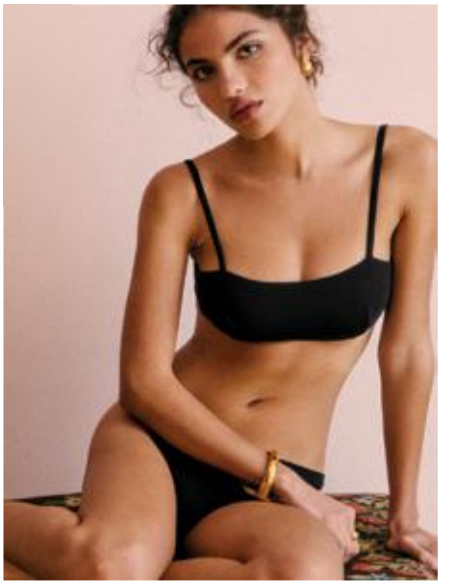
PALMA TRIANGLE
Textured jacquard bandeau bikini top in bright coral, featuring a faux front bow, removable straps, supportive under-bust band and full lining for beach-ready ease.



SUMMER SONG BIKINI TOP
Dubbed Chanson d'Été, this textured jacquard triangle bikini top in black with its front knot, back ties, removable cups and full lining is ideal for elegant summer lounging.



GEORGIA SUNGLASSES
Yellow tortoiseshell sunglasses with brown-gradient lenses, UV category 2 protection and a durable acetate frame. Includes striped case and signature gift box.



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In a rapidly evolving construction landscape where performance meets aesthetics, Trimark Windows Corporation is carving out a unique position in the luxury window and door market.

Born from a vision to close a significant gap in the premium window and door market, Trimark is redefining what it means to offer full-service building solutions. “We were already doing doors and standard windows, but we saw that there was a missing link — custom luxury windows for high-end homes,” says Trimark CEO Mauro Mattei. “That’s where the idea came about. We wanted to create something special, high-performing, European-inspired, and to offer it right here in Canada.”

This commitment to offering a one-stop solution is at the heart of Trimark’s operations. Mattei explains that customers should feel

PHOTO BY EMAD MOHAMMADI

Schedule a visit to the showroom and experience their outstanding range of products firsthand



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRIMARK WINDOWS CORP.

confident when they walk through Trimark's doors — they would know there's no need to look elsewhere. "We want our customers, our architects and developers to feel that they've arrived at the right place — where they can make decisions about their future family homes with peace of mind," he says.

Part of what makes Trimark stand out in a competitive market is its deep investment in innovation and aesthetic design. Vice President of Finance Sarah Tackaberry emphasizes that true luxury goes beyond materials — it requires vision. "Luxury has to have a high degree of design aesthetics, innovation and superior craftsmanship," she explains. "Clients want smaller frame sizes for more visual glass space, large openings and easy operation. We deliver on all those fronts." From personalized consultations to 3-D visualizations and elite installation services, Trimark delivers an end-to-end experience that feels tailored, seamless and, above all, timeless.

Energy efficiency is another pillar of Trimark's approach. According to Vice President of Operations Mark Di Poce, the company ensures each product meets or exceeds North American standards through rigorous testing and customization. "We design every window based on the unique needs of each build. All our products use high-quality, Low-E coated glass, available in both dual and triple formats," says Di Poce. This meticulous approach allows Trimark to maintain the delicate balance between form and function. "Every product is made to order. There are no standard sizes. Everything is completely custom, right down to the colour and finish."

This philosophy extends into durability and environmental adaptability. As President David DeFelice points out, the company's focus on customization helps create a solutions-based model that adapts to any client's vision. "No two clients are exactly alike. We work with homeowners, general contractors, designers and architects to create a complete-envelope solution," says DeFelice. He adds that this mindset is deeply ingrained in the company culture. "Our team is trained to treat each product as if they're manufacturing it for themselves. From the first meeting to the final installation, we ensure every detail is perfect."

With a strong foundation in local manufacturing, Trimark is expanding its reach beyond windows and doors. "Being part of a larger group of companies gives us the ability to look at the entire building envelope," DeFelice says. "We're talking about railings and various façade systems — everything made right here in Canada. It truly makes us a full-service solution."

In an era where speed, sustainability and style are at the forefront of architectural trends, Trimark Windows Corp. is proving that Canadian-made luxury is not only viable — it's leading the charge. With high-performance products, dedicated service and a visionary team, Trimark is poised to shape the future of residential and commercial spaces across the country.

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ADVERTORIAL





From fresh fruit to gourmet treats, Tiziana Cannella brings smiles to customers with her passion for thoughtful gifting at Edible Arrangements

THE SWEET SUCCESS OF EDIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Tiziana Cannella sits down with *City Life* to share her love for her clients and how they continue to inspire her after 20 years

For Tiziana Cannella, owner of the Edible Arrangements franchise, the secret to two decades of success is simple: a passionate team, a commitment to quality, and a deep connection to the customers they serve.

As she approaches her 20th anniversary in January 2026, Cannella reflects on the evolution of her business from its early days crafting fruit arrangements to becoming a premium gifting destination. "We started with all fruit baskets, and they've evolved into this whole experience," she says. Today, offerings include everything from cookies and cheesecakes to flowers, candles and, most recently, made-in-Canada lemon bars — part of a broader push by the company's innovation team to source more Canadian products.

What sets Cannella's store apart is the strength and passion of her team. Many of her staff have been with her for over 15 years — some since the beginning. "Everything about my growth, my reputation — it's not just about me," she says. "It's a team package we've created here."

That dedication has earned the franchise an extremely high satisfaction rating through head-office client surveys.

It's a testament to the care that goes into each order, from the moment it's placed to the final delivery. Cannella adds, "No matter how big or small, every order is important to us."

In recent years, Edible Arrangements has embraced a refreshed marketing strategy, led by a newly assembled team focused on staying ahead of consumer trends. With a rebranding effort underway, the company is working to modernize its image while maintaining its core values. Cannella's location has welcomed this shift, offering an expanded product line that caters to diverse tastes and occasions, reinforcing its role as a go-to destination for thoughtful, memorable and high-quality gifts.

Beyond numbers and expansion, Cannella is moved by the emotional stories shared by customers. One client called to say the Edible Arrangements basket stood out among a sea of anniversary flowers, because her family gathered around to enjoy it together. Another found comfort in the thoughtful deliveries during a time of mourning. "Knowing we touched someone's life, even for a moment — that's what keeps us going," says Cannella.

As Edible Arrangements continues to innovate and grow, Cannella remains grounded in her mission: to deliver not just gifts, but memorable experiences. "We may not always hear the stories in the end, but that's our goal — to create moments that matter."

edible

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PHOTOS BY LISMERY LOYOLA



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALFA ROMEO

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SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND TEST DRIVE WITH ANTHONY CHIARAVALLOTI

AUTO REVIEW: ALFA ROMEO'S 2025 TONALE

Maranello Alfa Romeo invites *City Life* to an immersive driving experience to feel the comfort, finesse, and precision of the Tonale

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**

In my early years, shopping for my first car, I did countless nervous test drives of different vehicles. Yes, I was pickier, but even worse, I knew less about cars than I do today. So, when I was recently invited for an immersive test drive with Alfa Romeo's 2025 Tonale Intensa, naturally, I was hooked from the beginning.

