

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 93



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## BEST Dressed

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Meet interior designer Corey Damon Jenkins

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## AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

When the holiday season rolls on through, it's often the traditions we create or uphold that make it memorable. This issue of American Lifestyle magazine offers up some highlights to add to your list.

Fancy a trip back in time? Make your way to the Big Apple and check out the restored vintage subway cars parked at the New York Transit Museum, take a ride on the Holiday Nostalgia Train that runs on some of the regular routes, or grab tickets to the New York Transit Museum's Subway Swing, where you can enjoy a night of live music and witness revelers in retro garb swing dancing.

In Philadelphia, you can get your fix of nostalgia by strolling through the villas of Fairmount Park. Built in the 1700s and 1800s as summer retreats, they are now popular holiday destinations. For almost a half century, the mansions have been festively decorated for the annual tradition now dubbed A Very Philly Christmas.

If you prefer a more competitive spectacle, Breckenridge, Colorado, is the place to be during the International Snow Sculpture Championships. Sixteen teams, chosen out of 250 sculpture proposals from all over the world, congregate for five days to shape and carve big blocks of snow.

Where will you venture this holiday season? As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

**Stacey Shanner**



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## Front of Tear Out Card 1

# APEX

### santa maria-style POT ROAST

- 2 tablespoons sea salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 3 pounds boneless chuck roast
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 to 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut in half and then quartered
- 2 cups beef broth



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## Back of Tear Out Card 1



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4. Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or on high for 3 to 4 hours or until the meat is tender and falling apart.

Reprinted with permission from *Holiday Slow Cooker* by Leigh Anne Wilkes, Page Street Publishing Co. 2017.



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**ICE-SKATING BENEATH THE TREE** at Rockefeller Center. Catching the Rockettes' Christmas Spectacular. Self-guided store window tours of Tiffany's and Saks Fifth Avenue. These are holiday traditions that have lasted through generations of New York City natives and tourists alike. A perhaps lesser-known tradition takes place underneath the city from Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve. This is when the Metropolitan Transit Authority starts putting the New York Transit Museum's restored vintage R-1 through R-9 train cars back

into operation. Dubbed the Holiday Nostalgia Train, this throwback event began in 2004 to coincide with the subway's centennial.

The trains are in regular service, only requiring one swipe of a MetroCard or \$2.75. The route and schedule are announced each fall, and they may change slightly from year to year. As Regina Asborn, deputy director at the New York Transit Museum, explains, "It's a bit of a puzzle depending on what construction is going on. Not

all trains fit on all the tracks, so we work with transit and go with their recommendations." Part of the preservation of these cars involves keeping them moving, letting the oil seep into all the right places, and passing electricity through the circuits. Subway trains are machines, after all, and perform best when they are running. If left to sit, the cars eventually decay and become inoperable. The creation of the Nostalgia Train is a win-win situation for the vintage trains and the people who love to ride them.

This vintage series of sixty-foot-long subway cars was designed in 1932 and named for the contract it was ordered under, Revenue Contract 1. Each car contained sixty seats in a combination of crosswise and lengthwise seating and had room for 280 passengers. The R-1's trademark green, riveted shell is characteristic of the industrial look of the Depression. The R-1 cars also have four sets of double doors on each side, and safety devices were installed so doors could not be held open by passengers.

The New York Transit Museum facilitates other Nostalgia Train rides throughout the year on the vintage subway cars, picking up passengers from somewhere in the system and taking them to designated places like Coney Island or to the Transit Museum itself. The museum was founded in 1976 as part of the country's bicentennial celebration. It was a time of transition in the city, and transit employees saw an opportunity to remind New Yorkers of the wonder of the subway. They resurrected vintage trains and brought them into the Court Street Station, which had been decommissioned and served as an ideal venue for the museum. The exhibit was only meant to be temporary, and yet it still stands over forty years later.

Though these trains are still a surprise to many subway riders, their popularity has grown over the years. The vintage holiday rides are especially beloved by the vintage clothing aficionados, jazz musicians and enthusiasts, and swing dancers. So beloved, in fact, that unofficial pop-up parties began happening as a collaboration between these groups whose interests coincided on a specific era. For ten years, New Yorker and swing dancer Amy Winn has



Though these trains are still a surprise to many subway riders, their popularity has grown over the years. The vintage holiday rides are especially beloved by the vintage clothing aficionados, jazz musicians and enthusiasts, and swing dancers.

organized this ad hoc festival of sorts. Dubbed the New York City Vintage Train Jazz and Swing Platform Festival, this one-day event in December (always on a Sunday afternoon) sees these subsets converge with the general public in joyful celebration.

The seven-hour shindig features twelve to fourteen bands playing fifty-minute sets on the train, a designated station platform, or both. Bands include ensembles that are already well known to swing dancers, those headed by frequent side players who want to present themselves as bandleaders, or emerging groups eager to get in front of new audiences. Because this is a free event, the public is encouraged to tip generously and the bands are given the nudge to advocate for themselves.

This kind of gathering is a big deal in dense New York City, where large collective spaces are few and far between.

Why does Winn willingly take on such a giant project? “I’m always happy to help with events that help musicians earn a living, but this one is a gift to all of those communities,” she says.

Winn is equal parts humble about and proud of this unofficial event. It’s a true labor of love, garnering her no reward other than the mirth that comes from watching the awed faces of those who do not expect a train car full of people decked out in vintage garb, elaborate hairstyles, and a six-piece New Orleans-style jazz band to suddenly appear in front of them.

The New York Transit Museum took notice of the success and joy of this musical day and created an official annual event called Subway Swing,



© Shaelyn Amaio



© Marc Hermann

**“ THE MUSEUM RELEASES ABOUT 300 TICKETS, THOUGH THE NUMBER VARIES A BIT EACH YEAR. IN 2017, SUBWAY SWING SOLD OUT IN UNDER NINE HOURS, WHICH IS THE FASTEST TICKETS HAVE EVER SOLD OUT.**



© Shaelyn Amaio

which began in December of 2014. Shaelyn Amaio, public programs producer at the museum, explains, “We knew there were swing dancers and people in vintage clothing enjoying the vintage cars, but they didn’t necessarily know about the Transit Museum. We saw it as an opportunity to grow our audience by bringing people into the museum and continuing the celebration of the vintage trains there.”

