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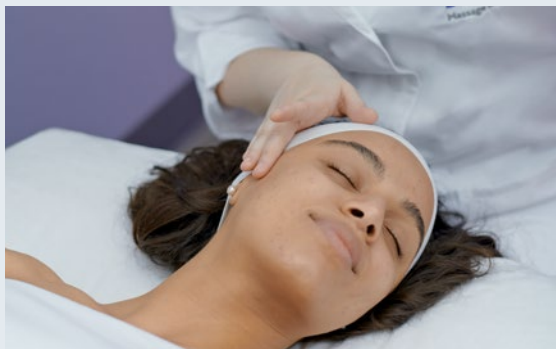
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# CHIC

C O M P A S S

## *Contributing Writers*



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**Ann Parenti**  
MANAGING EDITOR

# From the Publisher

---

Happy Anniversary Chic Compass!

Chic Compass celebrated its one-year anniversary this past summer and to keep the celebration going, we are excited to bring you this latest edition. It has been a year of discovery, surprises and certainly change in so many industries. As the print industry has shrunken rapidly over this last decade, we at Chic Compass bravely felt compelled to offer something fresh and inviting. We believe in CONTENT and partner with hand selected advertisers in unique ways that most magazines do not offer. For readers that prefer a digital presence over a traditionally printed version, we have that to offer, too. We will be expanding our blog and will continue to keep you posted on all the social media outlets for exciting events that we will be hosting.

The magazine was a new addition to the Forgotten Song Music (FSM) family. Forgotten Song Music is a multi-faceted organization that published the book *Midnight Muse – Las Vegas – Milestones in Music*, and a two set CD and documentary film by the same name. The film can still be seen on PBS – Las Vegas on occasion. FSM also executive produced an album called *Las Vegas Suite* with Carolyn Freeman of American Jazz Initiative and Rob Case of New Pants Publishing. Nathan Tanouye created the music and arranged it. Nathan produced the album with Ron George. Clint Holmes wrote the lyrics and performed on it.



About five years ago, Forgotten Song Foundation, Inc. was established. This organization is a 501c3 non-profit that was created to give scholarships and grants to the University of Nevada – Las Vegas Jazz Studies and Art Studies along with College of Southern Nevada Jazz studies. They also give out grants to likeminded 501c3 organizations focused on the arts. Their mission is dedicated to recognizing, remembering, and sustaining the visual artists and performance artistry of live music for future generations.

The magazine is a magnificent fit for both organizations. It offers a continuous organic platform to showcase what Forgotten Song Music and Forgotten Song Foundation were created for and so much more. Chic Compass focuses the spotlight on artists, musicians, poets and the arts in general and so many other “chic” experiences like fashion, travel, dining, etc. It’s our way to give back to the arts which is always one of the first to lose funding when government budgets are cut.

We invite you to travel with us on this wonderful journey as we point the compass to the next era. So, look out 2020, we are just getting started!

*Ann Parenti*



## OUR MISSION

Forgotten Song Foundation, Inc., a registered 501c3 organization, is dedicated to recognizing, remembering, and sustaining the visual artists and performance artistry of live music for future generations.

[info@forgottensongmusic.com](mailto:info@forgottensongmusic.com)  
[forgottensongmusic.com](http://forgottensongmusic.com)





**Carolyn Muse Grant**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

# From the Editor

---

Welcome to our latest edition of Chic Compass!

As a former editor of a design magazine, and luckily a continuing writer, I have to admit that working with this magazine gives me a great deal of pleasure. The writers and subjects featured in the magazine include multi-talented writers and the subjects are fascinating. As we indicated from the beginning, we include travel, food, fashion, music, design and artists...and are intrigued by our association and relationships with these gifted people. Their endeavors and subjects intrigue us, and we do believe, they have and will continue to intrigue you as well.

In this edition, we feature artist Tim Burton and have dedicated our cover to his latest exhibit at The Neon Museum. We are also featuring travel to Egypt, fashion from the designers of the Industry Fashion Show, great artists, and amazing stories about people here in Las Vegas who have great influences on our city and their amazing outreaches. I'm sure you will be equally fascinated by their endeavors and passions.

We appreciate the support from our writers, advertisers, and readers. And we are already looking forward to our next edition.

We are so honored to have all of our contributors and feel confident you will enjoy our latest adventures.

*Carolyn Muse Grant*

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## COVER PHOTO

### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Photo Courtesy of: Neon Museum  
Location: Neon Museum Boneyard



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# *On the Cover*

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## THE NEON MUSEUM LAS VEGAS, NV

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The Neon Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, studying and exhibiting iconic Las Vegas signs for educational, historic, arts and cultural enrichment. The Neon Museum campus includes the outdoor exhibition space known as the Neon Boneyard, a visitors' center housed inside the former La Concha Motel lobby, and the Neon Boneyard Gallery which houses additional rescued signs and is available for weddings, special events, photo shoots and educational programs.

Dedicated individuals from the private sector, as well as corporate and government entities, worked collaboratively to promote the preservation of these national treasures as significant pieces of artistic and historical importance. Each sign in the Neon Museum's collection offers a unique story about the personalities who created it, what inspired it, where and when it was made, and the role it played in Las Vegas' distinctive history.

In addition, the Neon Museum collection chronicles changes and trends in sign design and technology through pieces ranging from the 1930s to the present day.





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# WELCOME TO "LOST VEGAS"

NEON MUSEUM SPOTLIGHTS ART INSTALLATION BY DIRECTOR/ARTIST TIM BURTON

By Stacey Gualandi





Situated now on the grounds of The Neon Museum's outdoor "boneyard"—a collection of historic signs from Las Vegas's glittery past—is a domed structure that looks like it's straight from NASA. Walk inside the rotunda, and there is a mysterious glowing visage that reappears every few seconds on the front of a life-size slot machine.

"Who is that famous female face?" I ask everyone within earshot. I'm guessing Marion Cotillard, Eva Green, or maybe Helena Bonham Carter? Tim Burton—the daring director behind classic fright flicks *Beetlejuice* and *Nightmare Before Christmas*—flew to France to film the actress but won't fess up. Believe me, I tried.

Burton's illuminating piece of art is just one of over 15 brand new works found in "Lost Vegas," a significant, first-of-its-kind art exhibition in the history of Las Vegas, and the first time that Burton has presented original fine art stateside in almost a decade.

"I've really enjoyed reconnecting to my artistic roots," says the one-time Disney animator. "It's who I am. So, making weird art in the desert has been extremely satisfying."

**At Left:** Lost Vegas: Tim Burton at The Neon Museum // Photo Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum

Mixed throughout the museum's iconic collection of preserved neon signs, Burton's sculptural and digital installations pay a very personal homage to what he calls "the peculiar and beautiful past of this city" through his eyes and his distinctive artistic style.

Though he grew up in Burbank, Burton says he spent much of his formative years with family on weekend road trips to Sin City.

"I've been coming to Las Vegas since I was a baby," he says, "so as a child, a teenager, and an adult shooting a movie, I've had a weird history here."

Burton recounts the emotional experience of sneaking into an old Las Vegas sign company for the first time back in the '90's; once staying in a shuttered Aladdin hotel; and filming the demolition of the landmark Hotel for *Mars Attacks!* (something he admits has "forever haunted" him). But, he says, these strange memories have been an inspiration artistically throughout his career.

"[They're] memories and snippets about illusion and that's what Vegas is all about for me," says the 61-year-old. "The image in my childhood of giant sea horses coming out of the Dunes pool many years later—like, two-feet-tall—it's a weird illusional place, and being a filmmaker and artist, that kind of illusion and perception is important to explore, and this is a good place to do it."

Now, those images have been brought back to life in "Lost Ve-



**Above:** Lost Vegas: Tim Burton Artwork at The Neon Museum  
Photo Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum

gas," in all their Burtonesque glory. A 40-foot tower in the shape of the old Dunes hotel; three giant seahorses on an even more gigantic neon grid; a tribute to the landmark Hotel implosion; and, of course, his Martian invaders from the movie that first exposed the neon boneyard internationally in 1996.

Neon Museum CEO Rob McCoy says this collaboration was not only a no-brainer, but also a "unique ex-

perience where the location also served as creative inspiration."

"We're one of the most unconventional museums in the world," says McCoy. "And I dare say that Tim Burton is probably one of the most unconventional artists and directors in the world. It's a perfect match."

McCoy shares Burton's passion for all-things-vintage-Vegas as his family has lived in the city since 1939. "Our parents would throw us into

the car when we were kids, and on a Saturday night for cheap entertainment, we would drive down Fremont Street to see all the lights or we would see what new sign was being erected on the Strip, so this is really close to us," says McCoy.

McCoy has been with the museum for several years, first as a board member, the last three as president. So in May 2018, when he received an email from Burton's exhibit curator, Jenny He, saying that Mr. Burton has been following the development of The Neon Muse-

um, and that he loves the museum and Las Vegas and would really like to do an exhibit at the museum..."you don't tell Tim Burton no, and I certainly didn't."

Cut to 17 months later and Burton has pulled off the seemingly impossible: showcasing MC2 Experiential Studio projection mapping; animatronic sculptures; Looking Glass volumetric displays; and, of course, animated neon signs.

McCoy says, "Ninety percent of what people will see is brand new and it's been created especially for us, which is incredibly flattering."

This exhibition is just the latest phase of an ambitious expansion for the 23-year-old museum, referred to as Neon2020. It has already acquired a vacant Strip building across the street, with plans to move to the new campus early next year.

"We're going to totally repurpose that building," says McCoy. "It will house our very first indoor exhibit area, a smaller gallery and education center, and a neon fabrication workshop."

Space is limited at the boneyard, so instead of spreading out, signs will be going up, in a gentle nod to downtown Fremont Street's "Glitter Gulch" heyday. The first person to use the new 30-foot grid is—you guessed it—Tim Burton.

"Lost Vegas" follows "Brilliant," artist Craig Winslow's 30-minute dazzling audiovisual display in the North Gallery that debuted last year, and the official re-lighting



Above: Lost Vegas: Tim Burton Artwork at The Neon Museum  
Photo Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum

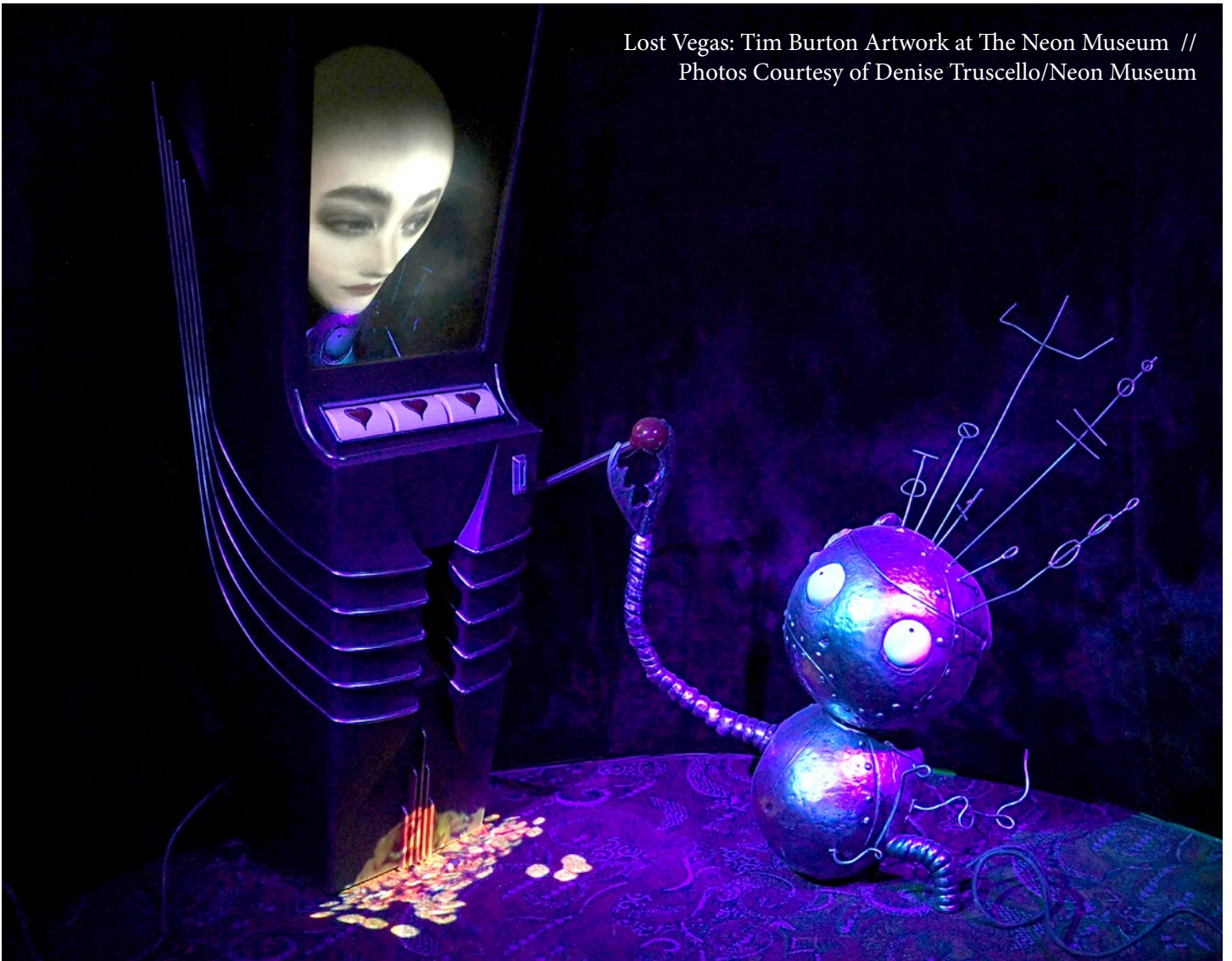


Lost Vegas: Tim Burton Artwork at The Neon Museum  
Photos Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum



*“ [They’re] memories and snippets about illusion and that’s what Vegas is all about for me.”*

Lost Vegas: Tim Burton Artwork at The Neon Museum //  
Photos Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum





of the iconic, fully-restored Hard Rock Cafe guitar sign in March... likely responsible for both driving Neon's reputation globally, and boosting attendance this summer by 32 percent.

"We had over 250,000 visitors this past year," says McCoy. "Ninety percent of those were tourists and of that, 74 percent were staying on the Las Vegas Strip but coming Downtown, which is going to help our annual economic impact on the city of Las Vegas by over \$7 million a year."

(And that was all before Tim Burton came to town.)

Sadly, neon is a dying art form, but Burton's links to the city's historical neon heritage may renew interest for artists and visitors alike. Expectations are high for the exhibit, presented by the Engelstad Foundation. It will remain on display through Feb. 15, 2020.