As I arrived, excited and with high expectations at the Maranello Alfa Romeo dealership in Vaughan, Ontario, I quickly learned that its reputation for being one of the most reputable dealerships in its industry still holds strong. To put it simply, there are numerous reasons why drivers choose to spend their hard-earned money at Maranello Alfa Romeo. Among them is general manager Anthony Chiaravalloti, who not only delivers the highest level of customer service, but is also honoured and takes the greatest pleasure in his knowledge of the brand, what it stands for historically, and has a passion for putting you behind the wheel of an Alfa Romeo that suits your lifestyle and needs.

Chiaravalloti stood prominently beside a series of Alfa Romeos as I entered the dealership. But the Alfa Black 2025 Tonale Intensa was the showstopper. The 2025 Alfa Romeo Tonale exudes Italian sophistication with its bold 20-inch black wheels, which feature a gold diamond-cut finish and matching black calipers adorned with a light gold Alfa Romeo signature. A gloss-black body kit and sleek black mirror caps, complete with an Italian flag accent, enhance its sporty appeal. LED headlamps and daytime running lights ensure visibility and style, while a sunroof and adaptive suspension deliver a refined, performance-focused driving experience.

I finally sat behind the wheel with Chiaravalloti as my companion, who explained to me that the level of consideration that went into designing the interior, from the aesthetic to the user-friendliness of the display interface, is unmatched because of its subtlety and simplicity. Blending luxury with innovation, the Black Alcantara seats and dashboard with tan stitching create a refined atmosphere, while heated front seats and embroidered headrests add comfort and style. A two-tone leather-wrapped steering wheel with aluminum paddle shifters enhances driver control. The



PHOTO BY LISMERY LOYOLA

GM Anthony Chiaravalloti stands with and behind the excellence of Alfa Romeo's 2025 Tonale Intensa

Intensa logo accents the front center armrest, complemented by multicoloured ambient lighting. Advanced tech includes a 10.25" Uconnect touchscreen, 12.3" cluster, Harman Kardon audio, and Level 2 autonomy with Traffic Jam Assist.

How was the driving experience? In one word, exceptional. Smooth and powerful, both balanced with precision handling. Simply a no-nonsense car that has no unnecessary features. With the Alfa Romeo's 2025 Tonale Intensa starting at MSRP $57,190, you get your distinctive offering of Italian design and passion at a great value.

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Designed for everyday life and easy entertaining, the couple's multifunctional "hybrid room" blends cozy minimalism and clever, hotel-inspired design

THE THOUGHTFUL ABODE OF ALAIN DESGAGNÉ AND CAROLINE SIDAROS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CENTURA MONTRÉAL

In the quiet Quebec village of Frelighsburg, designers Caroline Sidaros and Alain Desgagné have created a home that does more than sit within its landscape – it listens to it

WRITTEN BY **BONNIE POP**





In their Frelighsburg home, Alain Desgagné and Caroline Sidaros created a peaceful sanctuary where GLOCAL ceramic tiles by Centura unify interior and exterior spaces with elegance and practicality

The home's clean lines and simple shapes ensure its presence is at once striking against the backdrop of lush greenery and in harmony with it.

Both Caroline and Alain work in design, but this project — shaping their own home — was deeply personal. The goal was not to build a showpiece, but to design a place in which each space is pleasant to live in and easy to maintain. That mindset guided every decision, from spatial planning to material choices. What emerged is a house that doesn't try too hard — a house that feels warm, intentional and lived-in from day one.

Inside, the home flows in a way that mirrors how the couple moves through their day. Rooms aren't sealed off but connected, offering flexibility without sacrificing intimacy. A central hybrid space serves as both a lounge and an occasional guest room, using a minimalist curtain system instead of walls. In the kitchen, a lack of upper cabinets ensures the space opens up seamlessly into the rest of the house.

The outdoor terrace connects from the kitchen, with a generous dining table and relaxed lounge area — perfect for sharing meals with friends or quieter moments soaking in the forested landscape. In summer, the pool area becomes the family's go-to retreat, its surface framed by slip-resistant tiling from Centura. For Caroline and Alain, their choice of easy-to-maintain tiles was practical as much as aesthetic. "The tiles remain comfortable to the touch even in full sunlight, and require minimal maintenance. This was essential for us, as we want to enjoy our time here rather than worry about upkeep," says Alain.

As with many gracefully understated homes, materiality plays a quiet but crucial role. For the interior, the couple chose porcelain tiles from Centura's GLOCAL collection, offering visual



Extending naturally from the kitchen, the tiled terrace's thoughtfully chosen materials meet the calm of Frelighsburg's landscape, creating a sunlit space for dining and relaxation

continuity and grounding the spaces with soft, natural tones. Their matte finish and subtle texture keep the mood understated, while the practicality of the material supports the couple's everyday needs — whether it's guests coming in from the pool with wet feet or muddy boots from a forest walk.

There's no single "statement piece" in this home. Rather, the statement is in its restraint. In how each element supports the couple's rhythm. In how the house respects the natural beauty of its surroundings. In how each choice reflects the couple's shared values: warmth, simplicity, and an appreciation for design that serves real life.

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EDITOR'S PICKS

Own your style and confidence with these curated picks made just for you!

PRODUCED BY **MICHELLE ZERILLO-SOSA** | WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**













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BREAKING & ENTERING



PHOTO BY BRIAN A JACKSON

Crash. Bash. Kick. Assault.

Their actions are so brazen that you feel compelled to watch the videos over and over again to confirm that what you are seeing is really happening in your neighbourhood.

For or a certain segment of the criminal population, it seems that home invasions have become the modus operandi for procuring the luxury items that their victims have worked so hard for. Indeed, in a spate of recent home invasions in Vaughan the homeowners' security cameras bore witness to the bold-faced and cavalier way in which



With the recent onslaught of home invasions, the safety and sanctity of our homes are being violated

WRITTEN BY **CECE M. SCOTT**

SAFE HAVEN NO MORE: THE REALITY OF HOME INVASIONS!

groups of four or five men approach a house. Camouflaged head to toe in dark pants, oversized hoodies and white gloves, the culprits sauntered up the wide brick driveways like they were coming for a friendly late-night visit.

But imagine that it is you and your partner inside that house, jolted awake by the sound of your front door being booted and hammer-splintered apart so that someone can break in. The ferocity is so incomprehensible and the thunderous pounding of your heart so violent that it makes you wonder if you are having a heart attack. You grab your partner's hand as you reach for the night light, then stop yourself a nanosecond before you do, instinctively realizing that if the intruders see it, they will know you are awake — and then what?

The phone! *Where is your phone?* Quietly, ever so softly, you place your feet on the carpet and tiptoe over to the desk where your cell phone is charging, thanking both God and the Universe that 911 is an easy number to remember.