The train picks up people at a designated subway station and heads to the museum, where the musicians play and the party happens. The museum releases about 300 tickets, though the number varies a bit each year. In 2017, Subway Swing sold out in under nine hours, which is the fastest tickets have ever sold out. Amaio says, “People come every single year and call me in October to ask when tickets are going on sale. We feel so lucky to have that community of people who want to share that experience and want to come back to the museum. It’s become a really lovely

relationship and a really good way for us to bring the community to life.”

The Transit Museum is open six days a week, and it offers a great opportunity to tour some of the vintage trains with fewer crowds around. You can sit on the rattan seats, look up at the ceiling fans, read the retro advertisements, and pose for memorable Instagram pictures. There are guided tours of the museum on the weekend as well.

Whether it’s a ticket to Subway Swing, an official Nostalgia Ride, a visit to the New York Transit Museum, or simply hopping on a vintage train during the holiday season, anything associated with the restoration and running of the vintage subway cars is a wonderful opportunity to experience history firsthand—and maybe to dance a bit of swing on the side.

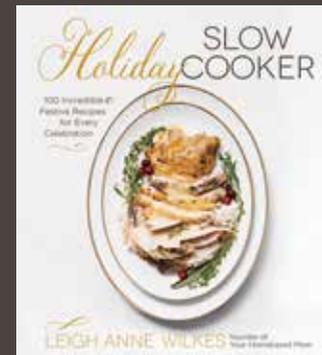
For more info, visit [nytransitmuseum.org/nostalgiarides](https://nytransitmuseum.org/nostalgiarides)



# holiday SLOW COOKER

recipes by leigh anne wilkes | photography by erica allen

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*My husband loves his mashed potatoes. I think they are too much work, all that peeling! This recipe is the perfect compromise for us and keeps my husband happy. No peeling required, and the addition of roasted garlic dresses up these potatoes.*

## roasted garlic and herb mashed potatoes

SERVES 8

- 1. Roasted Garlic:** Slice the top off the garlic heads so that the cloves are exposed.
- Coat the bottom of a 6-quart slow cooker with olive oil, and add the garlic cut side down.
- Cook on low for about 4 hours. The garlic will brown slightly and become very soft.
- Squeeze one head of garlic to get the garlic out. Refrigerate or freeze the remaining garlic heads.
- 5. Mashed Potatoes:** Spray the inside of a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray.
- Add the potatoes, seasonings, roasted garlic and chicken broth, and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 to 1½ hours.
- Use a hand mixer to blend the potatoes. Add the butter and milk slowly, a little at a time. You may not need the full amount of milk, or you may need additional milk to get the consistency of the potatoes you prefer. Add more seasonings if needed.
- Keep the potatoes warm in the slow cooker until you are ready to serve.

**Roasted Garlic:**  
4 to 5 heads of garlic  
2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil

**Mashed Potatoes:**  
2 pounds red potatoes, quartered  
1 teaspoon oregano or Italian seasoning  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon pepper  
1 head Roasted Garlic  
½ cup chicken broth  
¼ cup butter  
⅓ cup milk or cream



For video versions of these delicious dishes, visit [americanlifestylemag.com/bites](http://americanlifestylemag.com/bites)



*Santa Maria roast gets its name from a city in California. A Santa Maria rub typically is a mixture of salt, pepper, garlic, parsley and whatever else you want to add to it. It is traditionally done with a tri-tip roast, but it also makes a delicious pot roast. Add some carrots and potatoes, and you've got a perfect pot roast. Feel free to get creative and add additional favorite seasonings, but it really doesn't need it. You will have lots of delicious liquid in the slow cooker that you can use to make gravy if you want.*

## santa maria-style pot roast

SERVES 4 TO 6

**1.** Mix together the salt, pepper, garlic powder, parsley and sugar and rub over both sides of the roast.

**2.** Heat the olive oil in a pan large enough for the pot roast over medium heat, and then sear the roast on both sides for about 3 to 4 minutes or until browned.

**3.** Place the carrots and potatoes in a 6-quart slow cooker and place the roast on top. Add the beef broth, being careful not to pour it over the top of the roast and wash off the seasonings.

**4.** Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or on high for 3 to 4 hours or until the meat is tender and falling apart.

2 tablespoons sea salt  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1 teaspoon dried parsley  
½ teaspoon sugar  
3 pounds boneless chuck roast  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
3 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces  
3 to 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut in half and then quartered  
2 cups beef broth



*Thanks to the lemon juice, zest and lemon pepper, this lemon-garlic chicken packs a lemony punch! You can use breast or thigh meat, although I prefer thigh meat. Serve over pasta and the leftover juice in the slow cooker becomes your pasta sauce.*

## lemon-garlic chicken pasta

SERVES 4 TO 6

1. Sprinkle the chicken with the lemon pepper, oregano and salt on both sides.
2. Melt the butter over medium heat in a large frying pan and brown the chicken on both sides, about 3 to 5 minutes per side.
3. Place the chicken in a 6-quart slow cooker. Add the chicken broth, lemon juice, zest and garlic to the pan the chicken was in. Bring it to a boil and scrape up all the goodness on the bottom of the pan. Pour the sauce over the chicken in the slow cooker.
4. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours (breasts will take more like 4 hours). The chicken will be tender and pull apart easily.
5. Remove the chicken and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of juice from the slow cooker. Add the cornstarch to the juice and then return it to the slow cooker. Cook the sauce for 30 minutes on high to allow it to thicken.
6. Pull the chicken apart and put it back into the sauce. Pour it over the pasta and mix to combine. Garnish with fresh parsley.