For his part in reimagining "these beautiful old dinosaur bones," The Neon Museum presented Burton with the "Glow Award" at the

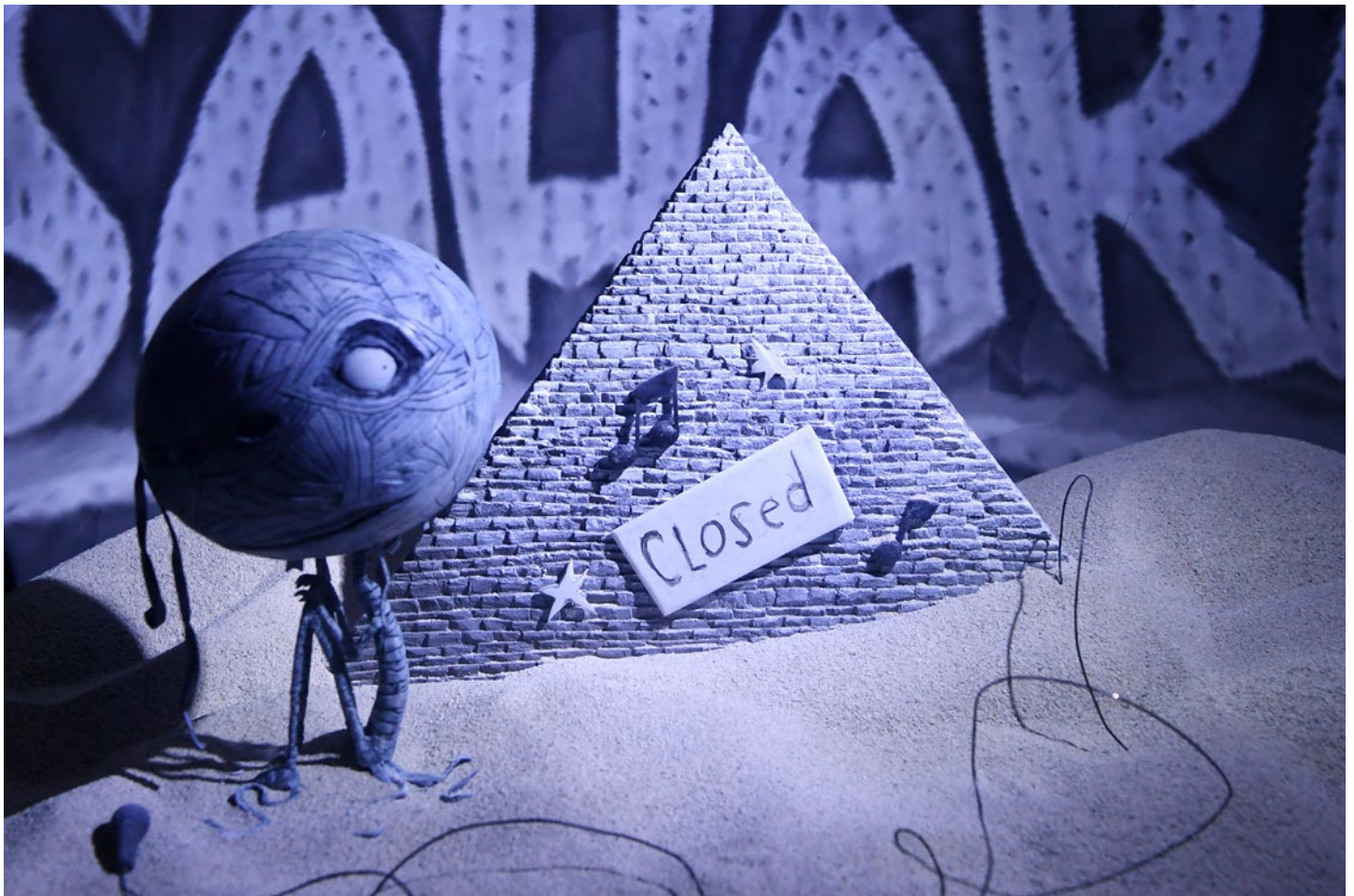
third-annual, sold-out, Boneyard Ball inside Encore Las Vegas. The event culminated with an epic performance by hometown heroes The Killers, at Burton's request. (He's the band's former music video director.)

Whether your favorite piece is the Burton poem-in-neon, "Stain Boy Sing-A-Long," or the aforementioned unidentified face-on-slot machine (c'mon, Tim! Who is she?), "Lost Vegas" is yet another immersive experience from the mind of a macabre movie maker.

Not only will it enhance his wildly weird body of work, but it will also help The Neon Museum's mission to preserve Vegas history for future generations...and perhaps, make a little history of its own.

"What you've kept—these beautiful art pieces is the thing that I've always loved," says Burton. "There's something about the process of creating something that is always exciting. I just enjoy making things."

Lost Vegas: Tim Burton Artwork at The Neon Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada // Photographs Courtesy of Denise Truscello/Neon Museum





The Neon Museum Boneyard  
Photo courtesy of The Neon Museum





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# SPRING/SUMMER 2020 FASHION

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The Industry Fashion Show | Photography by Mark Gunter

New York Fashion week presents the latest styles and statement pieces from designers across the country. The Industry Fashion Show organization produces one of the fashion industry's runway shows every season. The roster includes some of the most exciting and established designers while also featuring up-and-coming designers as well.

The Spring/Summer 2020 looks on the fashion runway evoke a modern variety and approach to style from tailored femininity, ethnic cultural influences, classic elegance, and a touch of avant garde. Chic Compass covered the Industry Fashion Show in New York last September to share with you the newest season trends.

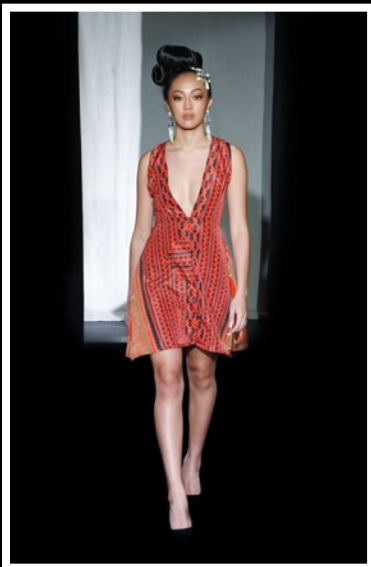




The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Lisa Nicole Collection  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: David Tupaz American Couture  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Hill Tribe Fusion  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Sharon Cox-Cole  
Photography: Mark Gunter

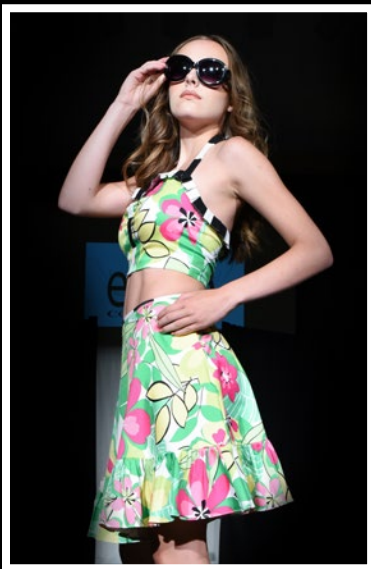


The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Troy Anthony  
Photography: Mark Gunter





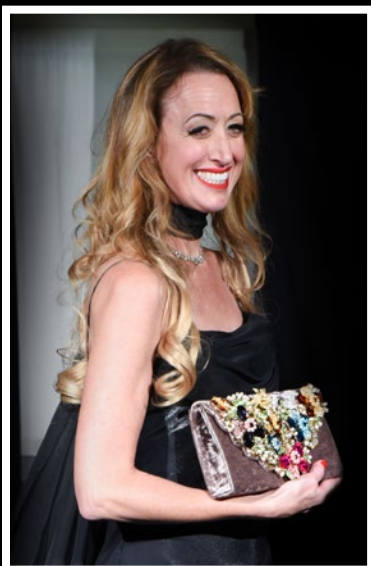
The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Will Franco Designs  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Marnia Miller (EFabb)  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Christina Miller Palombit (Petite Tweets)  
Photography: Mark Gunter



The Industry Fashion Show  
Designs: Avadora Mimouni Collection  
Photography: Mark Gunter



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A close-up portrait of Carolyn Freeman, an elderly woman with short, dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black and white floral patterned jacket and a pearl earring. The background is a plain, light color.

# YOU WILL BE MISSED, MY FRIEND

BY ANN PARENTI

*R*ecently, we lost a force to be reckoned with within the jazz community. My fellow Fairy God Mother of Jazz, Carolyn Freeman, passed away on July 6 in Las Vegas. She was in the middle of releasing a new album, writing another article for Chic Compass magazine, and had just received a grant from Forgotten Song Foundation for her American Jazz Initiative Foundation. We also celebrated her 84th birthday the day of the grant at the VIVA Awards in May.

Many a night, Carolyn and I would often go “clubbing” together to support our friends in the jazz and live music community. I first met Carolyn when she was the president of the Las Vegas Jazz Society. I wanted to interview her and several folks from that community to be a part of a project I was working on called *Midnight Muse*. (Carolyn ended up being featured in the book and the film by the same name later that year).

It didn’t take long to become instant friends. As time went on, we decided to create an opportunity for jazz musicians. For about a year or more, we produced live jazz once a week at several local clubs and featured many talented artists during that time. That was how we got the title of the *Fairy God Mothers of Jazz*. We had a third friend, Marsha Klein, who partnered with us on this musical adventure until we could no longer find a suitable venue to continue.

Carolyn left behind a long list of friends in the community who will miss her dearly. I am one of them. We will be honoring her legacy on November 10 at a new theater opening this autumn called, “Notoriety inside the Neonopolis” in downtown Las Vegas. Ironically, Carolyn would have adored this new venue and would already be thinking about what grand jazz event she could arrange there. So, in her memory, the concert will be the live version of her last collaboration. I want to think this was her grandest adventure of them all.

Carolyn produced three albums under the Peacock Entertainment

Label with the outrageously talented Nathan Tanouye, two of which were albums that honored her late husband, Russ Freeman, renowned jazz pianist, composer, and arranger. The third album, “11,” primarily features Nathan’s compositions.

Carolyn convinced Nathan to go back to writing and to create another idea she had. This time, she and Nathan enrolled the talent of Clint Holmes, who not only wrote compelling lyrics to four of the five songs for the arrangements but sang them all impeccably. The album features Carolyn’s and Nathan’s 32-piece orchestra called Las Vegas Jazz Connection that comprises some of the top musicians in the city. The concept was to create music that mirrored the city we all love—Las Vegas. The album is called *Las Vegas Suite*, and it is a true gem.

The album was submitted to the Recording Academy for three categories—Best Arrangement,

Instruments, and Vocals; Best Instrumental Composition; and Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album. We are hoping for voter consideration during this Grammy season. Rob Case of New Pants Publishing and Forgotten Song Music are the co-executive producers on the album with Carolyn’s American Jazz Initiative. Ron George and Nathan are the producers on the CD.

Forgotten Song Foundation will host the event on November 10 to honor the legacy of Carolyn Freeman and the celebration of her inspired album, *Las Vegas Suite*. All proceeds will go toward a Scholarship/Grant in honor of Russ and Carolyn Freeman.

Carolyn’s constant passion for keeping jazz alive and welcoming the up-and-coming young musicians she so loved to support was a remarkable thing to witness.

I will miss you, my dear friend and fellow Fairy God Mother of Jazz.



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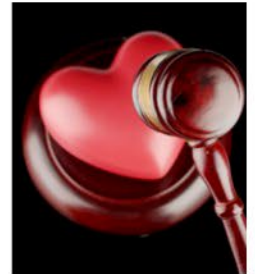


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# OPERA LAS VEGAS

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By Kendall Hardin

Opera Las Vegas is growing up - celebrating its 20th season ahead as a bona fide "regional opera company" under the leadership of General Director Jim Sohre.

In just a few years, the company has attained status as the Silver State's only professional member of *OperaAmerica* and has grown from presenting one mainstage opera to producing a year-round schedule under three major program umbrellas.

In addition to the company's full-scale *Mainstage Opera*, The company's *Opera With Class* program will present the family-friendly "Bremen Town Musicians" with free admission in its 4th Annual Library Tour in May, along with the popular "Who's Afraid of Opera" pop-up *informances* (perform + inform) reaching over 3,000 students annually in the Clark County School District.

OLV's *Opera on Wheels* program takes opera out of the concert hall to free and low-cost venues throughout the community to engage operaphiles and new audiences alike. The company presents the delightful holiday favorite, *Hansel and Gretel*, in early December, followed by *Opera Legends in Black*, to celebrate African-American singers, composers and conductors during Black History Month.

This year, OLV is presenting not one, but two innovative West Coast premieres as part of its *American Living Composers Series*.

Sasha Matson's *Cooperstown - A Jazz Opera in Nine Innings* kicked off the season with great fanfare. The long-awaited one-act opera by composer-librettist Derrick Wang, *Scalia/Ginsburg*, will be performed in March in the inventive legal setting of UNLV's Law School Moot Court. So, see you in court!

To add to this unique season, "the most talked about soprano of her generation," *American Superstar Angela Meade* will perform a one-night concert in the Doc Rando Recital Hall on April 25.

This year is known as the "Magical 20th Anniversary" since the company will be mounting Mozart's masterpiece jewel, *The Magic Flute*, at its fully-staged mainstage production in June. Everything promises to be sublimely entertaining - from costumes and sets to staging and special effects.

The magical theme of the company's 2020 gala - a star-studded "evening of revelry and out-of-this-world merry-making" - happens on February 22 in the sumptuous Versailles Ballroom at the Paris Hotel-Casino. This spectacular *Magical Night of Delights* promises an unforgettable experience to cherish for years to come.

It's all part of Opera Las Vegas' Magical 20th Anniversary Celebration. So, wave your magic wand and join the fun. It's going to be a blast!

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# faith

## In the Goodness of Humanity

By Joan S. Peck

I walked into the lobby of the World Market where we were to meet, and as I watched Gabi and her mother approach me, I was struck by the ease of love between them. Both greeted me with a smile before we sat down and began to discuss the idea of faith and what it means to Gabi.

It's not always easy being different—especially if you have a rare, genetic mutated collagen cell, which leads to unexplained pain in the joints and other issues that pop up from time to time. Gabi's condition has never been found in another human being, making her unique in that way, and causing her doctors endless frustration. That is the health issue she *has*, but that is not who Gabi Herd *is*—a beautiful soul with boundless kindness toward others.

**At Right:** Gabi Herd with her mother, Camille



Although shy, Gabi is quick to speak out about the need for each of us to be kind to one another. She receives great satisfaction from being kind to others who have greater special needs than herself, and to help them in any way she can.

When Gabi and her family moved to Las Vegas nearly four years ago from Seattle, she and her mother (her advocate) sought out available resources that help those with special needs. And Gabi jumped right in, taking advantage of the Job Discovery Programs ["JDP"], a partnership between the Clark County School District and Opportunity Village.

JDP is designed to help those with special needs learn different skills so that their opportunities to be included and participate in a working environment expand. JDP is an outstanding organization that helps its students obtain employment all over the Las Vegas valley. CCSD provides student transportation to eight different locations that are part of the JDP program.

- Opportunity Village Thrift Store
- Kitty Rodman Food Service Training Center
- The Animal Foundation
- Clean the World
- The YMCA – two locations
- Head Start – two locations

One of Gabi's first jobs was working at the thrift store at Opportunity Village, where one of its perks was that she got the first look at the items for sale before sorting and merchandise stocking.

The next step for Gabi was to get



Breanna and Gabi participate in the Opportunity Village and Clark County School District's Job Discovery Program

involved in Project 150, a non-profit that "offers support and services to homeless, displaced, and disadvantaged high school students so that they have what they need to continue school and succeed in life." It's a fabulous program where twice a month, a student with a high school I.D. can go to Betty's Boutique Tuesday – Friday between 1:30 and 4:30 p.m. to pick out ten items: sneakers, clothes, school supplies, and other items. Project 150 delivers lunches to local high schools and on Fridays provides Weekend Food Boxes so that the students have food over the weekend.

Are you aware that we have more than 15,000 homeless kids in Las Vegas?