Trembling, you punch in the three numbers that you hope will save you before this nightmare escalates. Who knows what these intruders want and how far they will go to get it?

Glass breaks and you hear things crashing. Each second feels like your last as you wait … wait … wait for the police to show up.

It is a horrific situation that none of us should ever have to worry about.

And while no one was hurt in one recent Vaughan home invasion, the suspects did escape with the family's Range Rover, bashing through the garage door and then crashing through the front gate as they made their chaotic getaway.

Others have not been so lucky. In another recent home invasion in Vaughan an occupant was attacked with a hammer, and in a Toronto home invasion a few months ago, the male homeowner's arm and hands were sliced so savagely that he will require tendon surgery.

When we the public see these attacks on social media we are alarmed,

shocked and outraged. Yes we know they happen in other countries, but here in Canada? In our own communities and our own neighbourhoods? But it is no longer a "they" problem, it is an "us" problem, and people are demanding change, as evidenced by the thousands of views on YouTube of the Vaughan home invasions and the hundreds of scathing, blunt and pragmatic comments posted to them.



Kevin Nebrija
Media Relations Officer with York Regional Police (YRP)

Emotions are running high and it is not uncommon for people to feel that criminals have all the rights — if there is a national freeze in Canada on the sale or purchase of handguns, and newly acquired handguns cannot be brought into this country, why is it that criminals seem to have unfettered access to them?

People are appalled and terrified for their safety, to the point that many share the belief that we as homeowners need to fight back, that the tenet that "Our home is our castle" is a basic societal right — one that is not only being infringed but being violently torn apart by these gangs of perpetrators that attack in the dead of night. If someone breaks into our house and violates all we hold sacred, their intention is plainly to do harm. Some are suggesting that we arm ourselves as a means of protecting ourselves and our families — and that to do so is also a basic human right.

Others call for a change in government and an aggressive and drastic shift in attitude about how we treat convicted criminals. Their message is loud and clear — jail, not bail for repeat offenders — and that changes must be effected now.

The 1990 movie *Home Alone* featuring then-child star Macaulay Culkin had him protecting his home from two inept burglars after he'd been inadvertently left behind by his parents who'd gone away on Christmas vacation, and was sprinkled with whimsically humorous situations in which he created a series of ingenious booby traps to foil the bungling Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern characters. These memorably included a paint can falling on the burglars' heads, a fire hose that sprayed them and other assorted at-the-ready household items that served as weapons to defy the intrusive burglars.

While the storylines of this movie and its many sequels were boisterously funny and charming, the reality of a home invasion is anything but. Certainly, one should not take the resolution of any such incident into one's own hands — especially given the danger, volatility and unpredictability that is at play.

"If any incident occurs at your house, call 911 right away," says Kevin Nebrija, Media Relations Officer with York Regional Police (YRP). "Be the best witness you can be. I know it is a dynamic situation, but try to remember as much information, as many identifying factors as possible — what the perpetrators are wearing, if they have accents or use particular phrases, or if they use names with each other — no matter how big or small, these kinds of details help investigators."

> "WHATEVER IT MIGHT BE, OBTAINING WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR IS REALLY ALL THEY WANT"
>
> — Kevin Nebrija



Gillian Freeman
Executive Director of Victim Services of York Region

If the intruders have already entered the house and you are unable to call 911, Nebrija advises the following: "Co-operate with the intruders; it is difficult to know what a suspect will do to escalate the level of physical force to accomplish what they intend to do. In most cases, the suspects are committing the home invasion because they are looking for something specific, whether it is currency or jewelry. Whatever it might be, obtaining what they are looking for is really all they want."

It is not hard to imagine how highly stressful being the target of a home invasion is. It's an event that produces extraordinary levels of fear, anxiety, shock, and numbness, along with other after-the-fact psychological impacts, reactions that Nebrija himself has witnessed.

"When I was a patrol officer, I attended at a number of home invasions, but one in particular stands out for me. In 2017, at about 2 a.m., a call came in that a child was on the phone stating that someone was in their house. As another officer and I were on our way to the house we were getting updates from 911 call-takers, who were relaying the information to dispatchers that the caller was saying he heard footsteps coming up the stairs. At that point it hit me that the situation was moving quickly. As the officers and I got out of the car we heard people running through the backyard, with another officer in pursuit. The suspects jumped over an eight-foot fence with another officer and me in pursuit. Because they had a head start, they got away but were apprehended shortly thereafter by nearby officers. My partner and I went back into the house to speak with the victims — some were children — and I remember seeing the fear on their faces. No assault had occurred, but you can imagine that if several people break into your home at 2 a.m. it is going to be terrorizing. Just seeing the look on the victims' faces, seeing what they had gone through, sticks out in my mind."

Gillian Freeman, Executive Director of Victim Services of York Region, says that during home invasions victims experience "fight," "flight," "freeze" and "fawn" — the last of which

Photo of Kevin Nebrija courtesy of Instagram @officialyrp

happens when the person is negotiating during the situation.

"The cognitive impacts of a home invasion are significant," Freeman says. "It wavers people's beliefs and the way they think about people and the world overall; victims tend to look at people differently in every way. Often when victims think of the crime, they struggle with thoughts of wishing they could have done more or done less. And in a crisis, the cognitive parts of our brains are not operating — we go into survival mode and instinct, based on the information people can compute at that time."



Steven Del Duca
Mayor of Vaughan

Along with these changes in thinking, Freeman says that major changes in behaviour also occur. "There is a new fear that sets in for victims of home invasions. People go to extremes: parents might not send their children to school or they may not go to work as they are afraid they may not be able to protect their family if they are separated. Suddenly, people realize they are vulnerable in everything they do. The flipside of this behaviour is some victims of home invasions adopt the opposite behaviour — they distance themselves from others so that they don't feel that same emotional instability and worry."

And when a child is involved, the impact of a home invasion can be even more devastating. "The child might assume a different view of the world than any other child," Freeman says. "Their autonomic nervous systems can become activated like those of adults, based on what has 'fired and wired,' together during the incident, which could in turn cause behavioural responses. At Victim Services, we try to unpack situations where smells, sights, words, phrases, and different memories get fired and wired together so that a person can be aware of them," can minimize those things and eventually rewire the associative process.

In her 23 years with Victim Services, Freeman states that there has been more than one home invasion where a homicide was committed with children present.

It is a violation of everything that we as human beings hold sacred — the sanctity and safety of our homes, our children, and ourselves.

Steven Del Duca, Mayor of Vaughan, declares that his first job as mayor is to make the right investments to keep citizens safe. Indeed, he has a mandate to provide a stronger police presence in Vaughan neighbourhoods, and to advocate for significant bail reforms at both the provincial and federal levels.

"Along with my colleagues on York Region Council, we approved, as part of this year's York Region budget, a substantial increase in the YRP budget," Del Duca says. "The percentage increase for 2025 is 7.7 per cent over and above the YRP 2024 budget, which has been directly allocated to the hiring of 154 YRP staff in 2025. The projection is to hire another 150 YRP staff in 2026, for a total of 304 staff over two years, with the lion's share dedicated to the hiring of mostly frontline police officers."