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs  
1 teaspoon lemon pepper  
1 teaspoon dried oregano  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons butter  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chicken broth  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh lemon juice  
1 teaspoon lemon zest  
2 teaspoons fresh minced garlic  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
Fresh parsley, for garnish



*These Lemon Pull-Apart Biscuits may just move to the top of your favorite lemon recipes. Using refrigerated biscuits makes them delicious and easy. The layers of light, fluffy biscuits covered with fragrant lemon sugar and then drizzled with a tart lemon glaze are a dream!*

## lemon pull-apart biscuits

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 1.** Spray a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray or create a foil slow cooker liner to prevent the biscuits from overcooking on the edges. Use two pieces of foil that are 18 inches long. Fold them in half and then fold again so that each foil piece measures 4 × 18 inches long. Place both pieces into the slow cooker so that they line the sides of the slow cooker. Then place a piece of parchment paper in the slow cooker, over the foil.
- 2.** Cut each biscuit into four pieces. Mix the lemon zest and sugar together.
- 3.** Place the lemon sugar mixture in a plastic bag, add the biscuit pieces and toss to coat. Place the biscuit pieces in the slow cooker. Sprinkle the remaining sugar from the bag over the top of the biscuits. Drizzle with the melted butter.
- 4.** Place a cotton towel or paper towel between the lid and the slow cooker to absorb condensation. Cook on high for 1½ to 2 hours. Remove the lid for the last 15 to 30 minutes of cooking time.
- 5.** For the glaze, mix together the powdered sugar, butter and lemon juice, and drizzle it over the top of the cooked biscuits.

### Biscuits:

- 1 can refrigerated biscuits, jumbo size (8 biscuits)
- 2 lemons, zested
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted

### Citrus Glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

# HOMES FOR THE HOLIDAY

written by **james mccllelland** | photography by **elijah lee reeder**



The parlor at Woodford Mansion.

**PHILADELPHIA'S FAIRMOUNT PARK IS** the largest landscaped urban park system in the world. From the steps of the art museum to the banks of the Schuylkill River, the park spans about 10,000 acres across the city. Several houses, or villas, are the jewels in the park's crown. Built in the 1700s and 1800s by affluent Philadelphians as summer retreats from the city's heat, today they are popular year-round destinations—especially during the holidays. For almost a half century, the mansions have been festively decorated for a seasonal event now dubbed A Very Philly Christmas. Open through December 31, the homes are a holiday must-see in the city.

Among these jewels is Lemon Hill, not far from the iconic Philadelphia Museum of Art and Boathouse Row. Philadelphia merchant Henry Pratt built this stately summer villa in 1800 on property formerly owned by Revolutionary War financier Robert Morris, who eventually went bankrupt and lost his property.

Pratt had the villa designed in the neoclassical style. It features graceful oval rooms with carved doors and fireplaces on each of its three floors and is named for the lemon trees that Pratt grew in his greenhouses. Although the greenhouses no longer exist, the lemon trees do and were decorated for the 2017 holidays; they were just one of many types of Christmas trees found in the mansion, including a grand tree decorated in gold ornaments. Lemon Hill also featured a child-sized ice sculpture reindeer in 2017, resting by a sleigh.

Drive a few miles north and you'll reach Laurel Hill Mansion. A widow named Rebecca Rawle inherited the property in 1761 and later married Loyalist and Philadelphia mayor Samuel Shoemaker;

they built the villa later in the 1760s in the Middle Georgian style. When Rebecca died in 1819, she left the house to her son, attorney William Rawle. In 1783, he had established his own law firm, which later became Rawle & Henderson. The practice was passed down through the family, and it's now the oldest continually practicing law firm in the United States.

Laurel Hill features an unusual octagonal music room, which was added during the early nineteenth century. The villa still retains the pianoforte by John Broadwood & Sons, London, 1808, and an antique harp. Today, the villa is maintained by the Women for Greater Philadelphia. In 2017, they decorated the handsome house in a women's fashion theme. The house also featured a giant tree, which was grandly adorned with a large collection of satin hearts

and a collection of antique dolls at the foot of the tree, including an original Raggedy Ann doll that's owned by one of the members.

Less than a mile away from Laurel Hill is Woodford Mansion, where snowman-shaped topiaries greeted you at the door in 2017. In 1756, Judge William Coleman purchased twelve acres of land and built a one-and-a-half-story symmetrical brick Georgian house. It has center hallways, two bedrooms, and a basement kitchen, but perhaps Coleman's best legacy to Woodford is the beautiful parlor with its covered ceiling and exquisite carved wooden chimneypiece. This room was decorated in white, gold, and red for the 2017 holiday event, with greenery abounding—including a lovely, fully decorated Christmas tree.



Exterior decor at Woodford Mansion.



Presents under the tree at Woodford Mansion.



Laurel Hill Mansion decked out for the holidays.



Laurel Hill Mansion's music room features a pianoforte and an antique harp.

Starting in 1771, the new owner, David Franks, expanded the house, adding a second floor with a Palladian window above the front door. That created a grand new stair hall leading upstairs to a cheery ballroom and new bedrooms. The original ground floor—which is open for touring during the holidays—was left largely intact, and its Georgian drawing room has survived unchanged from Coleman's day.

A National Historic Landmark in recognition of its architectural and historical significance, Woodford also exhibits the extraordinary Naomi Wood Collection of antiques. Among the treasured items are Federal objects of the 1790–1810 period, including a mahogany shelf clock and an American liquor chest-on-frame. Four of the side chairs were sold by Philadelphia



cabinetmaker Jacob Wayne in 1796, for which the bill of sale still survives.

The grand Historic Strawberry Mansion, within walking distance of Woodford, is situated on thirteen acres. It was constructed circa 1790 in early American Federal style by the renowned lawyer Judge William Lewis, who drafted the first law abolishing slavery in the United States. Lewis called this home Summerville.

Judge Joseph Hemphill, who bought Strawberry Mansion in 1821, added the elaborate Greek revival wings during the 1820s. The mansion also features an important doll collection, porcelain pieces, and other early American artifacts. For A Very Philly Christmas 2017, the mansion was decked in white and gold (particularly the ballroom), and its dining room was set for a traditional holiday dinner, complete with elaborate centerpieces and food.

To complete your tour of the Fairmount Park holiday houses, cross the Schuylkill River, and then head south to Cedar Grove, which is conveniently located near the Philadelphia Zoo and the Please Touch Museum.

Built in 1748 by Elizabeth Coates Paschall, a wealthy Quaker widow, for herself and her three children, it originally was a modest farmhouse.



Two generations later, at the end of the eighteenth century, Elizabeth's granddaughter and her husband more than doubled the size of the house, adding a gambrel roof and a large lunette window in the new gable. By 1848, the next generation of the family had added the piazza, wrapping it around both sides of the stone house; all the downstairs rooms give access to it.