Gabi now works at the Three Square Food Bank, where she

helps to package fruit bags for seniors in need. Three Square also provides lunches for middle school and high schools, among other things.

We are lucky here in Las Vegas to have several noted companies who hire people with special needs: Cox Communications, Springs Preserve and Smith's, as well as others. JDP has worked with, and now have former JDP students working for companies, such as T Mobile Arena, Brooklyn Bowl, Papa John's, Planet Fitness, Albertson's, Heritage Park Senior Center, McDonald's, Chuck E. Cheese, and the Clark County School District Food Service.

It was obvious that Gabi was happy to discuss her involvement in her training, but I also wanted to learn more about her private life.

**Gabi, what do you like to do for fun?**

GH: "I like to play games on my X-box because I can keep in touch with my friends—Breanna, Travis, Gianna, Swae, and Kelly. I like to go out to lunch with my friends, and I like to hang out with Breanna and Travis. And I love to go to Disneyland. I also love to get dressed up and go to the Joy Prom and other events."

**Tell me about the Joy Prom Las Vegas?**

GH: "It's fun, and I go every year and meet my friends Breanna and Travis there. Last year it was at the M Resort."

Marketing information lists it as "a yearly prom for teenagers and adults with cognitive and physical impairments, where the Las Vegas community unites to celebrate every guest ... and reveals the JOY in selfless giving."

I also went with Breanna to the Tim Tebow Special Needs Prom last February 2019.

**Anything else you like to do?**

GH: "I also like to watch SBSK (Special Books by Special Kids). SBSK is a non-profit that started when Chris was a special education teacher. His students originally set out to publish a book in which they shared what life is like from their perspective of living with a disability. Since no publisher was interested, he began to create videos. Soon people around the world began to email him, asking



Gabi (right) and Breanna (left) with their Gorman High School escorts at the Joy Prom

if Chris would interview them as well.

**Anything else?**

"And I love animals." Then the story came out that her dog Uno, a Rottweiler, had recently died, which has been a big loss for all in the family.

**When it's time to get another dog, what kind of dog do you want?**

GH: "I think a Golden Retriever, or maybe a Collie or German Shepherd." Whatever dog Gabi chooses, the dog is going to be lucky.

**Gabi, if you could change anything, what would it be?**

GH: "I would like more friends; friends are important. And when people see special needs people, I'd like them to be kind, not to stare, not to bully, and don't talk down to us as if we were children."

**What is next for you, Gabi?**

GH: "Every year, my mother and I join my best friend, Breanna, and her mother for a trip to Disneyland. I can't wait. This year we're going at Christmas time."

Camille smiled and added, "It's a girls' time with no guys, and we

can take our time and ride our favorite rides as many times as we want.”

### What does the future hold for Gabi?

I admire Camille for the joy she takes in her daughter and all that she does to ensure that Gabi is kept busy and is a positive participant in society. In speaking with Camille, I discovered that most of the programs available for special

needs people end at the age of 22. I was curious about what lay ahead for Gabi and wasn't surprised to learn that Camille is in the process of setting up a non-profit called the Kindness Kafe, which will provide a future for Gabi and others. It will be a coffee bar set up inside the lobby of building A of the World Market and will be known for serving top-notch coffee and kindness from its servers. Camille and Gabi have faith they will be able to raise the money for

this wonderful cause and be open for business in 2020. Let's hope so because it's a great idea.

At the end of our time together, I left Gabi and Camille uplifted as we gave hugs goodbye. It was nice to meet a young lady who has faith that by treating each other with kindness, it's the best way to live.

Who can find fault with that?



From Left: Miss Teen Nevada USA, Breanna, Gianna, Gabi, and Miss Nevada USA at the Best Buddies Friendship Walk.

# MAGNOLIA HOME

BY JOANNA GAINES

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# Wishing on a Star!

By Stacey Gualandi

# hope



Frank Shankwitz believes everyone can be a hero.

While his name might not ring a bell, the charity he helped create should. Shankwitz started the Make-A-Wish Foundation and his life story is the subject of a new movie called *WISH MAN*. Now this retired motorcycle cop hopes to spread his hero worship message to the masses.

"The biggest thing that I learned as a child is you don't have to have money to give back. You can give back your time. That's what I've tried to do my whole life," says Shankwitz.

His good deeds haven't gone unnoticed. In September, Shankwitz

received his very own star on the Las Vegas Strip's "Walk of Stars" shortly after the VOD and DVD release of the film. He says the honor was surreal.

"The only star I've ever had was on my [police] uniform and that was it!"

Shankwitz overcame humble beginnings and a traumatic childhood to

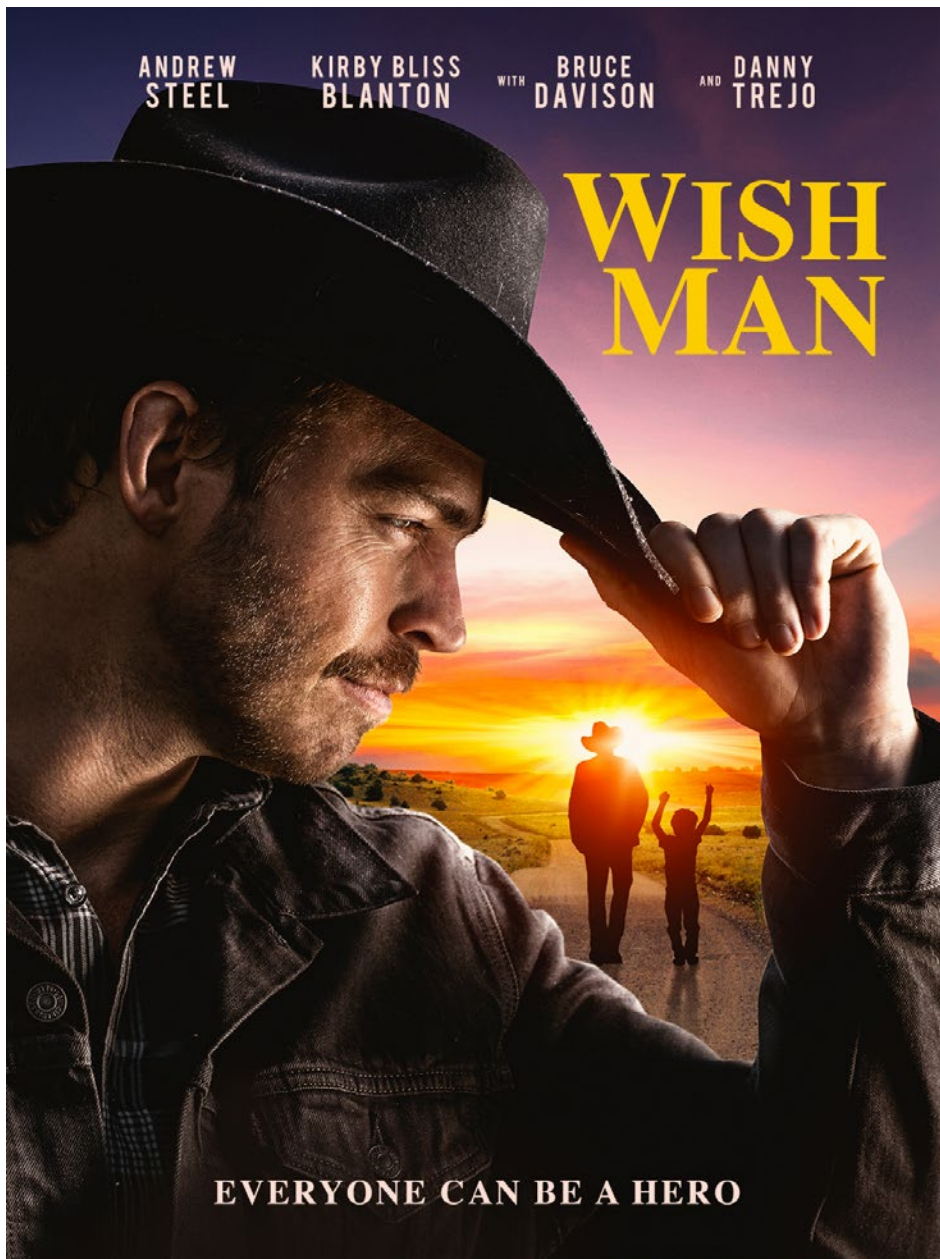
dedicate his career to service. "I'm a veteran and served 42 years in law enforcement."

While on duty in 1978, Shankwitz survived a horrific motorcycle accident that nearly took his life - his heart stopped for almost four minutes. A counselor later told Shankwitz, "God spared you for a reason."



*Las Vegas Strip's "Walk of Stars" honors Frank Shankwitz. Photo courtesy of William Burdine / SoCalCreations.*





"If Chris had survived, he would have ended up being a Major and I would have ended up working for him," Shankwitz imagines. "I only knew Christopher for 15 hours but meeting him gave me a new perspective on life."

After the first Disney wish in 1981 was a big success, Shankwitz told his board he envisioned the foundation granting wishes all over the world, "but they all laughed at me, except the one lady [Kitty] who gave me my wish three years later when she said, 'I do.'" Since then, the non-profit has granted over 450,000 life-changing wishes for kids with critical illnesses.

But almost 40 years later, Frank Shankwitz had one more dream realized, thanks to acclaimed author and *WISH MAN* producer Greg S. Reid, PhD. who also received his own star on the walk of fame not far from Shankwitz's. The two men first met while Reid was researching his book "Stickability: The Power of Perseverance."

"I asked him what his wish was, and he said no one had ever asked him that," says the author of 82 books. "I said, 'Well, I'll grant your wish. No

**Below:** Frank and Kitty Shankwitz

Shankwitz admits he never thought about that. "I found out that reason about two years later when I met the little boy who inspired me and others to start the Make-A-Wish Foundation." Christopher Greicius loved the television show *CHiPs* and always dreamed of being a police officer. But the seven-year-old had leukemia, so Shankwitz and several officers on the Arizona Highway Patrol gave Chris his wish: to be a cop for a day. The young boy died just four days later.



matter what you want in life, I will give it to you,' and he said, 'I just want my story to be told.' So, it took six years and millions of dollars and me not knowing what I was doing, but here we are."

Shankwitz, who is now a sought-after public speaker, was the technical advisor, consultant and producer on the film, which stars Australian actor Andrew Steel as "Frank." The socially conscious Steel - who started his own philanthropic film festival called "Flicks4Change" - says it was an emotional experience for Shankwitz, but his story needed to be told.

"At any point in your life, you can turn it around and you can do something incredible with that next breath. Frank had a near death experience ... that could have been the end," says Steel. "So, it could be a bad day, it could be a great day, but we can always do more, and with a little help from our friends, amazing things can happen."

That could include awards. The folks behind the film - also starring Frank Whaley, Tom Sizemore, and Danny Trejo - say *WISH MAN* is on the festival circuit and is now Oscar-qualified, so winning trophies may not be wishful thinking.

But a humble Shankwitz says whatever the future holds, he'll never stop giving hope to so many through simple acts of kindness. He's certainly the hero of his own story.

"I always turn a negative into a positive. There's always going to be bad things in life, but so what? Just uplift, accept it, improve it and move on."

*WISH MAN* is now available on VOD and DVD. For more information check out [wishmanmovie.com](http://wishmanmovie.com) and [wishman1.com](http://wishman1.com).



*Frank Shankwitz stands beside his star on the Las Vegas Strip's "Walk of Stars" Photo courtesy of William Burdine / SoCalCreations.*

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# grace

## Full of Grace

By Janice Marie Wilson

The name Anna means grace and Anna Stewart Billings is indeed a woman of grace. She was born in Bisbee, Arizona of German, Mexican, Cherokee Indian, and Scottish descent. She is impeccably dressed in an aura of empowerment that exudes the belief that everything is possible. Her mom would say to her "If you want that beautiful dress you can have it, if you work hard." As

she watched her mother raise her five siblings, she learned what it meant to take positive action to get things done. Her mother is her inspiration and the light that has guided her to achieve greatness.

She married her sixth-grade sweet-heart. He had long blond hair, and a handsome bad boy look. Anna's green eyes sparkle with passion when



*Photo of Anna Stewart Billings courtesy of Susie Magit of SueZQ Designs*



she talks about her past. She is petite and beautiful, a fireball of enthusiasm. Her warmth, charisma, generosity and determination exude her belief that "Life is good." She unabashedly shared, "If you don't like something, change it!" And with that green twinkle in her eyes, you know that she has that hutzpah to do just that. But it is her ineffable and contagious joy for life that lights up the room. Everyone loves to be with Anna.

Her giving and caring spirit touches everyone in the community. As the manager for the designer boutique, Anne Fontaine in the Forum Shops, for the last 14 years, she has contributed generously to many charities with her special events and scintillating fashion shows. As an icon in the fashion world in Las Vegas, she inspires women to be beautiful, strong, smart and graceful. She has created a career that is dedicated to encouraging women to do well. Her energy and passion for Anne Fontaine's fashions is magnetic. Women from around the world want to shop with Anna.

Anna's influence in the retail world of fashion is only outshined by her dedication to her family. She fell in love with her current husband because he was tall, handsome and looked sexy in his pink shirt. She has three sons and loves spending time with her family, traveling, antiquing and visiting the wild, wild West.

She recently was honored to be awarded the Best Buddies Champion Award. Sixteen years ago, she adopted a baby that has special needs. With the same persistence and dedication that she exudes in business, she graces her family. This international non-profit organization is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one to one friendships, integrated employment and leadership



development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. (IDD) Her contributions to this non-profit are fueled by her intense passion and love for her son. She believes this organization will give him the skills that will enable her son to support himself. (Bestbuddies.org.)

With great humility, Anna openly admits that her strength and grace are

gifts from God. She loves anything Victorian. Her penchant for traveling is insatiable. She loves taking groups of women on adventures around the world. You can tell by her unstoppable energy and lithe figure that she also enjoys working out. She believes women want to be recognized as powerful, smart, strong and beautiful. Anna Stewart Billings, you are that woman!

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# charity

## Sweet Charity

By Janice Marie Wilson



Lena Walther serves as Swedish honorary consul to Nevada and co-founded a group that combats human trafficking. This is quite a daunting task when you realize that Nevada is one of the five top cities for human trafficking. At \$150 billion, it is the second largest criminal industry in the world. There are more than 979,000 cases reported in the U.S. and growing.

The root cause of human trafficking are the traffickers. People might argue that poverty or lack of education, immigration policy, conditions, fractured families and lack of good job opportunities are the issues. But without the traffickers there would be no business. Traffickers range from small-time, solo operators to loose networks of criminals, to highly sophisticated criminal organizations that operate internationally.

Traffickers choose to trade in humans, because they are low start-up cost, minimal risks, high profits and large demand. For organized crime groups, human beings have one added advantage over drugs, they can be sold repeatedly.

Lena was first made aware of this pandemic problem serving as the Swedish consul. There were two cases of Swedish girls who had been held hostage. One was a 27-year-old civil engineer. She had come to Las Vegas as a tourist. "By the time I became involved she had a 4-month-old baby with her pimp." Lena recalls. "I was able to get her out of the country within a week. The trafficker had no clue what happened, "Once you see something like this up close, you can't back off," Lena states simply.

That is when she started going to the Southern Nevada Human Trafficking Task force with her friend that was setting up a therapy practice. Lena discovered that the programs that were in place were not adequate. "If you are going to fight something, you've got to fight it." She vehemently states. Her clear blue eyes flash with the tenacious willpower and a steadfast strength of character. Her voice is clear and committed to pursuing her purpose, AWARENESS.

