

CREATIVE FORCES



THESE FOUR ARTISTS SPEAK TO WHAT INSPIRES THEM



NEW BEGINNINGS

BY LAUREN CLARK

In a cruel twist of fate, Santa Barbara-based interior designer Jodi Goldberg lost the Montecito home she spent years renovating and designing from the ground up; it was actually the project that sparked her entire interior design career. Jodi, an unflinching optimist, stresses it could have been much worse – she was sure she narrowly avoided meeting a tragic end during the 2018 mudslides all because her longtime friend had a premonition. On the night of the mudslides, Jodi recollects her friend telling her he had a really bad feeling she and her family needed to get out of the house that night. “I said, ‘Why? You told me it was going to rain. Why am I afraid of rain?’ and he said, ‘I just have a feeling,’” she says. Jodi protested, telling him her husband had friends from out of town staying with them. “He said, ‘You need to ask them to get on the road before it gets too stormy.’ They left at 7:00, and by 7:15 we were unwinding in our PJs, getting ready for bed, and his voice kept coming in my head, ‘Leave the house.’ So we literally called our best friends who lived around the corner and went in our pajamas – no computers, nothing – and went to bed. I had horrible sleep that night, like something felt really wrong to me.”

The friends Jodi stayed with last minute awoke her from her fitful rest at 6:00 the next morning and asked her to come downstairs. “She said, ‘I need to show you something and I need you to just breathe.’ I turned on the TV and there was a man standing in mud, like just...in mud. And I didn’t understand what was happening and she said, ‘That’s your old house.’ And I said, ‘Where is my house? Like, *where* is my house?’ And all I can tell you when something like that happens is, you go to a really adrenaline-y place. I was just shaking, and out of sorts, and in disbelief that anything like that could happen to our life and to so many others. There were missing bodies and treacherous stories of people struggling to get out of the mud.” She continues: “We couldn’t get into the area for about two weeks, and then they started bussing people in. I really didn’t know much except that I knew I was very lucky that we left, that we would have never made it. There was nothing left of our house – zero. Out of the whole acre, there was nothing.” Weeks later, volunteers from the Santa Barbara Bucket Brigade helped Jodi and her family dig around the site of her home, but all she managed to recover were a few personal items that she still cherishes today – her husband Johnny’s favorite book, *The Buddha Text*, and two “his-and-hers beautiful fat Buddhas that were on our dresser in our bedroom,” Jodi recalls with a hint of a smile.

Surrounded by the exotic textures and colors of her resortlike downtown home, Jodi’s voice breaks with emotion while retelling this story – the only disturbance in her placid, soothing presence. Beautiful and fashionable, she wears a becoming off-the-shoulder blouse and soft black beret that sets off her dark hair and eyes. Soft



(Photo by Riley Yahr)

music and incense linger in the background – her aesthetic sense infusing the atmosphere. Jodi describes moving her entire family to Santa Barbara on a whim. Born in Santa Barbara but a self-described “L.A. girl” by the time she married and had kids and began a flourishing career in fashion, she and her husband made the decision to move to Santa Barbara when their daughter, Jordan, began struggling to fit into the juggernaut of the Los Angeles school system. Jodi’s husband proposed they move to Santa Barbara after discovering the beauty of the town in his many bike rides up the coast – and with the gorgeous landscapes and beautiful, warm community, they felt “What a great place to raise our children.”

Jodi was skeptical at first, wondering what she would “do” in

Santa Barbara, but things quickly fell into place. After checking out Montecito Union School (MUS), she found that her old principal was the principal at the time. Jodi and her family moved to the Coast Village Inn, signed her daughter up at MUS, and they lived in the motel for 90 days until renting a house while they searched for their forever home. “We rented this house with no furniture. We would literally skateboard through the house because there was nothing in it except two cardboard boxes on a blow-up mattress. We lived there for a while and kept looking at houses. The one house that kept presenting itself to us was one on Olive Mill. It was one that kept falling out of escrow because no one wanted it – there was so much to do with it, but we fell in love with it! It was 285 Olive Mill Road. We bought it, and it was a humongous purchase for us at the beginning – a lot of money, very stressful – but we took the plunge to change my daughter’s life, really. We moved in and ended up with immediate plumbing issues. But inch by inch, I carved that house into a Balinese paradise retreat. It was everything we wanted in a home and more. It was our safe place, our sanctuary, our.... It was really where I thought I would live and die, until the mudslides happened.”

Losing her cherished family home in the 2018 mudslides made Jodi realize she “needed to get into the community and help and figure out what we were going to do: It’s just a breath at a time, a kindness at a time, and the only thing I can say about Santa Barbara and the community is I don’t think a couple could have felt more loved and held, and I know they weren’t only holding us. They were holding *the whole community* that was suffering. People reached out

with food, clothes, underwear, and basics when we had nothing.”