The house features a two-sided wall of closets, as well as many of the original furnishings and objects. Cedar Grove depicts the simplicity of life in the

1800s, as the house's architecture reflects the family's Quaker origins. Originally located in the Frankford section of Philadelphia, this house was moved, stone by stone, to Fairmount Park in 1926, when its reconstruction was completed. The house was last fully restored by the city in time for bicentennial celebration in 1976.

In 2017, Cedar Grove was decorated for the holidays as it may have been in the early twentieth century by John and Lydia T. Morris, the last generation of Morrises to live in the house.

Showcasing a colonial revival aesthetic, wreaths and topiaries, adorned with cloved oranges (called pomanders), lemons, apples, and pineapple, were beautifully displayed throughout the house.

An afternoon at the historic houses of Fairmount Park offers something for everyone during the holidays and, depending on when you visit, you may even enjoy musical performances, entertainment, or food tastings in these iconic homes—so be sure to plan ahead. Parking is free at the mansions, and shuttle service is available for even more convenience. No matter how you arrive, though, these Philadelphia landmarks will add a special charm to your season.

For more information about A Very Philly Christmas, visit [holidaysinthepark.com](http://holidaysinthepark.com). For information about the historic houses, visit [parkcharms.com](http://parkcharms.com).



Scenes from Historic Strawberry Mansion.

**“ FOR A VERY PHILLY CHRISTMAS 2017, THE MANSION WAS DECKED IN WHITE AND GOLD (PARTICULARLY THE BALLROOM), AND ITS DINING ROOM WAS SET FOR A TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY DINNER, COMPLETE WITH ELABORATE CENTERPIECES AND FOOD.**



# all toyed up

interview with **mitchel wu** | written by **matthew brady**

*Wanting to spend more time with his wife and daughter, Mitchel Wu ended his wedding photography career in favor of a new take on photo subjects: toys. Today, this Californian is internationally known on social media for his creative and playful shots of beloved pop culture characters.*

**Have you always been creative?  
Has photography always been  
your profession?**

When I was a kid, we didn't have all the high-tech games and smart devices that kids have today. I climbed trees, played in the dirt with my toys, and made up a million different stories with my friends as we played. I was drawing from the moment I could hold a crayon, making up my own characters and stories and creating multipaneled cartoons of their adventures. I excelled at art in school (unlike other subjects), which led to me attending the California College of the Arts in Oakland, where I graduated with a degree in illustration.

What I learned in art school was invaluable because everything applied to creating images, regardless of the medium. It taught me about lighting, composition, storytelling, and so much more. However, I never shot professionally until I began doing weddings in 2008. My entire adult life has revolved around creativity, including six amazing years with the Walt Disney Company and creative collaborations with Lucasfilm, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros., and Cirque du Soleil.

**How did you get started photographing toys? Was it challenging?**

I photographed my last wedding in November of 2015. My daughter was in high school, and I was really starting to feel the sting of missing so many weekends with her and my wife because of weddings. I knew that my daughter would be off to college in the blink of an eye, which was a big determining factor in my decision.

Coincidentally, I saw some toy photos on social media around the same time that I was transitioning out of weddings. The idea struck me as really odd but also really cool. Once I took my first toy photo, I was hooked and never looked back. With toy photography, you're limited only by your own creativity, and I immediately saw the potential to make it into a career.

My journey to toy photography was the complete opposite of most toy photographers: I came into it with absolutely no toys but with a strong foundation in photography, so I was able to jump right in and start creating. In fact, many of the techniques I learned while photographing weddings are applicable to this field, especially lighting and photographing details (like wedding rings, table decor, etc.) in a beautiful, artful manner.

**You also do client work. What does this entail?**

I've created hundreds of images for Mattel for their toy and game brands, including UNO and Scrabble. I was also commissioned to create images for Hot Wheels's 50th anniversary, one

of my most creative and high-profile projects to date. And I'm thrilled to have recently picked up Warner Bros. Entertainment as a client. Regardless of the product and brand, one constant always remains—creating images with emotion that bridges the gap between the toy and the stories in one's head.

**Who are your creative influences?**

It's not really who so much as what. I like to stay open to all types of influences, as I never know where ideas or inspiration will come from. I enjoy capturing the comical, the ridiculous, and the unexpected in my images and often find that simply observing people and the absurdities of life (in my life, mostly) can lead to a lot of fun ideas. My wife and I also enjoy hitting galleries and museums as much as possible, something that's not difficult to do living in Los Angeles. And, being constantly bombarded by the media and pop culture on a daily basis, it's hard not to have some of that influence seep into one's images.

**What are some of your favorite toys to shoot, and why?**

I tend to work with toys that I have an emotional connection with, and that connection is often created by memories and nostalgia. One of my most photographed properties is Pixar's *Toy Story*, and that's because it was one of my daughter's favorite movies as she was growing up. I've watched that movie dozens of times with her. I know the story and the characters extremely well, and it always brings me back to a different chapter of my family's life. I also photograph toys based on the Maurice Sendak children's book *Where*

*the Wild Things Are* for the same reason. Besides nostalgia, another reason I buy and photograph certain toys is for their storytelling.

**Do you enjoy storytelling as much as the photography and scene creating?**

I love the storytelling aspect. It's been the one constant throughout my creative career, and it helped draw me to toy photography; it's integral to my images. There are three primary components that I try to focus on with my toy photography: story, emotion, and practical effects—in that order.

**What's your process for creating movement in your photos?**

Most of the effects seen in my images are real, often captured in real time after I've staged the scene; so, for the most part, my visual effects have actual movement when I take the shot. Real milk is splashing around Ant-Man, real smoke and fire are emanating from Woody's and Jessie's matches, and real dirt is flying around Scooby-Doo. I find that the best way to infuse reality into my images is to capture something real. I use Photoshop, but it's rarely to add anything to my imagery—usually only to remove things.

**What has social media meant to you during this venture? Do you like connecting with people?**

Social media has been a game changer for me and for others who understand how to utilize it. There's a vibrant worldwide community of passionate toy photographers and collectors on Instagram, and it's been incredible connecting with others and building

**“ ONE OF MY MOST PHOTOGRAPHED PROPERTIES IS PIXAR'S TOY STORY, AND THAT'S BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF MY DAUGHTER'S FAVORITE MOVIES AS SHE WAS GROWING UP.**





really nosedived. I came to realize that personal work is what really drives everything else: creativity, growth, and future client work. One of my goals for 2018 was to keep creating personal work regardless of how busy I got with client work, so I was excited to do that four-week project.