She has formed the non-profit organization called Awareness Is Prevention AIP. AIP educates the public on all forms of Human Trafficking including Sex and Employment Trafficking. Lena believes Awareness is Prevention. Her focus is on making children between the ages of 11-17 aware that anyone can be a target to be hurt, damaged, sold, or injured by this criminal



activity. Lena stated that, "These criminals have no boundaries. They don't just prey on the poor, abused or homeless children. You can be from the best of families, educated, gifted and popular. You can be a normal kid. I have talked to parents with stable, healthy family lives in middle to upper class backgrounds that told me, "I had no idea!" Their child fell prey to trafficking.

Lena believes that because of the horrific consequences of this problem the solution lies within the problem. Children are prey because they are innocent, sweet and trusting. These qualities can be developed to protect them when they nurture their natural abilities to be creative. "Kids learn from what they like to do. Dancing, painting, theatre arts, music and writing, are fun activities that children love! Reaching the kids is essential. However, you cannot "preach" to them or just talk about the horrific problem of modern-day slavery, you need to get them to be part of the solution through learning to express their natural creativity for fun. Learning that involves music, art or other expressionism will make a big impact."

Words don't teach. Lena believes that in their new project, "Awareness through the Arts," they will be able to involve children in art related contests, with age appropriate themes on bullying and trafficking. They will learn about the insidious behaviors that human traffickers' practice through the arts. They will have contests with prizes and local celebrities judging their work. They will have peer to peer conversations that are fun and be rewarded for their efforts.

Just talking about it isn't enough. She envisions artistic expressions that will show the children what is involved in the different stages of enticement. Some of the children are stalked for



three to six months before they are abducted. Their approach is strategic and sinister. There are even three different kinds of pimps that children need to be aware of.

1. The Romeo. He is normally a very good-looking person, who is charming and very well groomed. He builds up the esteem of the young girl or boy and charms them into falling in love with him. He showers them with gifts and attention. Everyone around believes that he is the "nicest guy."
2. Then there is the CEO. He presents himself as a businessman and lures them with the promise of making a lot of money.
3. The Guerilla. He is the one that beats them and drugs them into slavery.

The Awareness through the Arts will conduct creative contests with prizes and winning awards. This will generate peer-to peer conversations that will expand and enlighten the kids about human trafficking. It will develop creative ways that the children can learn about their innate power to protect themselves from harm.



The key to Lena's success is directly eradicating the root problem of Human Trafficking - the Trafficker. Once children are aware that these people exist, and that they have the creative power and instincts to protect themselves from their clutches, they will be aware of their tactics and through their creativity they will be empowered to run, not walk away from their advances. Lena believes by developing a child's creativity to follow their instincts and to be aware they will trust their intuition and keep themselves safe. "If you smell a rat it is a rat. If something isn't right, it isn't right. We need to shake the kids up, so they know what to do. They need to understand what's going on. They are primary targets."

The creativity of children is endless. With this new project Lena is harnessing the innate creative energy and potential of children. Their sweetness, innocence, and childlike intelligence will be a force that will empower their lives. Their sweetness will be strength. They will have the creative experience to protect themselves from harm. Joy is their birthright, and the perpetrators will no longer be able to penetrate or rob them of this inherent God given right. Their business will go bankrupt because the art of a child's creative genius will have shut them down.

Lena is practicing the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. And the greatest of these is her Charity. Support and contribute to this life enhancing charity, Awareness is Prevention and learn more about Awareness through the Arts at [aipnv.org](http://aipnv.org).

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# NAVIGATING THE SEASON

By Angela M. Brommel

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We asked Angela to join our team at Chic Compass and to tell us what the magazine represented to her. Angela M. Brommel is a Nevada writer with Iowa roots. *Mojave in July* (Tolson Books) is her debut full-length poetry collection. In 2018, her chapbook, *Plutonium & Platinum Blond*, was published by Serving House Books. Her poetry has been published in *The Best American Poetry* blog, the *North American Review*, *The Literary Review's TLR Share*, and many other journals and anthologies. A 2018 Red Rock Canyon Artist in Residence, Angela served as the inaugural poet of the program. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University, and an MA in Theatre from the University of Northern Iowa. You can also find her at *The Citron Review* as Editor-in-Chief.

As a curator, I am often asked how I know what art to choose, and then the individual inevitably confides that they are afraid of making the wrong choice when selecting art. But the thing is, every day we make choices to value certain items and experiences over others. We curate our wardrobe, home décor, and even our social media presence.

We are shaped by what we expose ourselves to and what we are open to being shaped by. Our choices, our style, our sense of what is chic - evolves as we do. Curation is an act that turns our focus in a particular direction.

The directional indications on a compass (North, NE, East, South-East, South, South-West, West, and North-West) are known as a Compass Rose as well as the Rose of the Winds. The compass

and its rose have long helped the lost and the searching to navigate their journey. *Chic Compass* is your companion as you navigate fashion, travel, music, food, culture, and design.

At the edge of late summer and early fall, everywhere we are bombarded with images of fall as pumpkin spice, harvest, and the chilly slowdown to winter. But I only have to look out my kitchen window to see that the roses are amidst a second blooming



season. Everything looks new from this direction. On the last Saturday in September I made my way from one event to the next to the launch party for the cover of *Chic Compass* held at Eccoci in Boca-Park. The clothes were gorgeous, the place was abuzz with people, and I was particularly taken by a demonstration by Amy Boger of We Do Plants on how to create fall planters with succulents. I even won a stunning book, Pamela Golbin's *Valentino: Themes and Variations*, as part of the raffle to benefit Forgotten Song Foundation.

Afterward, in Sambalatte while drinking a Rose Petal Latte, I reflected again on the convergence of chic and a compass. Later, I bought two kinds of rose tea that I have since drunk in the evening before bed as I try to stay in that place of unexpected goodness. Since joining *Chic Compass*, I have found myself pausing more often to ask what I might explore next while navigating this season.

Maybe finding our chic is more akin to the elegance of math and science. Perhaps it's about letting ourselves sometimes get lost in the beauty of the everyday, and then giving it the room to bloom.

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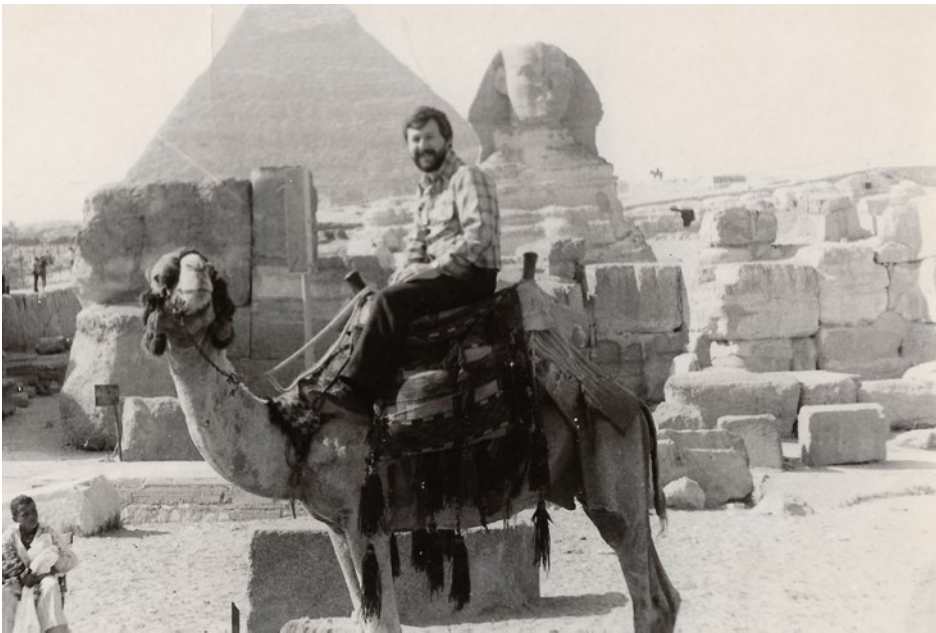
# EGYPT

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The Nile: 5,000 Years of Culture and History

By Richard Stearns





The year was 1977 and “Tutmania” had swept across America. The travelling exhibit of the young Egyptian King, Tutankhamen, was all the rage and tickets to the exhibit were sold out in every city.

I happened to be in Chicago at the same time as the exhibit and I attempted to get tickets. However, they were sold out for the next three months and it was impossible to get in. I just decided that rather than try to get into a travelling exhibit I would just go to Egypt someday and see the real thing. Eight months later, I flew into Cairo and began a journey that would forever fill my imagination with the wonders of a long gone, but never forgotten, civilization. I bent down very low and almost crawled into the very center of the Great Pyramid. I visited the entire Tutankhamen exhibit at the Cairo Museum. It contained more than 5,000 artifacts, 100 times more than the travelling exhibit that came

through the United States. I spent one week there and left knowing that I had to return someday and learn even more about this fascinating culture.

Fast forward to 2006 and I am making plans, with my husband, Graham, to return to Egypt. This trip includes three historic hotels and a river cruise down the Nile. Each day will take us deep into the history of this ancient country.

We arrive in Cairo and our guide, Medhat, is waiting for us. He takes us to the first historic hotel, Mena House. It is located right across the street from the Great Pyramids of Giza and as we opened the shutters in our room, they stood right outside our window. As we unpacked our bags and got settled in, I kept looking out the window. What a magnificent sight!!! Some of the guests to occupy this magnificent hotel include Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Creator of Sherlock Holmes), Winston Churchill, Agatha Christie, Frank Sinatra, Charlie Chaplin and a host of others. We had truly arrived, and our journey was just beginning.

The next morning our guide met us in the lobby, and we were off for our first full day of touring and exploration. Our first stop is Saqqara, the necropolis of the Old Kingdom of pharaoh’s around 3100 B.C. It is a sprawling complex of temples, pyramids and funerary monuments. The largest of these is the Step Pyramid. Archaeologists consider this to be the first pyramid



ever built. It dates back to the 27th Century B.C. and is more than 200 feet tall. It was built as the tomb for King Zoser. Additionally, it is the oldest stone structure of its size in the world. As we wander through the other tombs and buildings in Saqqara, we see some incredibly preserved murals that depict and provide insights into everyday life of Ancient Egypt.

After a quick lunch, we proceed north, and we are dropped off just a short distance from the Sphinx. The Sphinx has long been the source of stories, myths and fables. The mammoth statue faces the rising sun. In Arabic, it's called, Abu al-Hol or "Father of Terror." It has been carved almost entirely from one piece of limestone. Napoleon Bonaparte saw only the head of the Sphinx when he arrived in Egypt in 1798. The rest of it was still buried deep beneath the sands. In the distance, you can see the Great Pyramids of Giza as they become a backdrop for this amazing and mysterious statue.

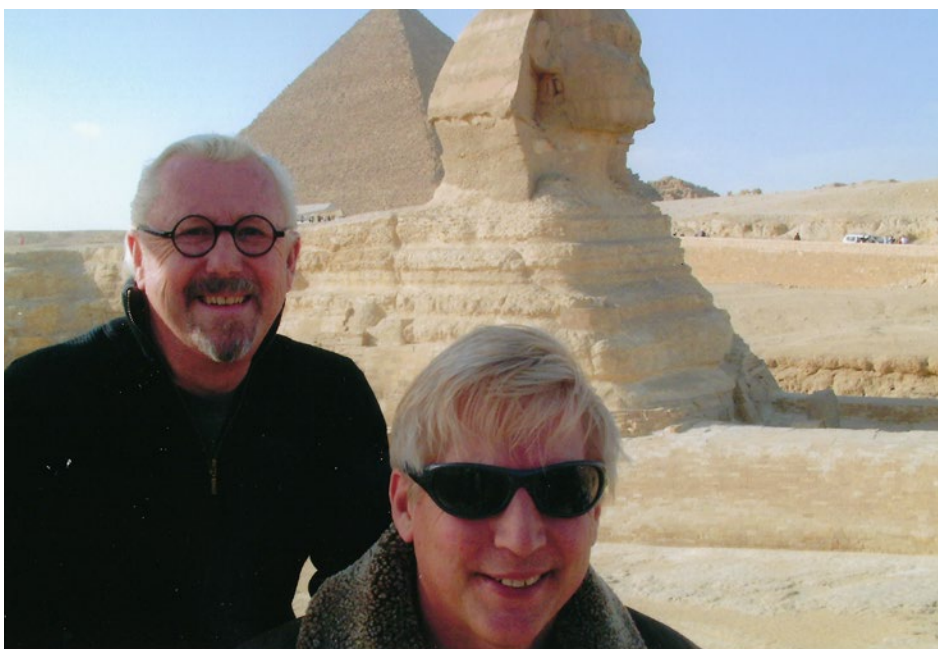


As we made our way towards the Pyramids, we can begin to see exactly why one of them has earned the name "Great." The Pyramid of Cheops, the largest pyramid, stands 450 feet above the desert floor. It was built around 2600 B.C. using construction methods that still confound modern day scholars. As I stand at the bottom and look up, I am dwarfed by the sheer immensity of this massive stone construct. Its entire purpose was to be the tomb for one man and it boggles my mind. It is said that "All things fear time but time fears the pyramids." Nearby, a re-

cently unearthed ancient boat has been reconstructed from all its original materials. Perfectly preserved by the dry sand that covered it, the cedarwood planking, oars, ropes (woven from halfa grass), wooden dowels and battens were all there. Interestingly, not a single nail was included. Its purpose was to carry the pharaoh's mummy across the Nile to Memphis for the funerary rites.

That evening, after dinner, we returned to the Sphinx for a light and sound show that is something no one should ever miss. The music, the story, the presentation and the history behind this show is worth every moment. What a way to end the day.

Our next stop, Aswan, is home to the mighty High Dam that spans the Nile River far to the south of Cairo. We are staying in the historic Old Cataract Hotel. This is the very hotel that Agatha Christie wrote her novel "Death on the Nile" in. She always stayed in Suite 1202. We are able to stay in a Suite just down the hall in 1209. The name of the hotel restaurant is "1902." We dress and go down for dinner. The restaurant is magnificent, and we were told that Agatha Christie had a favorite table where she could sit and watch everything that



**Above:** Security guard at Saqqar  
**Left:** Richard and Graham at The Sphinx

**On Opposite Page:**  
**Top Left:** Richard's first trip to the Great Pyramid, 1977  
**Bottom Right:** Mena House Hotel



went on while she dined. I asked the Maitre d' if that table would be available and with a nod of his head he takes us there and seats us.

Early the next morning, we hop onto an airplane for a very short flight to Abu Simbel, a temple that was built by Pharaoh Ramses II as a tribute to himself and his wife, Queen Nefertari. This temple would have been one of the first casualties of the new High Dam. Thanks to a group of international specialists, they carved the temple into 1036 blocks weighing 11 tons each. With the help of 25,000

workers the blocks were moved 200 feet up the cliff and reconstructed safely above the water levels of Lake Nasser. I am fascinated not only with this incredible temple built by an ancient pharaoh, but by the technological wizardry that saved it and was able to keep it in its exact original condition.