In tandem with this heightened police presence, another recent initiative has been a one-of-a-kind partnership between the City of Vaughan and the York Regional Police to curtail criminal activity, which has led to the opening a new YRP substation, on Islington Ave. in Kleinburg.

"There has been a real concern relating to home invasions, commercial break-ins and auto thefts in the west end of Woodbridge and Kleinburg, and with this new substation there is a physical police presence right in the heart of the city, which in turn gives residents additional peace of mind while allowing officers to attend to calls in a more efficient manner."



Robert Rotenberg
Toronto criminal lawyer

Bail reform is also high on the list for Del Duca, who strongly believes that criminal behaviour must lead to real consequences. "We need to have properly funded courts and properly funded jails. This means that when police arrest individuals who are perpetrating home invasions, they stay behind bars and are not back out on the streets the same afternoon, or the next day, or the next week," Del Duca says. "When I hear the heartbreaking stories from residents who have gone through a home invasion, it makes me that much more determined to protect them. Every one of us has the right to feel safe in our own homes."

Illustrating just this point, police say that four of the seven alleged perpetrators of a November 2024 armed home invasion in Vaughan were teenagers out on release orders, including a 13-year-old boy who was out on two release orders and a 17-year-old who was in contravention of his *Youth Criminal Justice Act* sentence.

Understandably, York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween has questions about the bail system, and while Toronto criminal lawyer Robert Rotenberg acknowledges his frustration, he states that we must know the facts and the underpinnings of the justice system.

"What the public doesn't realize is that the bail system almost always works, and so does the parole system," Rotenberg says. "But what we hear about are all the times that it doesn't function properly. We have to be careful not to swing the pendulum too far, which is what happened in the United States when they came up with the 'Three Strikes, You're Out' system, whereby 30-year-old shoplifters are put in jail for life. I am not saying that it is acceptable in any way for people who are released from jail to continue to commit crimes. But part of the overall problem is the lack of resources in the justice system, which to me represents the biggest gap — the lack of follow-up and enforcement of the conditions of bail. When people are released on serious charges on very strict bail conditions, we need to know what is being done to ensure that the defendant complies with those conditions. When I have a client who is on bail and on curfew in a small town, they can expect police showing up at their front door without notice to ensure they are honouring their curfew. There is nothing wrong with that. This is exactly how it should be. But in big metropolitan areas when people are out on bail with a curfew or other restrictions, there is almost no follow-up. And that is because we don't invest in the resources we need to do so. I am not

Photo of Steven Del Duca courtesy of X (formerly Twitter) @StevenDelDuca

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James Wilson Morrice (Canadian 1865–1924), *Corner of the Doge's Palace, Venice* (detail), c.1901, oil on board, Bequest of Miss Margaret Rousseaux, 1958, photo: Mike Lalich, 2023, Art Gallery of Hamilton

> **"WE CANNOT LOSE THE PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM"**
>
> — Robert Rotenberg

saying that the courts should let people out on bail who are serious offenders; that benefits no one."

The heightened focus and measures that have been implemented in York Region to prevent home invasions are showing that the efforts are paying off — although the occurrence of even one home invasion is one too many. Statistics obtained by YRP's Strategic Services Bureau indicate that in the three-month period from January to March 2024 there were fifteen home invasions; for the same period in 2025 there were eleven home invasions. Encouragingly, motor vehicle thefts trended down by 39 per cent. From the beginning of January to the end of March of 2024, there were 953 motor vehicle thefts; from January to March of 2025, there were 583.

Nebrija encourages residents to implement security measures to help ensure their homes are as safe as possible from home intruders. Simple and easy-to-implement solutions (listed on the YRP website: www.yrp.ca/en/crime-prevention/Home-Security-and-Prevention.asp) include installing doors with strong deadbolt locks, wide-angle peepholes, and hinges that are only accessible from the inside of the home. YRP recommends trimming bushes and hedges so perpetrators cannot hide behind them, as well as installing floodlights, security cameras and timers for the residence's interior lights so that it always appears that someone is home.

Ensuring the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of our families is undoubtedly one of our own most important responsibilities.

Unfortunately, those who have been victims of a home invasion are on a "lifelong journey of healing," Freeman says, "one that takes a village to provide support for these victims."

Nevertheless, it is important that we as a society adhere to the human-rights principles we have in place. "We cannot lose the presumption of innocence throughout the system," says Rotenberg. "As a society we have a right and an obligation to enforce not only the law, but the conditions of bail."

1-800-222-TIPS or online at www.1800222tips.com
Victim Services of York Region can be reached at 905-953-5363.
All services offered are confidential and free.


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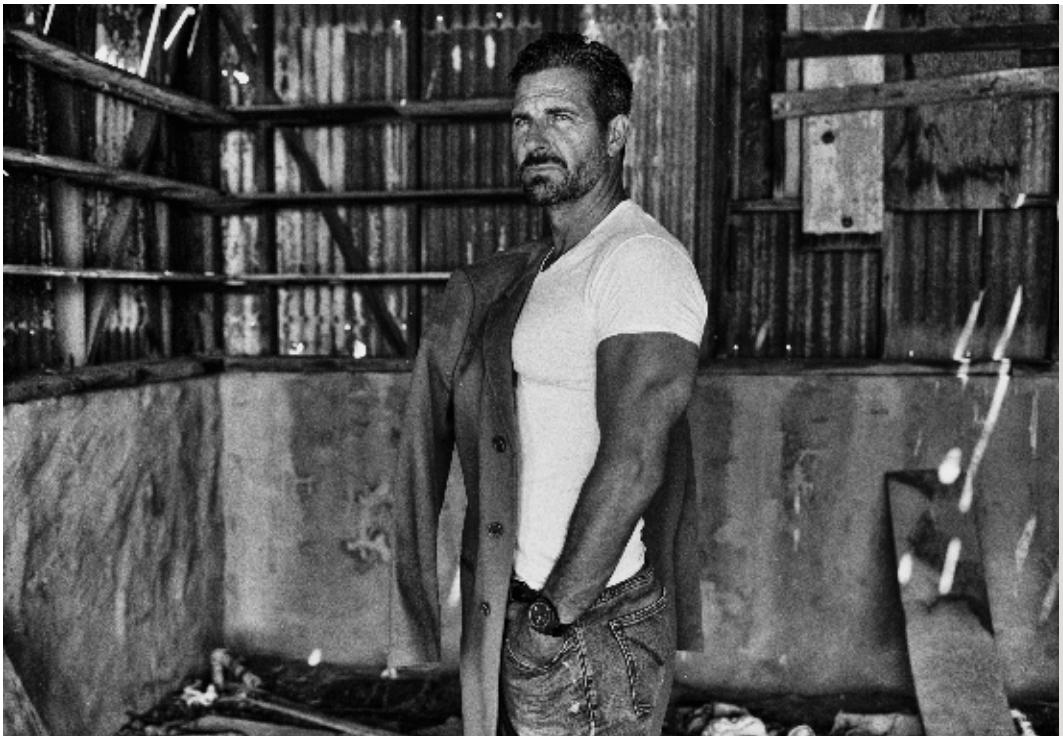
Ed Quinn pursued a path in music before considering a career in acting

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANDERSON GROUP PU[illegible]ELATIONS

GETTING REAL WITH ED QUINN

A conversation with the American actor, model and musician Arthur Edward 'Ed' Quinn about his roots and the standout moments in his life

INTERVIEW BY **MARC CASTALDO**



Quinn lettered in rugby and graduated in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts in history before beginning modelling throughout Europe, including in Paris, Milan and Barcelona

Q: How would you describe your childhood?
A: Idyllic. I grew up in the Berkeley Hills above Tilden Park. It is so beautiful and peaceful. But when you drive down the hill, you enter the wild wonderful world of "Berserkeley." I really miss it.