I also really enjoyed working on the Hot Wheels image campaign. Having grown up playing with Hot Wheels, it was a project that was very near and dear to my heart. And it was some of my most fun, creative work to date. Another client project I've really enjoyed working on is for an amazing little toy company called IAmElemental, which creates lines of female action figures. They were actually the first toy company to commission me for images, so it's been quite amazing taking this journey with them.



friendships there. At the same time, most companies, including toy companies, have a strong presence on social media and understand the value of being able to market and build brands that way. Instagram has become a place where corporations, photographers, designers, and artists can come together and connect.

**What have been your favorite toy photography projects so far?**

I don't normally work on personal projects as much as individual images. However, it's a timely question since I recently finished my first photo project, titled *28 Days of Toy Stories*, through which I challenged myself to create a new *Toy Story* image every day in February. During the second half of 2017, I was so busy with client work that creating personal work

**If you could live as one of the characters from your works for twenty-four hours, who would it be and why?**

I'd probably go with Mr. Incredible from *The Incredibles*, which also happens to be my favorite movie from Pixar. I like that he's a superhero with "normal" flaws: nothing too overblown or dramatic. I think I also identify with Mr. Incredible because he's such a family man!

**What's one surprising item you cannot do without on a toy photo shoot?**

My Bluetooth speaker for streaming music from my iPhone. Just the other day, I was photographing a *Toy Story* scene while listening to the song "You've Got a Friend in Me," which really



helped set the mood! I just love to have music playing during shoots.

**What's next?**

I plan to continue creating images and telling stories for toy companies and also to begin creating imagery for editorial and advertising clients. I'm also planning a workshop series on toy photography, as there has been an incredible amount of interest from people who want to learn how I create my images. A long-term goal is to travel to different countries to hold these workshops, meet fellow creatives, and share ideas and techniques. Lastly, I'm in the process of connecting with local, national, and international galleries to exhibit my work. I have a lot of exciting things on the table right now and am really just enjoying the journey.

For more info, visit [mitchelwutoyphotography.com](http://mitchelwutoyphotography.com)





# best dressed

interview with **corey damen jenkins** | written by **shelley goldstein** | photography by **werner straub**



Corey Damen Jenkins with one of his clients.

## What is your background when it comes to design? When did you open your own business?

I initially got my start in the field back in 1996, but I didn't launch my own design firm until December of 2009.

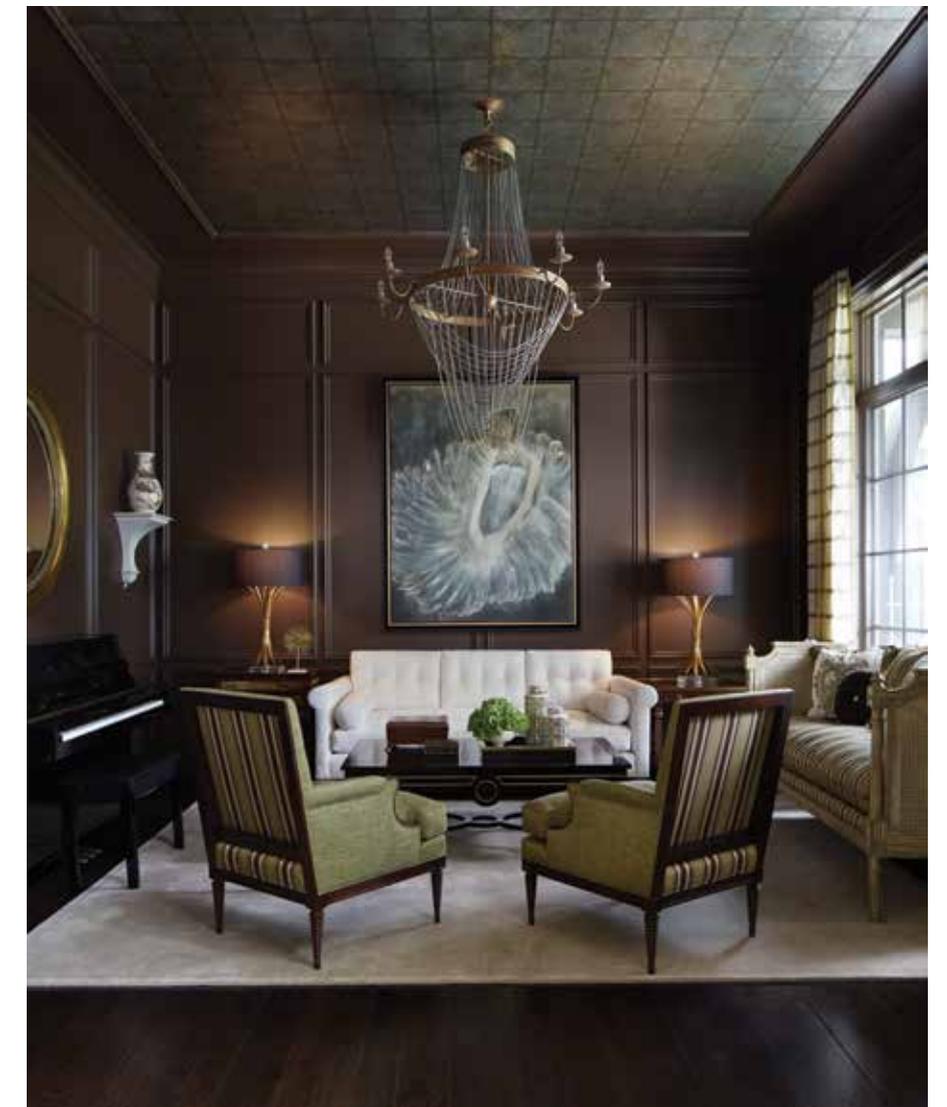
## What is your earliest memory of noticing how good design could make an impact?

My earliest memory of how important interior design could be dates back to the early 1990s, when my mom was redecorating our family's living room. I remember her being stumped by which shade of peach or blush to put with gray (because she was already "over" mauve!).