As evening approaches our guide takes us to the Philae Temple of Isis. The temple features courtyards flanked by granite lions and walls covered with depictions of ancient gods and goddesses. The island's most recognizable sight is Trajan's Kiosk with its 14 majestic stone pillars. It is said that Cleopatra would travel to this Temple every

**Above:** Old Cataract Hotel in Aswan  
**Right:** Restaurant 1902

**On Opposite Page:**  
**Top:** Camel Safari to Monastery

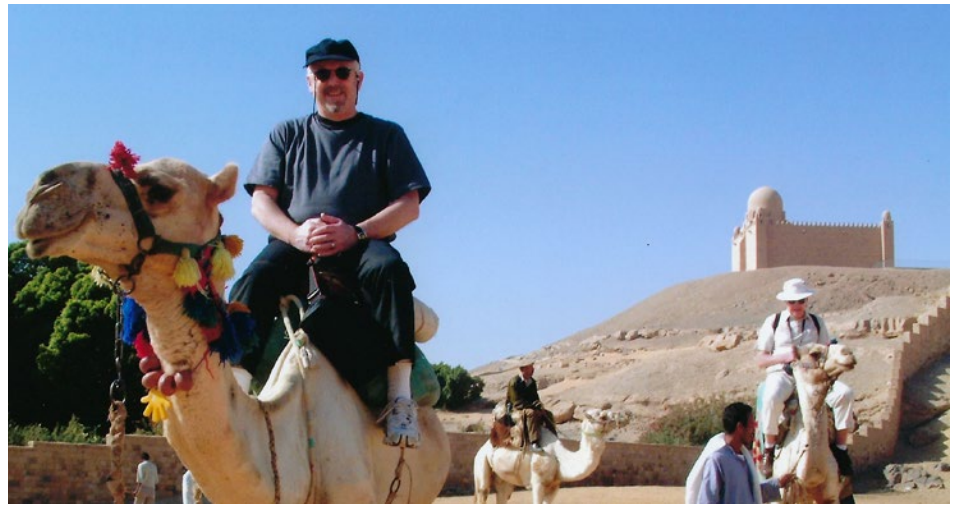




year and bathe in the presence of Isis. Wandering through the temple and the kiosk as the sun sets over the Nile River is simply fascinating. This is a UNESCO Heritage site that was also rescued between 1972 and 1980. A team of international technicians moved the entire temple and its outlying buildings from the original island which was about to be entirely covered with rising water from the new High Dam to a nearby island which was high enough to withstand the flood waters. Each piece was moved and reassembled exactly on the new island.

The next morning is a real surprise as our guide greets us with camels. My camel was named Rambo. We climb up on them and start out into the desert. Our destination is the old Monastery of St. Simeon. Built in the 6th Century it sits in the middle of the desert and is one of the best preserved early Christian sites in all of Egypt. As an additional treat our guide takes us, and our camels, down to a Nubian village where we are given tea in the home of one of the locals.

We checked out of our hotel and boarded our cruise ship which was docked on the banks of the Nile River. This would be our home for the next four days. As the gangplank was pulled up and we got underway I took one last look at Aswan and the adventures I had enjoyed there. Our ship was called the "Royal Orchid" and the crew couldn't have been friendlier or more accommodating to our needs. As we drift down the Nile, I can see all human history going by. The visuals are conflicting as



I observe a farmer drawing water out of the Nile by hand while a modern automobile drives by. There is a farmer ploughing his field with his mule and a commercial jet taking off above his head. The 21st Century is trying to get a foothold, but it hasn't quite grasped all of this ancient country quite yet. Our first stop is Kom Ombo. Directly in front of me, as I disembark, is a Greco-Roman Temple. Its placement is very dramatic right on the bank of the Nile. It is Egypt's only double temple. One side is dedicated to the crocodile god, Sobek. The other side is dedicated to the falcon god, Horus. The entire building is perfectly symmetrical along its main axis, twin entrances, twin courts and twin colonnades.

As we exit the temple, Graham glances a clothing shop just a few doors away. Graham tells me to follow and we head in the direction he is pointing. There is a costume ball on the last night of our cruise and we are supposed to dress in native Egyptian attire for the party. The shop has galabeyas (a type of full-length robe that you

pull over your head to wear), head gear and vests. Graham is ready to buy what he needs and enjoy but I resist. "I'm not a costume kind of guy! I haven't worn a costume since my Mother dressed me up as the scarecrow on the Yellow Brick Road.", I protest. Needless to say, Graham has the shopkeeper pick out some things in my size and I reluctantly try them on. Satisfied that our clothing is perfect for the occasion, Graham pays the shopkeeper and we take our bags back to the ship.

The next few days were filled with more and more local Nile life, history and fascination as we worked our way slowly towards our final destination on this wonderful water journey through history, Luxor. But first, the costume ball was fast approaching. It was a British tradition that has been passed down. And I, whether I liked it or not, was about to become an unwilling participant. As Graham dragged me back to our stateroom to change into our costumes, I could only shake my head and wonder how I got myself into this. I put my costume on, checked myself in the mir-



ror and proceeded to the Dining Room. Everyone in the Dining Room was in costume. We fit right in with the other guests. Waiters walked around with drinks on trays. A band was playing traditional music. A conga line formed that wound through the different levels of the ship. And, yes, I had fun. In fact, that costume ball was one of my best memories.

The next morning, we disembarked from our ship for the last time. We had arrived in Luxor and, once again, we were in a place that reeked of history. Our guide quickly escorted us to another very historic hotel, the Winter Palace. The room looked out over the Nile River from our balcony. I ordered a bottle of wine and some snacks from room service and we sat on the balcony, watching the felucca's

sail up and down while the sun set before us.

I was up long before the sunrise and on my way to a huge field filled with hot air balloons. In the dark, each one of them had an otherworldly glow as their gas flames filled them and prepared them for flight. My guide walked me over to the balloon and told me to climb into the basket.



The pilot instructed the grounds men to release the lines and we started to drift up into the dark sky. There was a bright spot on the eastern horizon and dawn would be peeking its way onto the sky very soon. I looked all around us. Everything was so quiet and we sailed through the sky at the hands of the expert pilot. As the sky began to brighten and the sun rose above the horizon, our guide pointed down to what appeared to be a very small village. He told us that this was the Howard Carter stayed while he was looking for the tomb of King Tutankhamen. As

we drifted along, we were suddenly over the Valley of the Kings. Located below us were the tombs of dozens of pharaohs from thousands of years in the past. I am in total awe of everything I am able to see before me. All too soon, I notice that the ground is coming up towards us and there are people below watching us as we descend. As we get close to the earth, the grounds men grab the lines and secure them pulling us so we sit flat on the ground. The only word that comes out of my mouth is "WOW!!"

But my day isn't even close to being done. My guide escorts me to a mini bus and we start to drive over to the Valley of the Kings. After watching it from above, I will actually get to walk through the valley and visit the tombs in person. As I was walking towards the entrance I can see people moving across the entire valley. Archeologists, students, historians and tourists are everywhere. The entire valley is a beehive of activity and I find myself caught up in it. My first priority is to visit King Tutankhamen's tomb. It is small and cramped for a pharaoh's tomb. All the treasures have been removed to the museum in Cairo. The only visible item in the empty rooms is the sarcophagus. King Tut is the only pharaoh who's mummified body still remains in the Valley of the Kings.

As I exit the tomb and look across the way, I see what appears to be television cameras and lights set up and ready to start filming. Apparently, a new tomb has been found and no one knows what is in it yet. They are waiting for the



lead archeologist and the Director of Egyptian Antiquities to arrive. I stand around and watch all of the people going back and forth. As one of them walks past me, I ask what is going on. He explains that they are about to open a newly discovered tomb, but no one knows what it contains. We can see antiquities being raised from the entrance. What were they? Thanks to the television cameras and the Discovery Channel, I was able to come home and watch the whole thing about six months later. The next morning was going to be another pre-dawn experience. "Oh Please, another coffee. I'm NOT a morning person." My guide was waiting for me in the lobby of

**Above:** Tomb in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt

**On Opposite Page:**

**Top Left:** Costume Party Onboard Royal Orchid

**Center:** Nile River From Our Room in the Winter Palace

**Bottom:** Winter Palace in Luxor

the hotel and it was still pitch-black outside. As we walked down to the edge of the river there was a brightly lit felucca moored to the hotel's dock. The guide helped me climb aboard and soon we were on our way crossing the Nile in the blackness of night. As we got to the other side and disembarked, I saw a great tent full of colors and open to the clear sky above. The

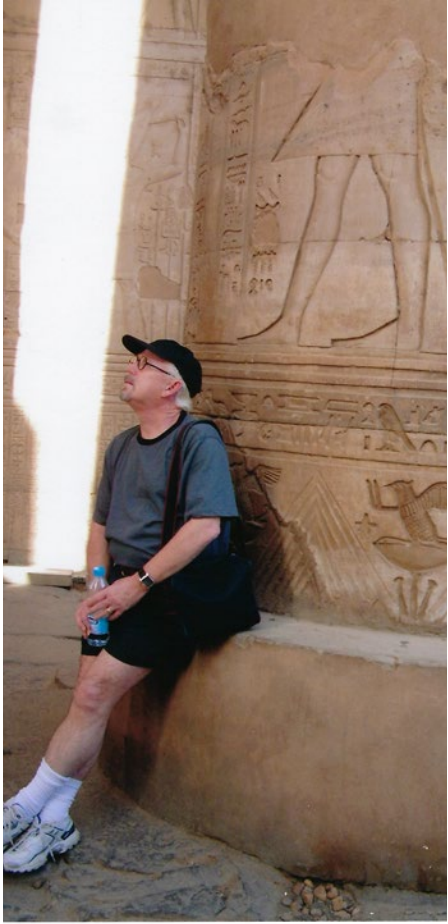


smell of fresh bread baking in mud brick ovens made my mouth water. Our guide had arranged for us to have breakfast and watch the sunrise. Indeed, as we looked out while drinking freshly brewed espresso, we could see the sky brightening and the bright light of the sun as it began to rise over the majestic Nile River. I completely forgot about the meal in front of me and just watched one of the most beautiful sunrises I had ever seen. Truly Magnificent!!!

After the amazing tented breakfast, we head for the Temple of Karnak. The ancient Egyptians called this "the most perfect of places." It is a tribute to the god Amun-Re and was continuously expanded for millennia by successive kings and queens who wanted to add their own tributes. As I walk through the Hall of Pillars, I am amazed at just how large this enclosure truly is. The tallest obelisk in Egypt is located here. It is made from a single piece of pink granite and was raised by Queen Hatshepsut

to honor Amun-Re. It stands almost 100 feet tall. I sit close to the base and look up at it in awe.

On our last night in Luxor our guide has one more surprise for us. A



horse drawn carriage pulls up in front of us. The edge of the canvas top is covered with small bells that jingle as the carriage moves along. Our carriage driver told us, with a smile, that while they were filming "Death on the Nile" he actually had Bette Davis and Maggie Smith ride with him in the same carriage. As our ride takes us through the streets, we find ourselves in the Night Market. Due to the extreme daytime temperatures in Egypt, most locals prefer to go out in the evening after the sun has gone down. These huge markets have expanded to cover dozens of city blocks in the center of the city and they open up at sunset. They are brightly lit with the vendors standing out in front beckoning you into their shops. The smell of spices and herbs permeates the air and the colors are a kaleidoscope as we gallop past. The sights, smells and chatter along with the chimes

of our own carriage are a sensory knockout. Finally, the carriage comes to a stop in front of a small coffee shop. Our guide invites us to partake of a beverage, but I choose to go back into the market and shop on foot for just a little while longer. I truly don't want to leave this place.

We head back to Cairo for our last full day in Egypt. I ask our guide to take us to the "Cairo Bazaar," in the Old City that is filled with shops, restaurants and artisans selling their wares. As we wander through this gigantic maze, I am happy we have our guide. I would never be able to navigate through this place on my own and find my way back out of it. For the next several hours I am in a shopper's heaven. I go from a silversmith, to a pottery shop, to a jeweler and, finally stopping for a break, we go to the famous Café Fishawi located

in the middle of the bazaar. In the middle of this cacophony of noise, the coffee shop is quiet, calm and peaceful. It starts to sink in that my trip has come to an end and I will be departing first thing in the morning. It is with a heavy heart and a great deal of reluctance that I head back to the hotel and pack my bags.

Will I ever go back? I hope so....  
YES, I will!!!

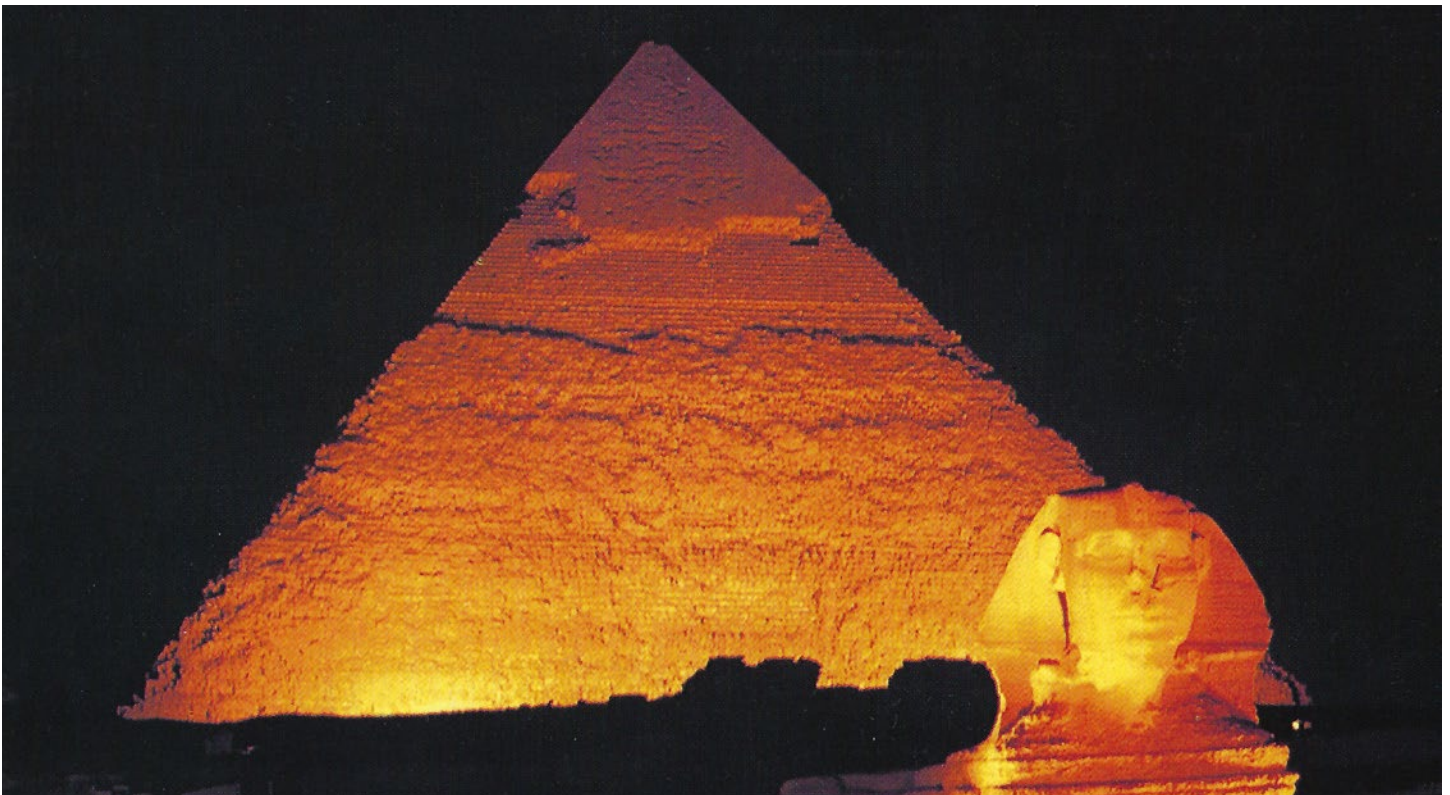
**Below:** Light and Sound Show with the Sphinx and Pyramids

**On Opposite Page:**

**Top Left:** Sunrise Over the Nile

**Bottom Left:** Tented Breakfast on the Nile River Bank (Our guide, Medhat, is in the middle)

**Bottom Right:** Pillars of the Temple of Karnak





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## About Richard

Richard Stearns is the Travel and Culinary Director for CHIC COMPASS Magazine, Award Winning Author, Columnist, Restaurateur/Chef, Hotelier, World Traveler and Designer. His designs have graced the Forbidden City in Beijing, Rothschild European Nurseries, and in Las Vegas, MGM Grand, Bellagio, Bellagio Conservatory, Caesars Palace, Mandalay Bay, New York New York and Monte Carlo – to name a few.