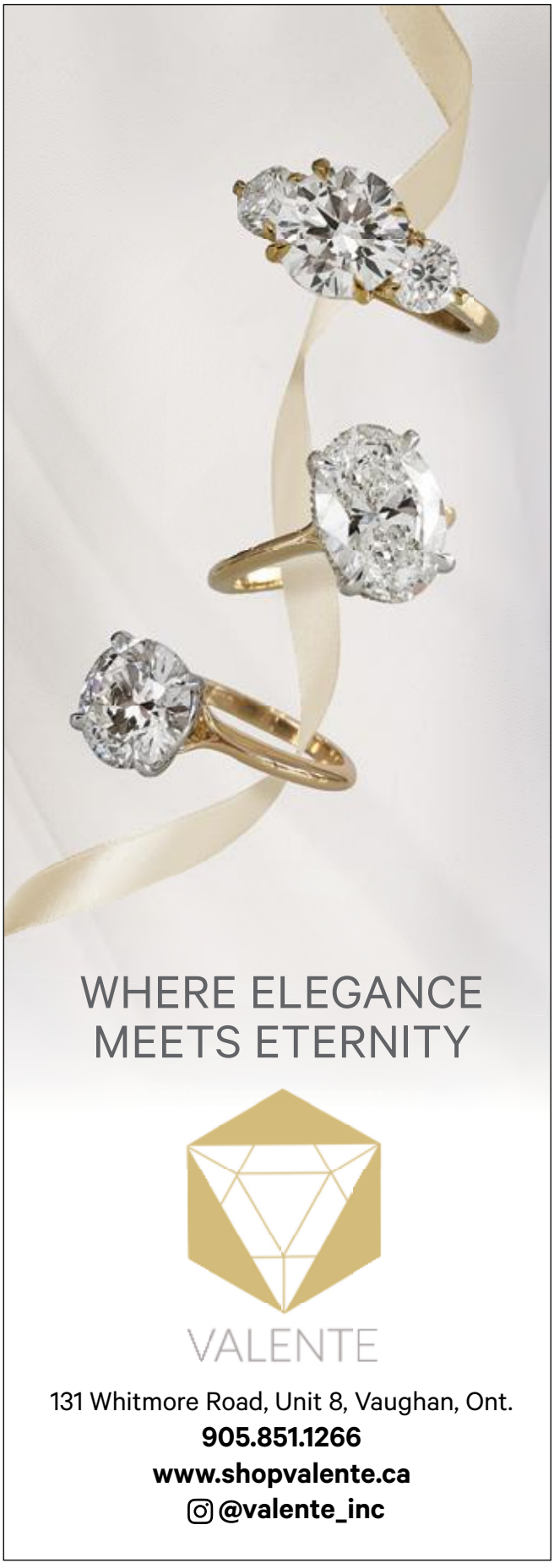
Q: Tell us the moment you knew you were bitten by the acting bug.
A: When Gianni Versace told me after a show in Milan I wasn't pretty enough to be a model. "You are handsome. And smart. You're an actor."

Q: In *Shadow Force*, you star alongside Kerry Washington and Omar Sy. What was it like working with them, and how did their performances influence your portrayal of Parker?
A: It's always a dream to work with people at the top of their game. Omar is this giant international star, and Kerry is an award-winning icon. The best part is they are both the nicest people in the world, and very invested in the success of the film. My character has a nice little important storyline, so they were very supportive and I just made sure to do the best job I could.

Q: Your role as Parker is described as one of your most high-impact roles yet. What aspects of this character challenged you the most, and how did you prepare for this role?
A: I love roles where my character has a secret. I tried to layer that in as much as possible.

Q: You're simultaneously starring in a major film and a television series. How do you navigate the differences in acting for film versus television?
A: It's actually such a gift. I love doing different genres. It keeps things fresh and keeps you sharp. I'll sometimes audition for roles I have no business auditioning for (and will never get) just to put in that work.

Q: Before acting, you were deeply involved in music, even studying with Joe Satriani. How has your musical background influenced your acting career?



A: Hard to say, really. Both businesses are virtually impossible, so I guess it taught me perseverance. I really love doing both, so practicing is a joy. And performing is all about clearing your mind and being in the moment, so that applies to both.

Q: You played in L.A.-based bands like Mad Theory and Scattergood. Can you share a memorable experience from your time with these bands?
A: As much fun as our Hollywood shows were, heading places like The Whisky and The Roxy and Luna Park, Dragonfly, Troubadour, the shows down in the South Bay were the best. Just loud, messy beach-rock shows. Those are the days I miss the most — getting wild with all your friends.

Q: Do you find that your musical endeavours complement your acting, or do they fulfil different creative needs?
A: Much different. Acting, I'm collaborating with lots of people to bring a story to life. Music, it's just me telling stories. But they do complement each other nicely.

Q: With a B.A. in history from UC Berkeley, do you find that your academic background informs your approach to acting or understanding characters?
A: I'd like to think it does. I always look at scripts from 10,000 feet, like a historian. I look at the arcs, the through lines, the relationships, and then focus on how my character fits in.

Q: Looking back at some of your early work, like Nathan Stark in *Eureka*, how do you feel that role impacted your career trajectory?
A: That role was huge for me, and a massive learning experience. The formerly named SciFi Network was at its peak. *Battlestar Galactica* was a critical darling, and then *Eureka* came along and became the highest-rated show in the history of the network. (Record still stands, by a mile.) I loved my role, I loved the show, I loved Vancouver — it was a dream. And I was possibly going to spin off into my own show (which was very common), and then going into Season 2 everything changed. Hollywood is a cruel mistress. That show was definitely the end of innocence for me. But I credit my longevity in this business to my ability to move on and embrace the next adventure.