## What types of design feed your creativity on a daily basis? What do you find yourself constantly checking out?

I'm obsessed with couture fashion and how symbiotic it is with interior design and other aspects of our culture. Anything that Jean Paul Gaultier, Balmain, or Elie Saab showcases on the Parisian runway captivates me. I find myself also drawing inspiration from the architecture designed by ancient civilizations like the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and the first Persian Empire.

*Designer Corey Damen Jenkins harnesses avant-garde inspiration from the runways of haute couture fashion and transforms it into his signature **trad nouveau** style of interior design. This Birmingham, Michigan, resident is the king of candor.*



**// I'M OBSESSED WITH COUTURE FASHION AND HOW SYMBIOTIC IT IS WITH INTERIOR DESIGN AND OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR CULTURE. ANYTHING THAT JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER, BALMAIN, OR ELIE SAAB SHOWCASES ON THE PARISIAN RUNWAY CAPTIVATES ME.**



**What are your design frustrations?**

The actual skill of interior design is not frustrating—the gift of creativity is innate and comes from within. But the real challenge comes from interactions with people during the process. Being an interior designer calls for the best human resource skills and diplomacy.

**What sets you apart from other designers?**

My candor—I keep it real. I tell it like it is, and I'm not ashamed to share the setbacks and struggles I've experienced in my past. I want to help others find their way and that sometimes means dropping the pretense. People value transparency, so they relate to you more when you're being your authentic self. We have more in common as a human species than we know.

**Who is your ideal client?**

My ideal client is the one who communicates what they want (even if they don't know what they want—admitting that part is half the battle) and trusts my vision. Also, my staff and I strive to always be respectful and hospitable to our clients, so clients who treat us with kindness and honesty are highly valued.

**What is your philosophy on design and life?**

Life is short. Enjoy it to the fullest while you can. And, if you can somehow infuse something beautiful into your lifestyle, that's a life well lived.

**How would you describe your design style?**

My design style is trad nouveau. It's a fresh, continental mix of tradition and modernity.

**What traits make you well suited to be a designer? What are some challenges you've had to overcome?**

I always tell young design students that the most important skill they can have in this career is not necessarily the degree, the ability to sketch, or other technical abilities. Rather, humility is the most important quality to possess. Humility keeps you grounded. It is the only mind-set that enables you to learn from your mistakes and grow.

**Tell us about this project:**

This ranch was a new construction project, so I was thrilled to work with a superbly talented team of architects, builders, and craftsmen. The interiors are traditional in style, but there are some rustic and French country influences as well.





**What was the goal of your clients for the house?**

The goal was to take the husband's and wife's very disparate style aesthetics and somehow fuse them into a cohesive look. She loves pink, toile, and florals, and he . . . does not. So that was the primary challenge, and it all came together beautifully, thanks to a ton of communication and compromise!

**What were your first steps in conceptualizing the design of the house? How would you describe the style of the finished project?**

Usually, I start designing a new space by conceptualizing it on paper. Hand-drawn, three-dimensional room sketches go a long way toward helping a client visualize the ideas. From there, we started pulling the color palette together and fleshing out the other design elements for construction.

**How did you settle on a color palette for the house?**

I generally give my clients at least three different color palettes to choose from, and then they vote for their favorite.

**The lighting is very dramatic in the parlor and great room. Can you talk about the chandeliers?**

I believe in going big or going home when it comes to chandeliers, especially with twenty-foot-tall ceilings such as these. So for the parlor and great room, I chose oversized selections to make a stronger statement. Chandeliers can be more than ambient sources of light—they can also perform as sculptural art.





Plaids, houndstooth, stripes, and other menswear trademarks were staples in his apparel choices, so the wallpaper seemed to be a natural choice to reflect his style for the gentleman's study.



**What was your favorite room to design? Which room was the most challenging?**

My favorite room is probably the formal parlor. I think it turned out so provocative, with its dark chocolate walls and moldings. It was a challenging space to design, too, only in that it took some effort to convince the clients to sign off on such a dark hue. But when you couple a rich paint color with brighter furnishings like art and mirrors, it actually produces a powerful impact. The great room was also a lot of fun to design, especially with the blush pink sofa. The husband wasn't exactly sold on that idea at first, but now it's his favorite place to crash.

**The plaid wallpaper in the office is a bold print. What influenced that decision?**

The husband is a well-dressed businessman, so I studied his wardrobe for inspiration. Plaids, houndstooth, stripes, and other menswear trademarks were staples in his apparel choices, so the wallpaper seemed to be a natural choice to reflect his style for the gentleman's study.

**That butterfly bathroom is the best! What led to the design choices in that space?**

The wife is a gourmet chef and owns a set of china that features an elaborate butterfly pattern. I thought that motif would be appropriate for a powder room so close to the kitchen she loves to work in every day.

**Tell us about the artwork. Did it belong to your clients, or did you help choose it for the design?**

The clients did own some artwork previously, and we worked it in. But some pieces I chose for them, like the

resting ballerina in the formal parlor. The bold charging bull is a custom piece by an artist from Asia, and including it was actually the husband's idea. So he consulted with me on it for sizing, frame finish, etc. I've always believed that the best design comes from collaboration with the people you're working with, and that goes both ways for designers and clients.

**How did the clients react to the finished project?**

The ranch took roughly two years to design, build, and furnish, so when we unveiled the home to the clients, it was pretty emotional for them. The wife was moved to tears, which naturally got the hubby a little emotional because he was so happy to see his wife and daughter overjoyed at the results. In fact, the more I think about it, laughter and tears were all around—even for my staff. And witnessing those reactions is the best reward for a professional like me. Our job is to improve people's quality of life, and when you see the impact of your designs on others' happiness, well, it's just the most accomplished feeling.