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## THOMAS BURGER: MORE THAN A DESIGNER

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By Joan S. Peck

*I*t'd been a while since I was at Thomas Burger's home, and when I walked into

it once again, I immediately felt welcomed and at home in the way only a peaceful, beautifully

well-designed home reflecting a friend's personality can do.

As always, once inside, I was excited to look everywhere, drawing in the beauty and uniqueness of each treasure and detail. Thomas Burger is more than a designer. What you will come to learn is that one of the ways that make Thomas' designing so unique is his ability to find and honor within his designs that which embraces your soul's spirit. By doing this, he brings out the essence of who you are, making your home extraordinarily complete in its Zen-like quality—that dynamic stillness—that soothes your soul and makes you know you're home.

Thomas's story is fascinating. He grew up the youngest of five (four older sisters) amid beautiful antiques and original artwork by famous artists, such as Peter Paul Rubens, Van Dyke, Vermeer, along with 16th-century Flemish tapestries, 15th-century writing desks, and other museum-worthy pieces. His grandparents and parents were all collectors and traveled the world, bringing back valuable treasures, as he does now. Every weekend he went with them to auctions, and he became adept at spotting and choosing exceptional pieces that hold value. He has a laser-focused eye, which he says you need at auction since you have to be able to discern between great and good.

Even today, when he shops for antiques for his clients, he quickly scouts out the merchandise for unique pieces by walking around the store in one direction and

then reversing his walk so that he doesn't miss anything. Because his family has similar taste, when he is with them, "I have to be very quick to pick out my items and set them on the counter," he laughs.

Thomas is so interesting—I could talk with him forever. But I wanted to ask him some basic questions before I forgot. So here they are:

### Where did you go to college?

TB: "I went to Indiana University and graduated with a degree in mathematics and physics with understudies in chemistry, biology, and psychology. I ended up focusing more on mathematics because I was really good at math, enough to be honored with the title of Hoosier Scholar."

### What did you intend to do with your degrees?

TB: "I had no idea. I just happened to excel in the sciences. My parents had a scientific background, as well. My father was a surgeon, and my mother studied chemistry and mathematics. But their lifestyle revolved around art and architecture. Ironically, we educated ourselves in the sciences, but in our environments, we expressed ourselves in the arts. And I believe that when you have a great understanding of science you appreciate art that much more."

### What did you do after graduation?

TB: "I traveled throughout Europe to study architecture and art. Then, at the age of 24, I went to New



York City and attended the New York School of Design to learn design."

### What was it like living in New York?

TB: "I started out with 68 cents when I landed in New York. Once

I was on my own, I was really poor. One can of tuna fish was my one meal of the day. I slept on a hardwood floor – no pillow, no blanket. But my parents had faith in me. They would say, 'You made your bed, now sleep in it,' as the expression goes. But I had no bed," he smiles. "I couldn't go out



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*“I seek out the soul of my clients so that it can be expressed as their environment.”*

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for dinner or out for a drink with friends. I couldn't even afford the bus, but what I could afford was the Metropolitan Museum of Art. If you read the sign carefully, it says suggested entrance fee of \$12.50. You can pay a penny, a nickel or a dime to go in. On the way there,

I always tried to find change on the ground – you can always find change on the ground in New York. I went every afternoon after I interviewed for jobs until I got jobs. Then, every single weekend, I was at the museum and would even show up on Monday morning,

although it was closed. I was in such a habit of going. And it'd cost me usually a nickel or quarter.

“Inside the museum, I studied everything over and over and over again. I studied every detail, and the more you study something, you'll see things you didn't notice before. I spent thousands of hours at the various museums that I could get into with the change I found on the street. I think that was a huge education.

“So many people today are trapped in TV and video games and don't take the time to really see art. Art is how societies have been recorded in time. Who they are, how they feel. If you look at art, architecture, and fashion, it literally defines every period, every culture throughout history—not the wars, and not the leaders. I think we humans express ourselves primarily through art, period.”

**What did you do after your degree in Design?**

TB: “I started with a very large prominent international architectural firm in New York City with over a thousand staff, globally. Eventually, I found my way to a Full Service Architectural and Interior Design Company, also of great fame, where it instantly became clear to me how important it was to understand and approach both



disciplines together, at the same time.

"In 1987, I decided to start my own company with the concept of 'Singular Vision' as Frank Lloyd Wright referred to it as the beacon I'd follow and further explore."

### **What was your first design job on your own?**

TB: "A very well-known celebrity was going through a divorce and wanted her small apartment redone. She was in a dark place and wanted everything in her apartment dark. I felt strongly if I did that for her, she'd never get out of her depression. So we made a deal. I'd present two designs – one dark, one light. When I followed my instincts and showed her my design with light and cozy

pieces, she loved it. Within a year, she stepped out of her depression, remarried, and was happy again."

### **Is that when you realized you had a gift to hone into a person's soul's need?**

TB: "That is when I understood that as a designer, I could make a difference in a way I'd never imagined."

### **After much success in New York, what made you decide to leave it and come to Las Vegas?**

TB: "Having spent over a decade to contemplate, meditate, and pray for clarity of my life purpose, I expanded my firm in 2006 to include a new office, and a new direction in Las Vegas, Nevada. With a powerful new mission

and vision revealed, my focus is more than introducing my clients to a world of resources, artisans, and creating beautiful spaces. It is about impacting the human soul and the human experience through my designs. To create sanctuaries that soothe my clients' souls, that call them to be more peaceful, more loving, more productive, and more joyful—environments that cause a rebirth of their connection to something higher.

"I seek out the soul of my clients so that it can be expressed AS their environment. The gift is not so much my ability to design but to reach into the essence of my clients and bring to light a brighter path toward their own personal fulfillment."





**Are you glad you came to Las Vegas?**

TB: "It was a big change, and it really wasn't until I renovated the house that I'd purchased that I found myself again – spiritually. It was by simplifying the architecture and opening up my house to become part of nature and the outside that my soul was at rest and peaceful. It was more than transforming the architecture and design of the house into something very different. I was the one transformed at the end. I don't have the vernacular to fully explain what happened, but it's something

I realize I've been doing for my clients for decades. Experiencing it for myself renewed my faith in what my life purpose truly is."

**What do you find different in designing today?**

TB: "I've noticed that because of the egos of both designers and architects, there seems to be a greater divide between the two disciplines, resulting in an 8,000 sq. ft. house, where you're eating in the kitchen, or there's a 12-foot wide fireplace blocking an \$8 million view of the strip. I see so many bad situations because the

architect and the designer aren't communicating. I'm working on a new process to bring that together in a new way that's never been done before, which will save the clients' money, hundreds of hours in time, and be almost what I'd say – idiot-proof – so anyone can have a perfect house in a snap of a finger. I'm working on this for new construction, but it'll trickle down for renovations as well. Back to my original focus of Singular Vision, but in an entirely new way!

"I think it's sad when I see a five-bedroom house whose Great Room can only seat 4 ½ people.

No room for guests to watch the Super Bowl or other activities. Who invites a half-person anyway? We're not designing for living, and certainly not for luxurious living. That is a big problem. Luxury Real Estate is a term I often hear in today's market, and it's a misnomer as it rarely reflects luxurious living. I believe it's time to rethink and revisit what luxury is all about. Architects design from the outside in and designers design from the inside out. I think you need to be two-headed to be able to do both at the same time to bridge them back together."

**What do you say to your clients**

**or anyone interested in collecting art?**

TB: "First, be sure to create a home where art is comfortable existing. Then, learn everything you can about what you like. Go to museums, read art magazines, and study art in all ways available.

"As you can see, I'm collecting museum-quality pieces, and I'd love to bring that to my clientele here in Vegas. We don't have that here now. You should only collect what you love, and don't let gallery salespeople talk you into what they're selling as a 'great investment.' Instead, know what you

love, or what you purchase won't give you lasting satisfaction.

"I try to find things that are unique—that have meaning, and that are true pieces of art, and not some manufactured tchotchke that can be purchased anywhere by anyone. I don't consider that art of any kind."

**Who have some of your clients been over the decades?**

TB: "Since the launch of my New York City firm in 1987, I've been fortunate to have composed a broad spectrum portfolio, including clients such as HRH King Hussein





of Jordan, The Royal Family of Monaco, Foreign Ambassadors, as well as other foreign dignitaries and other world leaders who required confidentiality agreements. Rod Gilbert of New York Ranger fame and other American sport's heroes, playwrights, including Tony Award winner Joe Dipietro of "I love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" and TV and film celebrities worldwide. It includes fashion designers, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, such as Ernst and Young, Bed Bath and Beyond, Japan Airlines, Atlantic Container and Shipping, Sotheby

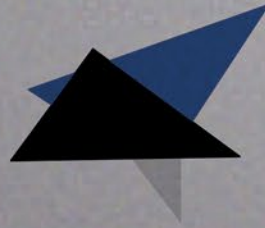
International, and many others. I've been a major force in designing and refurbishing interiors of many landmark buildings, including 100 United Nations' Plaza, Lincoln Towers, Galaxy Towers, Lakeside Towers, The Oxford, The Savoy, The Carleton Regency, Nathan Hale Tower, 36 Gramercy Park, 10 West 74th Street, 941 Park Avenue, and many others in New York City.

In 2012, I was proud to be asked to design and create, "The City of The Future" in China for the Chinese Government."

In spite of all his credentials and all that he's accomplished, it is Thomas Burger's innate understanding of what his clients need to find their own inner peace that makes him so remarkable. When they open themselves to what he has to offer, their home becomes their spiritual refuge surrounded by the beauty and energy of art and furnishings in their highest form. That's why I say Thomas Burger is more than a designer.

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Trick or Treat





# DURETTE CANDITO

## A WOMAN OF MANY TALENTS

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By Joan S. Peck

Durette Candito is the owner of the Urban Ranch General Store, which opened here in Las Vegas on April 2011. Simply by the name alone, you can deduce that her store is unique, and once you meet Durette in person, you realize why. She is a many-faceted, talented person.

The name Urban Ranch represents the pull between city and country, and she calls it a general store for modern city dwellers. There is an art to be able to pull that off, and Durette has done a great job of doing that.

If you visit her store's location on West Cheyenne Avenue and step inside, I'm sure you'll feel as I did. I was struck immediately by the calming created by the balance of the masculine and feminine energies reflected in her choice of products for sale. There is a sense of earthiness emanating from most of her items that has the feel of Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she grew up. Many of the items positioned around the store are made from wood, clay, stone, and various metals, which are offset by the more feminine materials of cloth, clay, plants, and manufactured florals. Durette sells her own creative, unique jewelry and clothing, as well as other local designers' jewelry, and locally-produced gourmet foods. Her love of the arts has Durette holding special modern maker shows in her store.

## Custom Dress Maker and Designer

When I asked her how young she was when she realized she had the talent to create, she said, "When I was little, my babysitter was an art teacher. My mother hired her to give me drawing lessons before I was even six years old. I knew then I was an artistic person. At the age of nine, my grandmother taught me how to sew, and that was a major transformational period for me to see the result of a 3dimensional object created from something flat."

Durette began her own custom dressmaking and sold readymade

clothes and custom-designed clothes for the wealthy women in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico. "I love sewing, and people, so it always was fun for me." She made lots and lots of wedding dressings and into each one she sewed a button from her grandmother's sewing box as a special "something old."

In her 20s, Durette was approached by one of her clients to go into business with her. "I was very excited, young, and naïve at that time." Her partner took care of the business and money end while she was the talent. "She ran me into the ground. I ended up in the hospital where a doctor said,

'You're suffering from stress. Go home and take care of it.'" So, she decided to put away her sewing machine and use her talents in another way.

## Architectural Designer / Interior Designer

In the 1980s, Durette enrolled in the Architectural Program at TVI (Technical Vocational Institute) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She loved everything about it and took to it right away.

"I love drawing and the tactile part of it. I still draw by hand. I learned to draw on a computer in school. But it was not inspiring because

***"Durette works toward a goal of "simple elegance" in her design work, always striving to incorporate sustainability in products and installation."***



it takes away from the power of creating it yourself. I didn't like designing for the corporate world because I didn't get to talk to the customer. I love the challenge of making a home out of both people's wishes and needs, so that both are happy – as well as the kids and dogs."

"Right out of school, I worked for one year as an interior designer and learned a lot. The owner designed furniture, and I did his drawings. Then I went to work for an architect who I found fascinating by how he'd go out to plot the site for the views, sunrises, and settings, etc. He'd draw out the whole house, and I'd develop all the interior drawings and work with the client for interior choices of tile, hardware, etc. He was English, and because he liked the hardware there, he began to buy cabinet door knobs and other hardware from England. I began to learn a lot about all the different hardware, and after two years, I asked, 'Why aren't we selling it?'" They set up a little section in the front of their office to display the hardware and became the importers and distributors of hardware from England, France, and Italy.

The interesting thing she discovered when she moved to Las Vegas is that, unlike in Santa Fe, the interior designer is not the one who helps the customer choose what hardware to install. Here it is the building contractor who does and offers few choices. Often, when a contractor purchases a door, the hardware comes with it as a packaged deal. "I struggle with that part of my business because



of how it works here. It's a matter of educating my market."

Durette can provide many options for her clients, as well as selling her products to other interior designers for their clients here and other cities.

When asked what her greatest talent is as an interior designer, Durette said: "My greatest asset is that I'm a good listener—allowing the customer the time to express

what it is they are looking for with a new design." While she listens carefully to them, she gets a sense of how they live their life and their sense of style, which enables her to envision and formulate a plan to create what they want.

Durette works toward a goal of "simple elegance" in her design work, always striving to incorporate sustainability in products and installation. Her projects include custom residences in Santa Fe,

Albuquerque, and Taos, New Mexico, homes in Texas, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Beverly Hills, Laguna, California, as well as health food stores and spas in Texas, New Mexico, and Nevada. Before Durette and her husband, Michael, the drummer extraordinaire, moved here in 2001, she was doing three things in Santa Fe: sewing professionally, architecture/interior design work, and was a ballroom dance instructor for ten years. "I was anxious to move to Las Vegas because I'd never lived outside of New Mexico. Michael is from New York City, and because he wanted to expand his musical career where there was a greater opportunity, we chose Las Vegas, which was the only place to have a phone book printed twice a year. I put two ads in the summer book—one for sewing; the other for architecture/interior design work—and decided to let the Universe guide my choice. Immediately, I got responses to both. I contracted to an interior designer, and after working for the gentleman for two years, I transitioned out and set up my own company with him as my client. Urban Ranch came about because I was working out of the house, so I set up its location in 2003.