Q: Having transitioned from music to modelling to acting, what advice would you give to aspiring artists looking to navigate multiple facets of the entertainment industry?
A: Be aware of the *change* that is inevitable. I've had a very unique experience with all of those industries. I was modelling in Europe right before the Internet and the digital photo changed everything, wiping out most catalogues and magazines. I was in the music business right as Napster and digital streaming came along and devastated the record industry. And now, after getting to take part in "Peak TV" and fondly remembering pilot seasons, DVDs and MOWs (RIP), I am watching this industry I love grapple with massive changes as well. You have to always remember you may be an artist, but this is a business. It is art meeting commerce — you must always be aware of that and how you can contribute.
@edwardquinn

SPRING FORWARD, SKIN FIRST

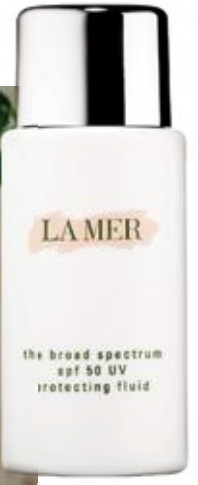
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WRITTEN BY **MASSIMO SOSA**





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Executive Director Danielle Dang and her staff are dedicated to lifelong learning and leading Creating Alternatives to a bright and impactful future

WITH DIGNITY AND INCLUSION, CREATING ALTERNATIVES IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DANIELLE DANG

PHOTOS BY EMAD MOHAMMADI

Through personalized programming, adults with diverse abilities are given the chance to live full, meaningful lives

WRITTEN BY **RICK MULLER** | INTERVIEW BY **MARC CASTALDO**

One of the many advantages of living in York Region and within the entire GTA is the vast array of social support services and organizations, including Creating Alternatives, in Vaughan. This family-centric community support organization is a little-known gem that has been serving families in the GTA for 25 years. It was founded by its board president, Phyllis Santone, who was looking for opportunities for her daughter Rita but found few suitable options for her or other young people with developmental disabilities after high school. She envisioned a place where they could gain work skills, build relationships, and be recognized as valued community members.



All participants have an opportunity to enjoy a variety of in-house and community-based activities that focus on education, socialization and recreation

Creating Alternatives is a day program in Woodbridge for adults over the age of 18 with diverse abilities. It is a safe and supportive environment where participants benefit from social, recreational and educational opportunities. It stemmed from a grass-roots, parent-driven initiative that addressed a longtime need for support and programming for individuals with varied capabilities.

"Creating Alternatives is deeply rooted in dignity, inclusion and community and, for me, I believe that every person deserves to live a full life with meaning, regardless of their ability," says executive director Danielle Dang in a recent interview with *City Life*. "With that belief, I am able to merge that with my professional drive, looking at leading, innovative, compassionate programs that respond to the needs and gaps in the community while providing solutions. We try to do our part, no matter how small."

The organization plays a huge role in teaching life skills to its participants. Each support plan is created with the participant, their family and the staff. They probe interests, goals and challenges to develop a personalized road map that guides their program curriculum and growth, and this collaborative process ensures participants feel ownership over their journey and are empowered to take the lead in their own development. The result is an inclusive family feeling that helps to support their personal growth. When Dang walks the halls every day, she knows the names and individual stories of every participant.

"Last year, we celebrated our 25th anniversary, and, for the first time in the history of our organization, we were accredited," says Dang. "So it speaks to the quality of the services we provide, and through it all we try not to lose that family feel. We are a person-centred service provider."

More than just a traditional day program, Dang says, Creating Alternatives is a movement grounded in choice, dignity and authentic community inclusion that builds relationships, creates opportunities and challenges the status quo for people with diverse abilities, empowering them to achieve their full potential. The organization does this with diversity, equity and inclusion embedded in hiring practices and staff training, using inclusive language and celebrating cultural diversity. Creating Alternatives is a reflection of its surroundings and is diligent in developing local partnerships.

"We believe in the power of partnerships to drive change," says Dang. "We actively collaborate with local businesses, service clubs, educators and health professionals to broaden access. Our goal is not just inclusion, but meaningful engagement."

Among those partnerships is an annual relationship with the CNE, allowing their participants to decorate a sculpture and display it during The Ex. During the recent World Down Syndrome Day, a participant DJed with the Raptors DJ during a game, and, in a partnership with the Hart Centre in Kingston, Creating Alternative participants displayed their artwork at the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes.

Vaughan can be proud of Creating Alternatives, a community resource that advocates for people with diverse abilities, guided by the simple belief that everyone deserves a chance. "Whether it's supporting participants in employment, encouraging leadership roles or facilitating inclusive community outings, we're proving every day that full inclusion is not only possible but also necessary," says Dang. "But our truest measure of success lies in the smiles, the milestones and the meaningful progress we witness in each individual's journey."

creatingalternatives.ca

@alternatives_

KUSAMA'S INFINITY ROOM RETURNS

Yayoi Kusama's iconic INFINITY MIRRORED ROOM — LET'S SURVIVE FOREVER returns to Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) on April 5, 2025, after captivating audiences worldwide. This immersive installation invites visitors to step into an infinitely reflective universe, where light, mirrors, and space blend in a mesmerizing optical experience. Following a successful American tour, this masterpiece is back home, forever part of the AGO's permanent collection.



Yayoi Kusama's *INFINITY MIRRORED ROOM* returns to the AGO, offering a unique, immersive art experience

PHOTO COURTESY OF AGO

Kusama, a pioneering figure in pop art and minimalism, first explored the concept of infinity through mirrors and lights in the 1960s. Her art defies the boundaries of traditional space, offering an interactive experience that engages all the senses. Known for her signature polka dots and radical anti-war performances, Kusama has influenced generations of artists and continues to inspire with her visionary work.

This installation is free for Ontarians under 25, Indigenous people AGO members and annual passholders. It will be on view in the Sam & Ayala Zacks Pavilion on Level 2. Don't miss the chance to experience Kusama's universe in person and be immersed in a world of endless possibilities.

ago.ca

@agotoronto

Chantelle combines timeless plank design with modern fibreglass durability for stunning first impressions



PHOTO COURTESY OF MASTER GRAIN

CHANTELLE FIR **ENTRY DOOR**

The Chantelle by MASTERGRAIN YourStyle reimagines the classic plank door with refined elegance. Crafted in fir-textured fibreglass, it blends timeless character with modern sophistication — perfect for traditional or contemporary homes. Durable, stylish, and low-maintenance, Chantelle adds lasting curb appeal while reflecting your unique taste. Make a confident first impression with this beautifully designed entryway centrepiece.