For more info, visit [coreydamenjenkins.com](http://coreydamenjenkins.com)

*Colombian-born Patricia Riascos took full advantage of her second chance at the American Dream, carving out a career in the medical field before pursuing her true passion: art, through which she creates a canvas-centric dialogue with her audience.*

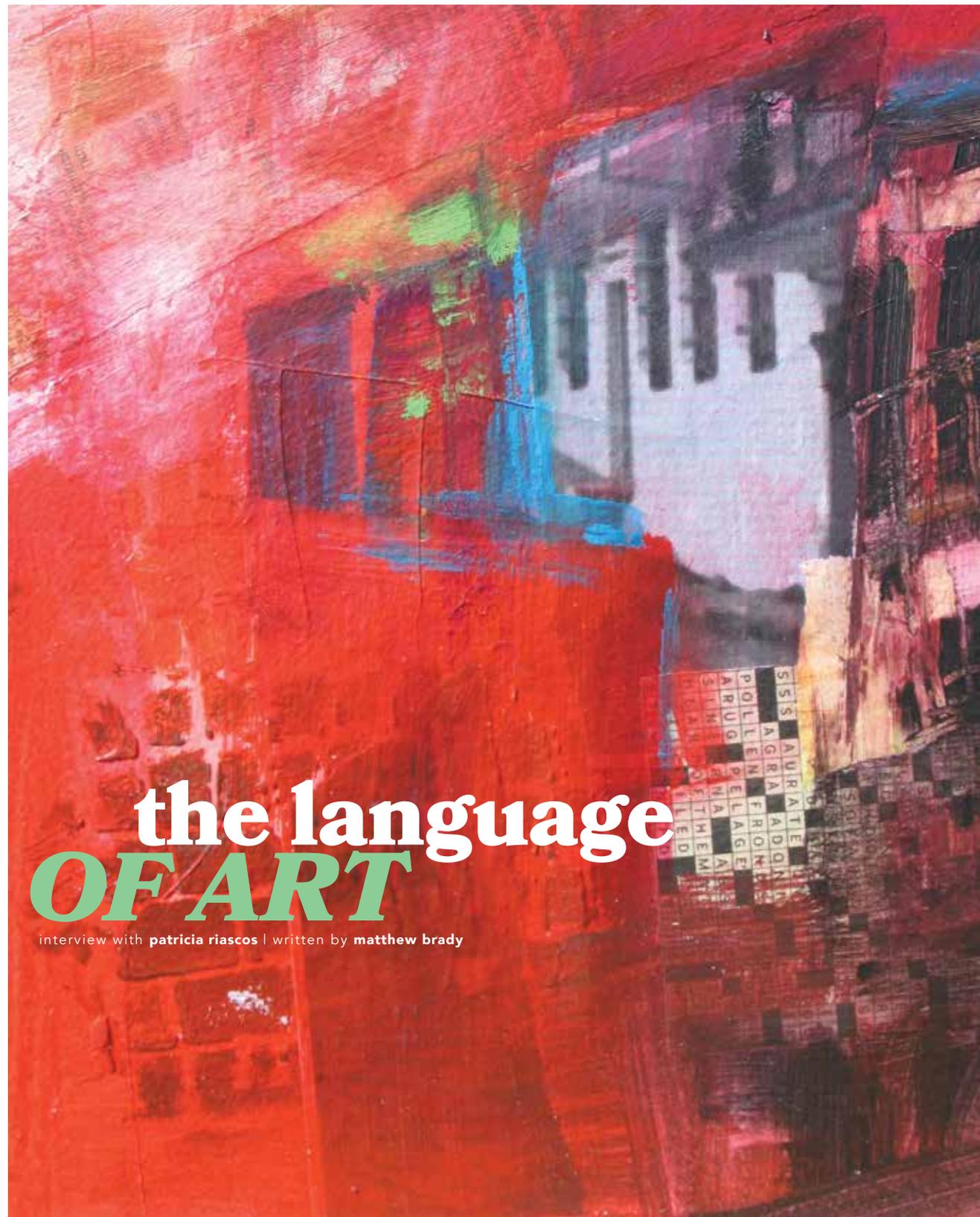
**Tell us about your upbringing in Colombia. Were you raised in an artistic household?**

I grew up in a relatively small town right in the middle of the coffee region in Colombia surrounded by amazing landscapes and the most beautiful greenery—something that you truly appreciate once you have left it behind.

I do come from a family with an artistic soul. My mother never had art instruction, yet she painted watercolors and was a great gardener and flower designer. Her side of the family shows artistic traits manifested in many different ways, as several relatives are published writers. My brother is an architect and also enjoys painting. My two sisters both have artistic talents.

**When did you move to the United States?**

I had a great experience as an exchange student in Illinois, and then I returned to Colombia to attend college. After finishing school, I received a Fulbright Scholarship. Due to paperwork confusion and lack of advice, I had to let it go at the last minute. That is something that has always haunted me—a great and unfortunate loss. I decided that I would come to the States



# the language OF ART

interview with **patricia riascos** | written by **matthew brady**



anyway. I saved a little money and moved to California on my own in 1984.

**How have your travels influenced your artwork?**

My art is, for the most part, emotional. When I travel or go back to Colombia, the feelings that I gather inspire me. As many people know, Colombia has suffered more than forty years of terrorism, but people like me, who are part of the diaspora, have not lived those difficult times.

Several years ago, I spent a good amount of time reading and learning about this suffering, which inspired me to create a small series representing my sorrow as I learned the facts. I have not shown most of those paintings.

**You had a career as a lab medical technologist but quit to become an artist. What prompted you to do so?**

Older generations tended to advocate security instead of passion to their children, so it was decided that I should be in a field that would provide more



of a secure future, which I agreed to (and I feel that this decision served its purpose). But I also pursued art on the side, going to art schools more as a hobby. The change to art happened slowly, coinciding with fewer hours at the laboratory.

I feel great satisfaction being able to dedicate more time to something that makes the hours go by without me noticing and resolves the urge to create. The results are a source of happiness for me beyond any limits.

**On your website, you have photos of your studio. It's very neat and organized—except in the photo of you painting. Do you work better in chaos?**

My studio is neat before I start a new project. As I paint, though, a hurricane of debris starts to populate the surfaces. Since I often work with collage, all kinds of boxes, each containing different materials, are open and books are consulted. I don't want to spend the time on getting things organized as I go; I feel the urge to concentrate on painting. Then, after I'm finished, I

need to have my studio completely clean and back in order before I start anything new.

**Your recent paintings are more abstract, but you've also done representational art. Why did you switch?**

I have worked in the representational style but never too close to a complete copy of the subject. I have always admired abstract art but never actually had classes. I felt a great deal of curiosity about learning and decided that I would immerse myself in it.