With the support of her community, Jodi and her family bounced back. However, 30 days after she moved into her new home downtown, in 2020, she received another horrible shock – she was diagnosed with lung cancer. “I don’t know if it was the stress of everything or my destiny, but they told me I was going to die, and it was very touch and go for a while,” she says. “I had Stage 3b lung cancer, which my mother had just died of. So, the last 18 months have been struggling to be alive, have a good attitude, and stay in the faith and not in fear, and be brave, and lead by example, which is always what I want to do – lead by example. I’m always trying to be part of this community that gave me so much, so I always try to give back.”

“I resonated creating spaces for people where I knew I was going to leave them feeling however they told me they wanted to feel within their homes – whether it be Zen, joyful, or like they’re on vacation or in a faraway place – I knew I could create that for people.”



(Photo by Riley Yahr)

“Time doesn’t stop because you get sick. Time doesn’t stop because you lose a house,” Jodi emphasizes. “You have to find within yourself what is going to make you keep wanting to go forward.” It’s why she says her work is so important to her. Afraid no one would hire her when she got sick with cancer, Jodi was relieved to find that was not at all the case – she threw herself into her work, designing a number of high-profile homes throughout the pandemic and her illness.

Jodi got her start in fashion styling, the industry she worked in most of her life, and she launched her own business at the tender age of 18. When she moved to Santa Barbara and started “gutting the Olive Mill house,” as she puts it, neighbors and friends took notice of the work she did on her home. People in the community began seeking her out to design *their* homes, and Jodi not only found she was innately talented at interior design, but she loved creating beautiful, functional living spaces for people. She speaks about the families’ homes she designs with a sort of reverence. “I resonated creating spaces for people where I knew I was going to leave them feeling however they told me they wanted to feel within their homes – whether it be Zen, joyful, or like they’re on vacation or in a faraway place – I knew I could create that for people. Lucky enough, the longer I worked, the more inspired I became. I was given so much opportunity – I felt I was given the chance to water my own garden.”

Although Jodi used to run an entire boutique out of her home, now she focuses on selling beautiful jewelry in a personalized,



(Photo by Nancy Neil)



Jodi was brought on to design this modern-Zen home in the hills of Montecito as a nod to wabi-sabi, upholding a minimal style while delicately bringing in one-of-a-kind and eclectic pieces (Photo by Nancy Neil)

exclusive way from her home. “I’ve always had a room in any house I’ve lived in with stuff to sell that I’d actually want to wear. I used to have a whole boutique in my old house with clothing and gifts but now I pretty much only do jewelry. I curate my jewelry with two people – one from L.A. and one from Tahiti. We work together to create looks that I know are going to sell and are Santa Barbara style. We’ve been doing that forever, and it’s kind of a hidden little gem. It’s word-of-mouth only. It’s one-on-one, it’s in my home, people come and shop. It’s a very personal experience. It’s really nice if people are going to an event or just needing to update their jewelry wardrobe,” says Jodi.

Jodi Goldberg’s story is one of remarkable resilience and deep love between her family and community. In particular, she shares an incredible bond with her husband. “I’m so lucky – I seriously won the lottery,” she says. They met when she was 24 and have been together ever since their very first meeting. Jodi says through tears, “It’s as if the universe aligned, the clouds met, and the heavens did something. He said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you all my life,’ and I said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you all my life.’ I had found my everything. He’s my everything. Why my life never made sense before, Johnny was my sense.” With her amazing lasting love story and passion for her work and her community, Jodi underscores the importance of not taking anything for granted. “I go to bed with a gratitude prayer every single night: You’re a breath away from being here, or not. It’s that simple.”



AN ARTFUL EYE FOR FASHION AND HOME DECOR

BY LAUREN CLARK

“I was born in Kenya, but primarily grew up in England where my father was a director for a bakery chain called Greggs,” recalls Caroline Diani, CEO and founder of DIANI Boutique, DIANI Shoes, and DIANI Living. “I grew up being fascinated by his job and how he created magic in all these bakery retail stores. I would follow him around on a Saturday morning when he would do his rounds and check in on everybody. That was when I was really young, and it was my first job when I was allowed to work at age 15.”

Diani, who trained in fashion design at Kingston University outside London, ended up in Ventura, California, in 1995 when she accepted an internship at Patagonia. Her early work experience set the tone for the type of values she hoped to embody in her own business one day. “I fell in love with California and the lifestyle – and Patagonia as a company. I was just so intrigued by how they ran a business in a for-profit way but with such an emphasis on philanthropic work and doing good for the employees, the consumer, and the environment. Looking back, I realize these were stepping-stones that led me to starting my own business.”