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TEAM REVOLUTION CYCLING COMMUNITY



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TEAM REVOLUTION

Robert Colelli, Steve Gobbatto and all the riders of Team Revolution passionately support Humber River Hospital by promoting health, community impact, and lighting new ways in healthcare

Team Revolution unites over 165 passionate cyclists riding for health, purpose and community impact. Affiliated with Humber River Hospital, the team has raised over $5 million for vital causes and events like Villa Charities Giro and Project Saving Legs. In 2025, the focus shifts to GTA rides, supporting initiatives like World Bicycle Relief — pedalling together to light new ways in health care and beyond.

www.theteamrevolution.ca

@theteamrevolution





NEWSWORTHY



Gaspard Premier's new releases bring the essence of wilderness, love, and sensory indulgence to life

PHOTO COURTESY OF GASPARD PREMIER

GASPARD PREMIER **NEW RELEASES**

Gaspard Premier unveils a fresh batch of its beloved Chalet perfume, inspired by wilderness and love stories. The new collection also features botanical bath therapy and an artist-designed car fragrance, ideal for Father's Day.

www.gaspardpremier.com

@gaspardpremier.wildperfumes

ELEGANT GREEN **TREES TABLECLOTH**



Natural washed linen brings rustic elegance and a soft, airy feel to your dining space

PHOTO COURTESY OF LINO ROOM

Bring nature indoors with the Green Trees 100% Linen Tablecloth in Natural. Its soft drape, delicate texture, and effortless charm add rustic elegance to any dining setting. Designed to suit both modern and country-inspired interiors, this linen piece is machine-washable for easy care. Choose from two sizes to elevate everyday meals or special gatherings with organic beauty.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CURÙ SKIN

SUSTAINABLE SKINCARE **INNOVATION JOURNEY**

Founder Melodie Padula champions Italian-Canadian collaboration through Curù Skin's sustainable skincare innovations

Curù Skin, founded by Melodie Padula, introduced three early-stage skincare prototypes in 2023 using upcycled byproducts from the winemaking industry. The brand was recognized at the BESTMEDGRAPE conference in Rome for its commitment to sustainable cosmetics and cross-border collaboration. Today, Curù Skin continues to advance ingredient innovation in Italy and Canada, recently participating in the Invest in Italy event to foster partnerships in natural skincare, biotechnology, and sustainability.

curuskin.com

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Beachfront living, championship golf, and luxury amenities define life at Vale do Lobo Resort

VALE DO **LOBO RESORT**

Discover the Algarve's original lifestyle destination at Vale do Lobo. Since 1962, this 450-hectare beachfront resort has offered a vibrant community, world-class golf, tennis, wellness and fine dining. With over 1,500 properties, it's a haven for homeowners and holidaymakers alike. Choose from luxury villas, apartments or land plots to rent or own in Portugal's premier coastal retreat.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF VALE DO LOBO

LUXURY HAND **CARE DUO**



A luxurious, sustainable hand care duo designed to cleanse, nourish, and beautifully elevate your space

PHOTO COURTESY OF MY PAUME

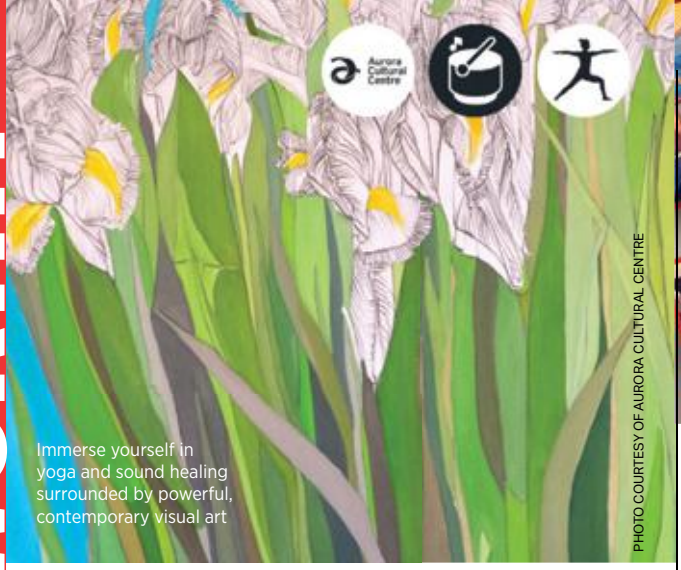
Elevate your daily ritual with the Bathroom Duo by PAUME — a refined pairing designed to care for your hands with intention and elegance. This stylish set includes a 300ml Exfoliating Hand Cleanser and a 300ml Probiotic Hand Balm, delivering a complete cleanse-and-hydrate experience for you and your guests.

Crafted with clean, high-performance ingredients and PAUME's signature scent, each formula nourishes and protects your skin while complementing your bathroom décor. Rooted in founder Amy Welsman's journey into parenthood, PAUME was born from a desire to create hand care that's effective, luxurious, and sustainable.

As award-winning leaders in hand care innovation, PAUME products are loved by parents, wellness enthusiasts and even celebrity nail artists. With elegant packaging and a commitment to sustainability, this duo doesn't just clean and hydrate — it tells a story of care, connection, and conscious beauty.

mypaume.ca
@mypaume





Immerse yourself in yoga and sound healing surrounded by powerful, contemporary visual art

PHOTO COURTESY OF AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE

GALLERY YOGA **SOUND EXPERIENCE**

Join Meghan and Dana on June 2, 2025, at Homeroom Gallery 2 for yoga, meditation, and sound healing among Laurence Vallieres' art. This $18 evening blends hatha, yin, and restorative sound baths for all levels. Doors open at 6:00 pm; session starts at 6:30 pm. Bring a yoga mat and water bottle. Experience calm, connection, and creativity.

auroraculturalcentre.ca

@auroraculturalcentre



Postcards show scorched landscapes to pressure leaders and inspire bold action on the wildfire crisis

SIGNED SEARED **DELIVERED POSTCARDS**

Launching by the Climate Emergency Unit and Blackjet on May 3, Signed Sealed, Delivered transforms vintage postcards into climate protest tools. Featuring scorched Canadian landscapes, each free pre-addressed postcard is ready to be mailed to federal leaders. This bold campaign urges Canadians to demand urgent wildfire action before these views become all too real.

www.signedseareddelivered.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIGNED SEARED DELIVERED



THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL LITERACY WITH EXPERT LI ZHANG



PHOTO BY STOCK HOLM

CPA Financial Literacy expert Li Zhang highlights the significance of financial literacy, especially for women

WRITTEN BY **ISHA SHARMA** | INTERVIEW BY **MARC CASTALDO**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CPA CANADA

LI ZHANG
MBA, PMP AND DIRECTOR,
SOCIAL IMPACT & FINANCIAL LITERACY LEADER

Since childhood most women have been confronted with stereotypes such as "Women don't understand math," and told that they deal differently with numbers than men do; historically, the financial industry has been male-dominated.

Li Zhang, a financial literacy expert who runs several programs on behalf of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA), recalls how she first became interested in financial literacy education. Zhang, who has performed a variety of roles over her lengthy career, said that it was almost 15 years ago that she surveyed accountants and asked how important financial literacy was for Canadians and whether or not they saw the lack of it as a problem.

Ninety per cent of them said that financial literacy was a part of their daily work life and that the education component should absolutely be a part of the profession. Seventy per cent of the surveyed accountants also said that they volunteered and supported the communities where they worked and lived to educate people about financial literacy at no cost.

Since then, the program has effectively educated about 1 million Canadians. CPA is constantly updating and incorporating new content. They have 35 to 60 different topics that are taught in many settings, including schools and workplaces.