### Costume Designer

"A few years ago, I started sewing again. I bought a new sewing machine—the first since 1981, so, of course, it's fantastic! My husband works for Gary Puckett and the Union Gap. I was asked to make jackets for them, and after the show, Gary asked, 'Would you bring your tape measure?' Two years later, I'm making new jackets



and modernizing the jackets off an old album from the early 70s. Now Jay and the Americans are asking me to make their jackets!"

Last year, Michael and Durette decided to renew their wedding vows in the little church in Santa Fe, where they were married 20 years ago. At that time, Durette not only made her wedding dress and everything else for their first wedding and had so much fun doing it. "For my 20th-year celebration, what was I going to wear? I made a sacred heart jacket out of Irish linen tablecloth of my mother's, which I embroidered and wore over a simple dress with lace that came from my grandmother's sewing box. I love repurposing and use old table cloths and other items I've collected over the years—fabrics, beads, buckles, buttons, threads."

### Social Consciousness

Durette is a strong believer in being active in bettering our world. "If we can all work toward less waste and more recycling, we can decrease our footprint on the Earth. Shopping with a conscience is a great way to start. I like to know the source of the products that I'm buying for the store – and ultimately, my clients. Feeling good about your purchase is a bonus!"

She was raised by a single mother who was always involved in volunteering in one form or another. "My Mother was extremely active all her life with many charities – and she organized and ran most of them! So giving back is second nature to me."

She has been involved as a volunteer in many programs in New Mexico and served on several boards here in Las Vegas (ALS of Nevada; BLVDS' (local magazine) and on the PAC for the Art Institute of Las Vegas). Currently, she is a member of the Nevada Commission for Women, a designation appointed by the governor, and is a member of IDS (Interior Design Society) and ADAS (Architectural and Decorative Arts Society).

I meet so many interesting people who I end up admiring when I

have the opportunity to interview them. As I listen to their journey through life, it's amazing to me to see how one decision leads to another and acts as pieces of a puzzle to display a clear picture of how they've reached where they are in life now. It's fascinating. Thank you, Durette, for sharing your journey with us, because you are a woman of many talents, indeed.

Durette can be contacted at:  
702.368.2601  
studio@durettecanditodesign.com  
www.urbanranchgeneralstore.com



Original jackets Durette made for Gary Puckett and the Union Gap.  
From left to right: Mike Candito, Jamie Hilboldt, Durette Candito, Gary Puckett, and Woody Lingle.

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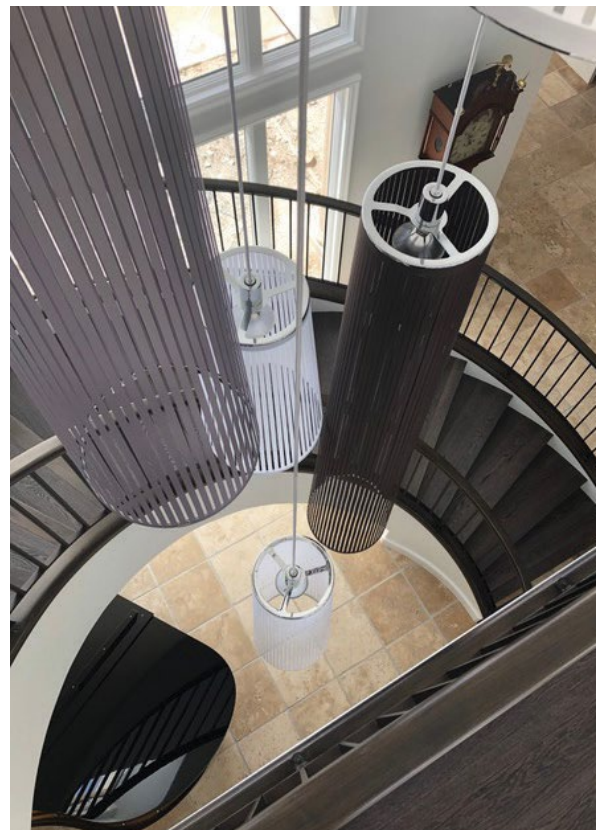
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LIZ GINI

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# Cigar Box Purses

By Joan S. Peck

Although I think of Liz Gini each time I view the purse in my closet, which she created several years ago, it was nice to walk through her front door and see her smiling face in person. It didn't seem possible that so much time had passed since I'd seen her last. Surprisingly, as soon as we began to talk, it seemed like it had been only yesterday. We'd originally met more than 10 years ago when she first began to create her cigar box purses to sell.

Once I walked through the door and looked around, immediately I was drawn back to that time when I'd struggled amid so many choices to pick out the purse that I have now. Cigar box purses were everywhere—different sizes, different shapes, different mediums, different colors—each more intriguing than another—all beautiful. I wanted them all! That's why Liz's purses are in demand, and it becomes so difficult to walk away with just one.

I sat down to keep me from running from one cigar box purse to another and pulled out my phone to record her journey of creating a successful cottage industry.

## Why cigar boxes?

LG: I made them as purses when I was a child. My dad smoked cigars, and I used the boxes as my purse—just without the hardware that is on my purses today. Although the original cigar boxes have its closing slide hook, it has no handle.

Why cigar boxes? Because they are sturdy, come in different sizes and shapes, are beautiful, and can be very valuable, depending upon the maker and seal. The most wanted ones are those with four-color foil stamps on the exterior and or inside. I preserve the stamps on the inside but the outside ones I usually cover because one side of the box is always not finished well. Did you know that a four-color foil strip is the most expensive way of advertising per square inch?



Cigar Box Purse / Photography by Susie Magit of SueZQ Fine Art



Cigar boxes are great to use. Usually, the worst thing that can happen to one of my purses (unless you leave it on top of your car and drive away as I did) is having it scratched. But no worries because I can sand it down and easily repair it.

### What about the lining?

The lining is a bit more difficult to do, but I made up templates for the different boxes.

### Where do you get your boxes?

LG: Friends or people who saw my work would invite me to look at what they had saved in their garages, so I'd get some for free. But it became harder and harder to find them until I became friendly with several cigar lounges in town. Many of those places throw them out, and some of the boxes I've saved have been very beautiful. Periodically, I hold shows at some of the lounges where I'm able to sell my purses.

### What made you get started in this business?

LG: I certainly seemed like an unlikely candidate, that's for sure. I'd spent 25 years in the legal profession and before that 20 years in the hospitality/hotel fields.

Although I am more right-brain, left-brain jobs such as hotel management, court clerk, paralegal, real estate investor and newspaper columnist provided for my family. They fed the body, but not the soul.



Cigar Box Purse / Photography by Susie Magit of SueZQ Fine Art

Then after 35 years of marriage, I went through a sad divorce. Like many others who go through any kind of transition, whether by choice or not, there was a shuffling around to discover who I was and what I wanted to do in life. One of our strongest identifiers as a person is based upon what you DO, and after spending so many years in the world of business I had to start all over much as I had in the past.

### Had you ever done art before?

LG: I have a daughter who is a valid art teacher and was artistic from the get-go. I didn't know how to relate to such a creature since I couldn't even draw a straight line! But we did crafty things—tried anything that came up.

### How did you learn to paint?

LG: When I asked my daughter to give me painting lessons, she wished me luck, saying I was hopeless as did anyone else I asked. But in 2007, I persevered and attended an art class taught by Linda Hilderman at Michael's store. She taught the Donna Dewberry One Stroke way of painting, which was easy enough for me to handle. That is where I learned to paint my flowers. Now I can also paint birds and faces.

### What did your first box look like?

LG: Liz laughs. "I took a picture from an Architectural Digest Magazine of an oriental rug to decoupage it onto the front of the box. It was very popular.

**What is your number one best seller?**

LG: Far and away, it is Marilyn Monroe with her saying, "Well behaved women rarely make history." A close second is a purse with Audrey Hepburn and her saying, "Elegance is the only form of beauty that never fades."

I also love the cat and other purses with the saying, "Got wine?"

**What is your most endearing art form?**

LG: My painted flowers. I've gotten better with shading them, and my clients love them. They're especially popular in the spring and the summer—perfect as a gift for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

**What are you working on now?**

LG: Two things. I've done a bag to celebrate our new hockey team Vegas Golden Knights. They are doing very well.

I met a photographer, Susie Magit, who specializes in exquisite photos of hummingbirds and flowers. We are collaborating by using her photos on my cigar box purses. Even though we've only been working together for a short time, we already have experienced great success with the most popular photo being the hummingbird. You can see it on the cigar box purse I'm holding in my hand.



Above: Marilyn Monroe Cigar Box Purse / Below: Las Vegas Golden Knights Cigar Box Purse / Photography by Susie Magit of SueZQ Fine Art





**Do you do special orders?**

LG: Yes, I do. A lot of special orders are for dog owners with pictures of their dogs and owners of ladies' businesses. I've worked with

Dale Cooper and her business, "A Little Bling," as well as having my creations in several boutiques. My dear friend, Jazzee Hastings, and her boutique was such a help to me when I first started. Today, my

unique purses can in found in Las Vegas galleries and hotels, and California wineries and shops.

Before I left, curiosity got the better of me, and I couldn't resist asking Liz what her daughter thought of what she was doing now. Liz smiled happily. "My talented daughter is very supportive and compliments my work."

No surprise there! Her cigar box purses are fabulous. Want one? Go to her website. I wish you luck in being able to pick out only one!

Contact Information:  
 702.257.6668  
[www.pursesbylizgini.com](http://www.pursesbylizgini.com)  
 Facebook: Purses by Liz Gini

Above: Liz Gini (left) and Susie Magit with an assortment of avian inspired purses / At Left: Cigar Box Purses / Photography by Susie Magit of SueZQ Fine Art





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# HUNGRY FOR LOCAL CULTURE?

## BITE INTO EAT MORE ART VEGAS!

By Kendall Hardin

Are you a “culture vulture” starved for an endless banquet of arts and entertainment offerings across the Vegas Valley? Then [EatMoreArtVegas.com](http://EatMoreArtVegas.com) is your guide for whatever whets your appetite - from theatre, music and the visual arts to dance, opera and the literary arts. It’s the perfect one-stop “shopping spot” to satisfy all your cultural cravings.

“The challenge across the Valley isn’t lack of cultural options. it’s

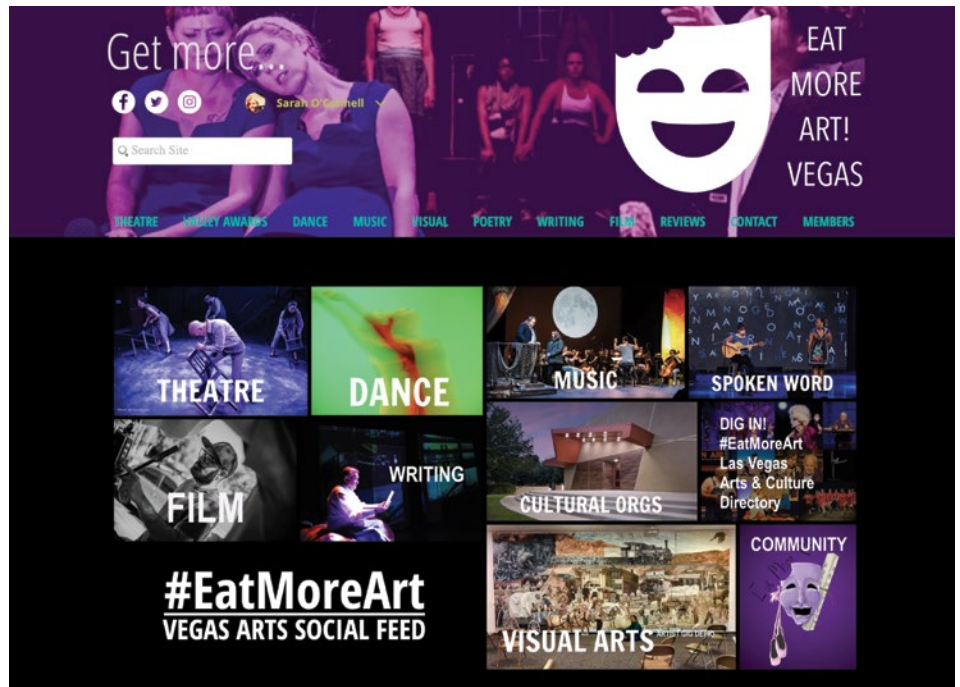
competition for promotion,” says EMAY founder and local theatre director, Sarah O’Connell. A graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, she struggled to connect at first with her peers when she moved to Las Vegas from San Francisco in 2002 with her A-list lighting designer husband, Axis de Bruyn, whose credits include a long list of star performers like Queen, Fleetwood Mac, Elton John, Carol King and James Taylor.

“Fortunately, I ran into a member of The Asylum Theatre at a local community center and began to meet fellow creatives bit by bit.” Over time, she realized how much work was produced without most of the public knowing about it. It was 2 am one morning in November five years ago when Sarah resolved to serve up a menu of news and reviews for local cultural happenings beyond the Strip.

"A one-person show was debuting downtown at Art Square just as the area newspaper cut their local reviews." Worried that no coverage would result in an empty audience, she decided to take matters into her own hands and secured a domain to inform the public about the event. A week later, O'Connell invited the laid off critics to continue their independent coverage on her platform. The site was named after her mantra, "You are what you eat, so *EAT MORE ART!*"

It did not take long for the cultural scene to seize on the opportunity to tell their own story to the public. Within six months, several volunteer staff joined the team to support features and reviews across multiple disciplines including theatre, dance, poetry, film, music, and literary communities. Organizations can submit their listings free of charge, which are then delivered to a growing list of the thousands of *Eat More Art Vegas* fans through the "TASTE Vegas Arts" newsletter and social media bounces.

The art evangelizing grew beyond the internet when EMVAV salvaged the management of the *Las Vegas Valley Theatre Awards*, which just celebrated its sixth sensational



year in a sell-out production rivaling that of the Oscars on television. Earlier this year, Sarah established open forum meetings for arts leaders called *The Vegas Arts Table* on the second Monday of every month. The vision is to develop a network that connects artists and organizations to each other in order to improve communication, build partnerships and inspire collaborations. "We believe that art is for everyone, and opportunities to participate are all around us.

By informing and supporting each other, we accomplish a lot by

working smarter, not harder."

EMAV continues to champion the arts in Carson City and Washington DC, as well as locally - winning support from both U.S. Congresswoman Susie Lee and U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen. A successful campaign to keep "Debbie Reynolds Drive" on the Las Vegas map resulted in the delivery of hundreds of petition signatures urging the Clark County commissioners to save the Hollywood legend's street designation. An agreement to withdraw the proposal was reached while the county and other stakeholders relocate, rather than erase, Reynolds' namesake street.

"We celebrate the cultural legacy that our local creative community has built for us, and everyone is invited to sample a rich menu of experiences that grows every day," O'Connell explains. "Check it out. We're saving your seat at [eatmoreartvegas.com](http://eatmoreartvegas.com)."



Las Vegas Valley Theatre Award Winners, July 2019

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# BRUSH STROKES

## THE ARTWORK OF KATARZYNA KOCIOMYK

By Brian G Thornton, IIDA  
Artwork by Katarzyna Kociomyk





Let me paint you a picture. A portrait of a talented and provocative woman. Imagine a writer with an artistic bent invited to script a piece focused on a fine art master painter. Then, visualize the imagery of a newcomer to Las Vegas whose blank canvas began in Bielsko - Biala, Poland, her hometown. Other than metropolitan cities like Warsaw, Kraków, or Gdańsk, plus one of my favorite vocalists, Basia Trzetrzelewska, this writer was unaware of the culture, sights, sounds, culinary taste, let alone the rich art history of Poland until meeting Katarzyna Kociomyk.