Fast forward to 1999. Diani relocated to Santa Barbara for a relationship but ultimately stayed for the love of business and the welcoming community. In 2002, she opened her first namesake store since so many women in town felt dissatisfied with the local shopping options. “A lot of women were saying, ‘I don’t shop in Santa Barbara, there’s nowhere for me. I go to Los Angeles or shop when I’m traveling around the world.’ So I started researching and



realized I could get access through my connections with friends who I went to college with to some European brands that hadn't made it out here yet," she says.

Because of Diani's well-traveled lifestyle and her keen curatorial eye, she brought pieces from Europe, and her clean, modern aesthetic caught on instantly. (She was one of the first three American retailers to bring the popular French designer Isabel Marant to the United States.) This clamoring for the exclusive European designers she carried led her to create an e-commerce website. "It was really how my online business exploded," she says. "We were getting calls from all over the world. People were asking, 'This piece is sold out in Paris. I heard that you have it – can you ship it to me?' It was getting so time intensive sending photographs, taking measurements, credit cards back and forth," says Diani. "It just blew up. Isabel Marant almost single-handedly got me on the map internationally."

Her boutique grew well beyond clothing to include shoes and accessories as well as a home goods store and blog, and Diani credits the restoration of her own upstate New York Colonial home for increasing demand for her aesthetically pleasing collections. The 1752 farmhouse is being lovingly restored for the last five years since Diani and her husband, Jeffrey Doornbos, purchased the home. Her New York home has been featured in *The New York Times* as well as Jenni Kayne and the Remodelista blogs. "That put a big spotlight on the home store," says Diani. "Clients I'd had for years started asking me to do their homes."



(Top to bottom) Diani's mix of old and new decor at her New York home

Diani's aesthetic is influenced by her upbringing in Kenya and England, and her mother's love of Victorian flourishes. "It was very floral. Laura Ashley was a big inspiration for her," Diani says with a laugh. For many years, Diani shied away from these details, leaning into a much more modern aesthetic. However, "After 20 years of living with that, I realized there were a lot of things from my childhood that brought me comfort," she says. "I started sourcing vintage fabrics online and at antique fairs, so I've melded a mix of mid-century modern with old vintage florals and old French linens and stripes. My New York home has lots of antiques but textural elements that are more modern, like seagrass rugs and sharp brass fixtures and lighting as well. And being born in Kenya, we had a very indoor-outdoor lifestyle, so I enjoy creating that way of living."

During the pandemic, comfort became key not only for Diani's customers, but also herself, and though now she sees her clients tossing their sweatpants for blazers and dresses, there is still a new emphasis on comfort and timelessness as opposed to following every passing trend. "During the past 19 years, DIANI has become a place where women of all ages can feel like I offer something for them – for their wardrobe, home, and their lifestyle," she says. "A lot of what I talk about on my blog is being a woman in my 40s. There's a lot of personal struggle with letting go of what was and embracing what is. Time and again, customers say, 'It resonates with me, because I know when I come to DIANI, you can relate to me, and I know you're buying for me, and my stage of my life.'"



Farmhouse-chic finds at DIANI Home

A WOOLEN GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

BY LES FIRESTEIN

Santa Barbara-based artist Kellen Meyer grew up in Yuma, Arizona, but moved to Montecito 10 years ago. Her recent show “Entwined” of Jules Verne-esque fibrous formations that she has knitted, crocheted, and otherwise loomed recently showed in both locations – at her beachside studio gallery here in Carpinteria as well as the Yuma Art Center.

Fiber sculpture called *Golden Shining Hour*, canvas and wire. “This piece is a nod to my love of bees and the whimsy of the frayed canvas backed by a setting sun,” says Meyer. (Photo by Cecily Breeding)



Installation artist Kellen Meyer in her studio with pieces from the “Entwined Collection 2021” that include large-scale fiber installations, paper and reed sculptures, and holding petals/leaves that became the ethereal window installation at the Yuma Art Center (Photo by Chris Orwig)





Meyer in her Carpinteria studio gallery
 (Photo by Cecily Breeding)

As one walks inside Meyer's creative space, one instantly feels enveloped by the warm embrace of nature; being inside her studio feels like curling up inside the most sumptuous cable knit sweater on a chilly day at the beach. You simply can't not want to touch her sometimes massive, burgeoning, lively, seemingly almost respirating installations – in fact you want to get *in* them. And some of the works are large enough to do so.

Meyer's work is ethereal and organic and clearly rooted in

biological forms. She works mostly in wool, organic papers, reeds, and sometimes the pieces include driftwood. The word "biomimicry" comes to mind, with some clusters looking like sea fans, kelp, drying fishermen's nets, and others like mermaids' purses. Then there are other installations that look like the random collisions of nature we find washed ashore and entwined by the surf – but rendered in wool. Everything is bristling with life.