Commenting on how mainstream media presents women as if they have no understanding of numbers or money, she stresses the pressing need for women to be financially literate. She also notes that financial systems are built by men for men, and that women tend to get lost.

She adds, "Confidence, not competence, is what holds women back from making financial decisions. We don't have to know everything to take action — we just have to start."

The first step for women is to overcome their anxieties and build confidence in action," she says, adding that women don't have to know everything to make financial decisions but only to build a safe relationship with their money, a lifelong journey of constant learning and navigating decisions according to distinct situations.

www.cpacanada.ca
@cpa.canada

EVENT



Picadilly's clothing caters to the modern woman, crafted for home, travel, or formal occasions

CULTURE MEETS FASHION AT THE CANADA ISRAEL FASHION WEEK 2025

Canadian Jewish designers showcased their incredible collections at Canada Israel Fashion Week

WRITTEN BY **ISHA SHARMA**
INTERVIEW BY **MARC CASTALDO**

PHOTO BY ARLINE MALAKIAN



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEIL DOMBROWSKY

NEIL DOMBROWSKY
CEO OF PICADILLY



PHOTO BY TOM SANDLER

NAOMI SHAPIRO
FOUNDER OF ROCK 'N KARMA





PHOTOS BY JENN JEVONS

Left: Picadilly has been successfully reinventing its styles year after year, with over 90% of its pieces being made in Canada at their headquarters in Toronto, Ontario
Right: Striking a pose with purpose, Rock 'N Karma lit up the runway at the Canada Israel Fashion Show, merging art, fashion, and global inspiration

Culture defines fashion, and fashion expresses culture. Celebrating both, the first-ever Canada Israel Fashion Week was held in Vaughan, Ont., on Thursday, April 3, and Sunday, April 6, 2025. The two-day event was organized to recognize Canada's thriving Jewish creative communities.

The event showcased the collections of many talented designers, including Neil Dombrowsky, CEO of Picadilly, and Naomi Shapiro, founder of Rock 'N Karma. Sharing their thoughts on the relevance of this event, Dombrowsky noted that this was an incredible opportunity to showcase the abilities of Jewish designers in the world.

Shapiro, who founded Rock 'N Karma with her sister Devorah Shapiro, added that people invited to the event projected Israel's fashion culture in the most fascinating manner. She believes that people in Israel have great style, and that it comes naturally to them.

When asked about their initial reactions to being invited to the fashion week, Dombrowsky shared that he was excited and proud to reflect on his culture and share it with everyone. For Shapiro, it was all about using her passion for fashion as a symbol of solidarity.

Speaking of his foray into fashion, Dombrowsky said that he comes from a family with a strong fashion background, a fact that has already motivated him to be in this business for so many years. However, the brand's aesthetics have changed, just as fashion itself does. He added, "We kept on rebuilding ourselves. Picadilly is more of a casual lifestyle brand that targets the 40-to-80 age group. We exclusively sell to boutiques across Canada, the United States, Japan and Australia. We strive to bring novelty and depth into our collection."

At Rock 'N Karma, the focus is to build collections for everyone. Shapiro shared how everything she does is naturally happy, and, therefore, her pieces put a smile on people's faces. Her mantra for building a strong fashion brand: "Loving what I do and also loving the people I work with."

Explaining the name she chose for the brand, she pointed out that most of the collection has a rock-and-roll edge. Not just that, though — she views herself as rock-hard, while her sister stands for karma. Both sisters believe in the idea of karma and putting forward unique work that celebrates longevity and inclusivity.

The collection at Rock 'N Karma appeals to people who are looking for good quality. The Shapiro sisters put together the collection with hand-painted and hand-beaded designs.

At the centre of all these collections is the responsibility of acknowledging one's community and spotlighting talent across borders. The Canada Israel Fashion Week was undoubtedly a beautiful example of how fashion and culture intertwine to celebrate communities that thrive on purpose and passion.

canadaisraelfashionweek.com
@canadaisraelfashionweek



JONATHAN ORTEPI, PART II: THE GIFT OF LIFE

A selfless donor, unshakable hope and a family's strength changed everything

WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**

www.mycitylife.ca
SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN ORTEPI

Jonathan Ortepi was dying when I first met him in November 2023. His skin was discoloured, his eyes were dark, and he was extremely thin. Although he was in desperate need of a liver donor, his smile shone brighter than most.

Going into the Christmas holidays that year, I received a message from Jonathan's wife, Sabrina. She informed me that, by the grace of a generous donor, Jonathan was currently in the hospital getting prepped for surgery to receive his new liver.

Fast forward to April 2025, when I connected with both Sabrina and Jonathan to do a follow-up, Part II interview to capture their story and journey to recovery. Among the many things that I was surprised to learn about his harder-than-expected recovery journey, what caught me by beautiful surprise ... was the Jonathan Ortepi who was standing before me.

His skin tone had returned to normal; he filled out his shirt with muscle. Plus, his smile was just as bright as before. More than a year post-transplant, Ortepi is feeling physically strong. He's back to cycling, working out and even indulging in the foods he once loved.

"I can finally say I feel like myself again," he shares, in a recent interview with *City Life*. "Before, I could wrap two fingers around my biceps, I'd lost so much muscle. Now, I'm back to my physical self."

But recovery goes beyond the physical. Weekly blood tests, the looming fear of organ rejection, and what many didn't foresee, which was one of the most terrifying challenges he faced: memory loss.

Two weeks post-op, Jonathan lost his memory for nearly a month. "It was like I was watching my life through a fog," he says. "The little I remember is me asking Sabrina, over and over, 'It'll come back, right?'" He asked that question hundreds of times, and every time, Sabrina reassured him — sometimes projecting more confidence than she actually felt. That unwavering support, he says, was his anchor.

Even simple tasks became overwhelming. "I forgot how to use certain programs on my computer," he recalls. "It was like my brain short-circuited." But through the haze, his passion project — 905 Klean Kicks, a sneaker restoration and design business — offered both a creative outlet and a lifeline. "Somehow, I still knew how to work on sneakers," he laughs. "That muscle memory helped ground me."

With the help of his family, Jonathan began piecing his life back together, step by step. "There were dark days," he says. "But the strength of my wife, Sabrina, and my kids kept me going."

But the heart of his story lies in the gift he received from Jessica, a stranger who donated a piece of herself to save him. "When my daughter asked her why she did it, Jessica said, 'I did it for you guys. So your dad could be there.'" Ortepi's voice breaks with emotion. "She gave me bonus days. I don't have the words to thank her."

Today, Jonathan is passionately involved as a director of Move for Life, a non-profit promoting transplant awareness and organ donation. He's sharing his story and inspiring others to register as donors. "This is how I give back," he says. "It's not just about survival — it's about helping the next person."

@move.for.life.foundation

PHOTO BY EMAD MOHAMMADI

Marketplace



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WRITTEN BY **MARC CASTALDO**



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www.badlandsbrewing.ca

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www.junctioncraft.com





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Tradition vs. Convenience: A New Era in Funerals

WRITTEN BY THE VESCIO GROUP OF COMPANIES

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