The first Impression was absolutely influenced by sight seen. Kasia [Kaz-chia], as she is known, is a statuesque woman with flowing brunette hair. Like her art, something intriguing compels one to know more of the story therein. Quite frankly, without establishing provenance of her craft, this master painter and her lifelong history in art is itself a painting beckoning appreciation of its complexity and beauty.

**At Left:**  
"Follow Me"  
Oil on Canvas - 48" x 60"

As we sat down for this interview, Kasia and her adoring husband and established art promoter, Wojtek Pilczynski, insisted we make this gathering less formal. The painting of this picture is a passionate conversation of their love of fine art, genuine hospitality and certainly their love of one another. Their minimal, yet elegant space populated by her stunning paintings set the tone for our studio visit. It was an evening at a private gallery experience. With music accompanying the tour, calm grey walls fade into background, then the art organically leapt off the walls. Focused lighting further enhanced each and every finite detail from the large lifelike paintings to the smallest of works as well. When asked if this was deliberate Kasia remarked "I believe that with good art in any space you don't need much else. Just the simple functionality."

As Kasia began to speak, I imagined her brush slowly, deliberately adding the basic background colors for which her story - this painting - would emanate. Kasia began to emote about childhood memories "I painted my first painting when I was four," she recalled. She even joked about blue paint being everywhere even on herself. The oil paint and turpentine scents in the home were olfactory triggers of her father, a self-taught painter and artist in his own right.

"He was the first person who gave me art and art history lessons." Her mother's family history in weaving and textiles also influenced her art. Growing up in a very small apartment during the seventies further

evokes visions of modest beginnings. She remarked that she never painted on a table, but always properly on an easel. As an only child, she literally got lost in her imagination - for escape, curiosity, and what was just around the corner. "Art was my escape at a very early stage of my life."

Her very finite, honed education began in primary school, then applying to and being selected for the art high school Art Lyceum, in Bielsko-Biala, and finally, a scholarship to Academy of Fine Arts

Warsaw. Ironically in 1993, in the first year, a modeling agency representative noticed her not only for her artistic success, but her natural beauty. It was her commitment to her craft that helped a 19-year-old Kasia pursue her prestigious art training over modeling. Ford Models is one of the oldest and most respected international modeling houses based in New York. What a dilemma, yet following her dream was more important at that young age. It would be many years later that her talents would lead her to America.





Her self-portrait is one of the most memorable pieces in what was about a tour of easily two dozen paintings displayed. I guardedly said “Kasia, that painting reminds me of you.” The piece, “Looking Out For Myself,” with three women in a spiraling vortex clearly could be mistaken as a photograph.

Her technique is eerily accurate. Looking at digital images of many of her pieces may often be mistaken for photography. The modeling of the human form and flattering detail she possesses is that of a master. Her understanding of

form, lighting, perspective, color and even just the right amount of fantasy complete the picture. The fact that she was trained in the late 20th century in Europe is lost in the themes and efficacy of her imagination.

“I relax by painting. That’s what I do most of the time. I get stressed when I don’t feel like painting or I feel like I don’t accomplish my artistic goals fast enough. That’s very scary feeling.”

It’s difficult to believe that one artist can possess such a broad range.

**Opposite Page:**  
“Getting Ready”  
Acrylic on Canvas - 60” x 48”

**Above:**  
“Falls and Triumphs Series – Looking Out For Myself”  
Oil on Canvas 48” x 60”

"I use several painting and drawing techniques in different mediums on various surfaces and in multiple styles. I use numerous brush techniques... learned during my studies and perfected over the years using wide range of brush sizes and shapes." Kasia continued, "In the last several years I mostly utilize

combination of palette knives and brushes to achieve the desired effect."

One very interesting technique is called impasto (thick paint application) and is employed in the painting "Rebel." Each and every painting has meaning beyond the

**Below:**  
"Rebel"  
Oil on Canvas - 72" x 72"





movement. Imagination is overtly tasked to transport you to someplace within her painted milieu.

Following training and early adult life in Warsaw, Kasia was fortunate to meet the catalyst that has led her to America. After the Academy and marriage, as a young mother

of two she began teaching art in her son's school. That modest yet personal sacrifice would ultimately draw her abroad. "I initially came to the US for two weeks to establish a relationship with an Art Gallery in Vermont. I was introduced to it by my neighbor and parent of one of my students. The owner of the

**Above:**  
"Flamenco High Fashion #4"  
Oil on Canvas - 48" x 48"

gallery was a brother of the parent I knew."

That two-week excursion led to a permanent move and has shaped her life with now husband, Wojtek. Since 2009, they have travelled and established galleries while Kasia was constantly challenging

herself with new subjects, styles and techniques.

Today, Kociomyk is known as skillful master at the painterly effects. Her works appear in private collections in the United States, Canada, South America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. In addition to

surrealism, still life, landscapes and cityscapes she has been commissioned to paint portraits as well. Of note, she was the first woman in history who painted an official portrait of legendary boxing great Muhammad Ali. Now immersed in her Las Vegas studio I wondered what's next and how this new chapter of her life will influence her creativity.

"I don't believe it was anything in particular that influenced me. My mind runs on high all the time with new ideas I want to paint and so often I need to slow my mind down to create something of commercial appearance. Being a professional artist and staying afloat internationally is a very difficult task. There is so much going on behind the scene besides creating a work of art that one needs to be wise to keep going as an artist and in the same stay true to her or his identity and integrity."



**Above:**  
Katarzyna Kociomyk

**At Left:**  
"Sub Sequential Consequences of Neglecting Second Chance"  
Oil on Canvas - 72" x 48"



Kociomyk added "Growing up in a communist country was very hard for majority of people. It made me very resilient to failures and established appreciation for hard work and perseverance. I knew I wanted to be an artist since I was four years old and I quietly was determined to go against all odds. So

far I am enduring the challenge..."

So, if you don't get the picture yet. Each and every piece is a portal into her ever evolving life.

Open your eyes to the colorful and imaginative world of Katarzyna Kociomyk, artist.

**Above:**

"Falls and Triumphs Series – Walking Toward Light"  
Oil on Canvas 48" x 48"

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# QUENTIN ABRAMO

## A BELIEVER IN MULTI-USE SHARING

By Joan S. Peck



I was curious to meet Quentin Abramo—the man who had set up the Savidan Gallery so that he could honor his 90-year-old mother and display a portion of her more than 600 posters she’d collected during her years in Europe and the United States. After all, who doesn’t want to meet a man who demonstrates the love of his mother in that way?

It’s an interesting story. In 1929, Suzanne L’Hostis Abramo was born in Brest, France, but lived in Morlaix during the war years. In 1947, after attending and graduating from secretarial school in Paris, Suzanne was employed at a glove factory there. The small

room where she was living was bare and needed decoration. So began Suzanne’s poster collecting. In the beginning, the posters were given to her free of charge by the merchants who displayed them. Later, she had to pay the merchant a small price for the tax stamp required by the French government.

In August 1953, Suzanne applied for and was hired as a secretary for the French embassy in Washington, D.C. In 1954, she met Guy Abramo, a U.S. Marine, and married him in Los Angeles, California, the following year. From that time on, they lived in various European countries and some United States cities—all the while

with Suzanne (pictured below) collecting more art posters.

Her collection of posters is gorgeous. Each poster displays a famous artist with the announcement that his work was going to



be shown in a famous gallery. Picasso, Matisse, Gonzalez, Miro, Modigliani, Rousseau, Chagall, and more are just some of the artists in her collection.

The Savidan Gallery & Collection was named after Suzanne's mother, who loved all kinds of art and shared that love with Suzanne, who passed the love of art down to her four sons. Abramo's desire is to bring more art into the Las Vegas downtown district, and he has made his studio available for other artists to show their works.



"I know what I like and what I don't. I'm not an aficionado or expert about art," Abramo said. I smiled because I had to agree that was true for most of us since we usually base our reaction to art on our personal experiences.

### How did you get started in the furniture business?

"In 1982, I graduated from college with a History major. I met

a gentleman—my best friend—whose father was a furniture manufacturer based in North Carolina. He introduced me to the commercial office furniture business in Los Angeles, California."

In 1983, Abramo started his own furniture supply company in Denver, Colorado. He worked in business development with Carnegie Fabrics in New York City and held several positions at Haworth, the

second-largest office furniture manufacturer in the world.

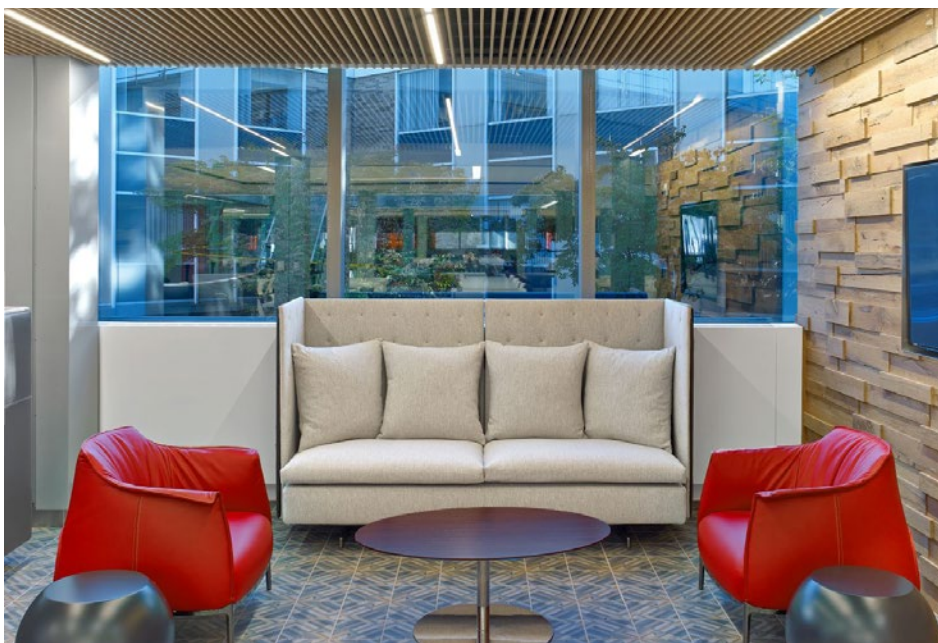
### What is Faciliteq?

Faciliteq is a Preferred Haworth Distributor (and main distributor) that provides high-performance Architectural Interiors, including Modular Walls, Modular Power, and Data Distribution, Raised Access Flooring, and office furniture in the Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Denver Metropolitan areas.

### How did you end up in Las Vegas?

In 2005, after Abramo bought the business from his ex-partner in Phoenix, Arizona, he founded Faciliteq Business Interiors here in Las Vegas. "I changed the name from Facilitec to Faciliteq, which stands for facility and technology." That combination is what his brand stands for in how he considers and creates office space.

"I believe in adaptable re-use and purchased an old auto repair shop



on Main Street in the Arts District/Old Downtown neighborhood to support the downtown's rehabilitation movement. The garage had good architectural bones, and by keeping a part of the old garage and painting it orange, I was able to integrate art into the architectural part of my business location. It took 18 months of remodeling and construction before Faciliteq could open for its commercial furniture business."

As Abramo took advantage of the need for shared space, 831 Main Street became the downtown hub for Las Vegas co-working. It has been renamed Co-Operate on Main.

Co-operate on Main consists of 10,000 square feet and is the flagship location that provides creative co-working space to grow your business, and meet with your clients. "Whether you're a startup, consultant, remote worker, or team of entrepreneurs, our community

welcomes businesses like yours as part of our team.

"We place our tenants on a path toward success by offering access to flexible workspaces, cost savings, shared resources, and a community of professionals you can count on.

"We're often complimented on our unique and innovative features such as ample natural lighting, high ceilings, exposed brick, two conference rooms equipped with AV, various desk options in a fun, productive environment. With accommodations for every business need, we're confident our space will inspire creativity, promote collaboration, and will help you get stuff done."

### **Why did you move your office into your new location on 3rd Street?**

"The co-working space took off to the point where I decided it would

be best to move our business offices to the HOP building in 2013. It is there where the Savidan Gallery was created and exists today."

### **What does the future hold for Faciliteq?**

In 2015, Faciliteq expanded into Phoenix, Arizona, and Denver, Colorado. "Our goal is to create sustainable, economical, and employee-friendly workplaces. Faciliteq was built on and remains true to the conviction that workplaces should be designed thoughtfully – with specific regard to environmental impact, technological implementation, and the comfort of those using it."

Inspired by his upbringing in Italy, France, and Germany, Abramo's appreciation for art and culture are at the heart of Faciliteq's service. He hopes to integrate the art aspect into the architecture of the other two locations via the Savidan Gallery and Collection, making it a regional experience and part of his brand.

When we finished the interview, we sat and talked about the wonders of living in Las Vegas where anything can happen. Quentin said that when he landed here in 2005, he had no intention of staying more than a couple of years. Now after 14 years, he's still here and planning to stay. Sound familiar? Isn't that what happens to everyone who moves here?

Contact Information:  
[www.Co-operateon.com](http://www.Co-operateon.com)  
[www.faciliteq.com](http://www.faciliteq.com)





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*“At Faciliteq,  
we’re in the  
business of  
making your  
business  
better through  
workspaces that  
are as inviting  
and comfortable  
as they are  
unique and  
inspiring.”*

---



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# ABOUT TOWN



**Las Vegas NEWH Glamp 2019** (Photos courtesy of Mike Sosa)  
**Above:** Las Vegas NEWH Glamp Event 2019 - Ponderosa Ranch in Zion, UT



**Left:** First Place Winner - Age of Aquarius - by Dezmotif Studios  
**Below Left:** Second Place Winner - Victorian/Steampunk by MGM Resorts International  
**Below Right:** Third Place Winner and Resort Favorite - Bergman Walls Speakeasy



**Las Vegas Jazz Society Picnic in the Park at Winchester Center**  
**Left:** From Left - Greg Blando, Maggie Peterson Mancuso, Gus Mancuso, Judy Tarte, Mimi Williams





**Summerlin Arts Festival**

**Above:** Artist Niki Sands

**Above Right:** Nancy Moon Higgins and Curtis McCoy



**Chic Compass Magazine Launch at diptyque** (Photos courtesy of StanleyTRAN Photography)

**Right:** Reveal of On-line Silent Auction Donation for Forgotten Song Foundation by Katarzyna Kociomyk

**Below:** Carolyn Muse Grant, Mark Abelman, Lola Abelman, David Tupaz, Corazon Ugalde Yellen Armenia, Eloisa Ugalde

**Bottom Right:** Staci Alayvilla

**Bottom:** Chic Compass Magazine Launch at diptyque





**Foundation Room at Mandalay Bay Art Showing for Katarzyna Kociomyk** (photos courtesy of Talbot Snow / TalbotSnow.com)

**Left:** Mix and Mingle in Shangri-la Room

**Below Left:** Deng Jones, Nate Jones, David Tupaz and Katarzyna Kociomyk

**Below:** Thomas Burger

**The Smith Center Very Vegas Showcase with The Las Vegas Philharmonic and Composer Showcase** (photo courtesy of Jonathan Scott)

**Bottom:** The Las Vegas Philharmonic with Clint Holmes





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