Over the course of her career, Meyer has worked in many



Large-scale fiber sculpture called *'Twas a Misty-Meisty Morning*, hand-dyed canvas. "This was inspired by early morning misty walks at the beach when the tide is low and I glimpse limpet shells adorning the rocks," Meyer says. (Photo by Cecily Breeding)



A large sculptural beehive fiber installation called *And Then Came The Blossoms*, knit and crocheted wool and local driftwood reminiscent of budding vines or underwater kelp forests (Photo by Cecily Breeding)



(Photo by Cecily Breeding)

mediums as an artist and has been knitting and crocheting since childhood, but it wasn't until somewhat recently that she put her many skills together to create "Entwined." Undoubtedly she was influenced by her somewhat recent move and proximity to the sea.

When asked what inspires her work and where it "comes from," Meyer replies, "Sometimes I start with a shade or a mood or a form. But I mostly don't direct the art; it directs me. That's

been an epiphany for me as an artist – letting go and just *surfing* it. When things are really working, my process is more like I channel the art – I try to help the art get where it wants to go, help it along, and stay out of its way. Maybe I'm more of an instrument than a musician. At least that's how it feels when I'm really in my flow."

So where do these ethereal forms come from? "I think they come from a greater consciousness but not necessarily mine. I'm just a facilitator or maybe more of a midwife."

PATTI PAGLIEI

WAXES POETIC

BY LAUREN CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIM REIERSON

It was kismet how Patti Pagliei, founder and creative director of Waxing Poetic jewelry featured in her Funk Zone boutique The Shopkeepers, began her business. At the Rose Bowl Flea Market, she noticed beautiful wax stamps for sale, ones used to seal letters and documents. “I saw those, and I had this thought, *Why is nobody turning these into jewelry?* It came to me and just made sense – the letters are stamped in wax, and the lost wax process is how you do casting for jewelry. So I started collecting seals. I started stamping them and making my own waxes.” Pagliei’s colleague then connected her to her business manufacturer of 20 years in Bali, Indonesia, who helps bring Pagliei’s designs to life. Once a fun way to relax and be creative with her girlfriends – “I’d invite girlfriends over, and we’d sit around and drink wine, make jewelry, and have fun” – Pagliei got more serious about her jewelry line and started doing trunk shows. Then, an actress wore a Waxing Poetic necklace to the Golden Globes, and soon after, Pagliei’s jewelry would be carried at national retailers such as Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, and Anthropologie.

Pagliei is adamant that she wanted to make objects of lasting value as opposed to the trend of the moment – quality, warmth, and energy radiate from all her pieces, which have an old-world, charming imperfection. Pagliei frequently collaborates with world-renowned thought leaders and writers such as Elizabeth Gilbert, Glennon Doyle, and Cheryl Strayed. “Buy things that last. Buy things you love. Buy things with meaning,” she says. The pieces borne of these collaborations often feature bits of written wisdom or positive affirmations. Collaborations like these, with women who are working toward improving the world, are important to Pagliei. “Moving toward the future, I just want to be part of the wave of goodness that keeps the world together.”

Pagliei is a trained fine artist and designer from New Jersey and came to Los Angeles in 1995 to work in the film industry. “I got into storytelling and that stage of my life made an imprint on me because I realized story is really powerful – it’s what connects people,” she says. Then, Pagliei recalls entering a difficult period right before and after 9/11. “I was working at a tech startup company when the bubble burst in 2001,” she says. “I lost my job, I was going through a divorce at the same time, I was doing a lot of soul-searching. After 9/11 happened, the world stood still. With



*“Buy things that last. Buy things you love.
Buy things with meaning.”*

both my personal world and our national security shaken, I went back to basics – I started making things that felt good and drew on my own ideas and talent to support myself. Little did I know that later that year, magic would happen – I’d fall in love with my now-husband John, and the wax seal idea I had would flourish into a larger business with his help.”

Even the name Waxing Poetic was divinely inspired. “I was talking to my husband about what to name this new line of



jewelry— he’s a writer, an avid reader, loves words, loves language — and it came to him, ‘Waxing Poetic!’ And I said, ‘Waxing poetic? It’s a double entendre!’ The masters for casting the charms were made from stamped wax...and poetry is this thing you can’t really put your finger on. It’s expressing some truth of experience in a meaningful way. And then putting the words waxing and poetic together, it takes on the meaning of like a waxing moon — it’s becoming, it’s growing, becoming more poetic like being verbose and being more connected to this beautiful world. As a name, Waxing Poetic works on so many levels. To this day, it still feels like a divine gift.” MJ