In my opinion, abstract art is a bit more difficult; there is nothing to copy from, and everything has to flow from your own intentions. It also demands a more disciplined sense of design, contrary to what people believe. At the moment, I am mixing both elements.

**Your overall style is very free flowing, yet you also make ample use of squares, which are very structured shapes. What does this combination add to your artwork?**

You touch on a very good point. I have actually thought about this concept.

There is the idea of a "square person," who is supposed to be unwilling to accept other beliefs or external influences. However, I find that squares are very versatile in a painting; they add variation, texture, and fun, especially when mixed with a free-flowing style.

**Lines are also prominent in your artwork. What do they bring to your art?**

For me, lines are a very adaptable element. I enjoy using them; they can be very expressive, strong, or delicate. Picasso is my favorite artist. I have

**// I BELIEVE ART IS A LANGUAGE, MUCH LIKE MUSIC AND THE WRITTEN WORD. IF YOU DON'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE, IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND IT.**



studied and admired how he could depict almost an entire painting with a few strokes. I use lines at all stages, sometimes as the final touches on wide spaces.

**How do your paintings express what you're feeling?**

I believe art is a language, much like music and the written word. If you don't speak the language, it is hard to understand it. That's why I think it is important to include art in the school curriculum.

There are certain elements in art that communicate feelings. It is up to the observer to establish a connection. Sometimes a person is drawn to a particular painting because it awakens memories or emotions that don't necessarily coincide with the artist's intentions but still produce a successful interaction. I like it when someone tells me about their own interpretation, which might be totally different from my intentions. It is also rewarding when someone gets exactly what I intended. It is an open dialogue.

**You also occasionally include messages in your paintings. What determines if you do?**

I enjoy writing. My mind is constantly at work as I go about my day. I collect all those thoughts in a little notebook. Sometimes, when I am deciding on my next project, I refer back to my notes. Then a painting is born and those words go on it, or it will be the title of the next painting.

One of my favorite examples occurred after I was moving from a house that

I had lived in for twenty-one years. During the time I spent packing, I started to think about how fortunate I was to have so much to pack and how the process was almost like reviewing your life and remembering the nice things that people have given to you. As a result, "Nothing like packing to move to see your life in front of your eyes" is written in one of my paintings.

**What is more rewarding: a painting that comes to you easily or one that you have to put a lot of work into?**

The fact that I could come up with what could be considered a successful painting is rewarding no matter what. If the painting went through a long process, it is like a child that demanded a lot of time and patience.

Paintings are very much like children to me; it is very hard to let go of them. Once, I sold a very dear painting to an institution. On one occasion, I went to see how it looked. When I saw it, I wanted to cry. It was hanging in a long, somewhat dark corridor, on a wall too big for its size. I felt that it was very lonely. I wanted to buy it back!

**If you could go back ten, twenty, or thirty years, what advice would you give to yourself?**

Work harder, invest more time when possible, and think well before you go into endeavors that look like great opportunities. Do better research and, more important, a better soul search.

For more info, visit [patriciariscosart.com](http://patriciariscosart.com)

# MICHELANGELOS OF SNOW

written by alexa bricker  
photography by elijah lee reeder



## SNOW BEGINS AS TINY ICE CRYSTALS

in the atmosphere that bind together and eventually fall from clouds as snowflakes. It's hard to imagine these microscopic droplets of frozen water could be transformed into anything more than snowmen, but the visionaries at the International Snow Sculpture Championships see snow differently.

For more than twenty years, Breckenridge, Colorado, has played host to the competition, which brings teams from all over the world together for five days in January to shape, carve, and sculpt enormous blocks of snow. In 2018, teams from as far away as Mongolia and Argentina ventured to this mountain town for the opportunity.

According to Austyn Dineen, the director for the Breckenridge Tourism Office, the Snow Sculpture Organization Committee sends out 250 invitations in

June and, in August, requests sculpture proposals from the artists. Of the 250 invites, just sixteen teams are chosen to compete.

It's not just the chance to create that brings these artists together, though—it's forging a bond through their love of this little-known medium, learning from peers with completely different points of view, and, most important, pushing the limits of what's possible.

## FIFTY THOUSAND POUNDS

The town of Breckenridge is known for its snow—it's one of the most popular skiing destinations in the entire world, after all. But even for this snow-covered town, maneuvering four hundred tons of the stuff in a short period of time is a challenge.

It takes a few days to mold fifty thousand pounds of snow into uniform

blocks that are approximately ten feet wide by ten feet thick by twelve feet high. With the help of the Breckenridge Public Works Department and volunteers (who are responsible for, quite literally, stomping the snow into place), every team is left with the perfect canvas to shape its creation. Innovators in the field come armed with their own set of tricks and tools—scraping, cutting, and carving away at these blocks until they become the masterpieces that their minds have conjured up.

None of this would have been possible, though, if it weren't for the vision of the staff at a local real estate group who, in 1979, came together as Breckenridge's first snow-sculpting team. The team, made up of Rob Neyland, Ron Shelton, Randy Amys, and Bill Hazel, worked with the city to bring in talent from around the world in what would



later become the first international championship in 1991.

Since then, the town has become a haven for snow sculptors and is dedicated to making the experience memorable, not only for those competing but also for those who come to admire the work. “The setting could not be more perfect,” says Brett Tomczak, a longtime competitor from Wisconsin. “Breckenridge takes really good care of us.”

#### CARVING CAMARADERIE

It’s no secret that snow sculpting is a niche portion of the art world. Most people might not even know that it exists outside the realm of snowmen. But, like any other creative outlet, the artists are fully committed to their craft and are constantly revolutionizing what it means to create art out of snow.

As a part of USA Team Wisconsin-Tomczak—one of two teams from the state, and one of five American teams—Tomczak has been snow sculpting on the international level for more than twenty years, though it was a path he nearly passed up. “I kind of fell into snow sculpting,” he admits. “A friend called me up one day and asked if I wanted to join his snow sculpting team that was going to be entering a competition at a local winter carnival. I grabbed anything I could find—some bowls and a few spoons—and decided to see what I could do.”

Tomczak’s team ended up taking third place, and he instantly fell in love with the idea. He has been competing ever since. He has also, for the most part, been competing with the same group of sculptors and has been lucky enough to be invited to the international championships for the last few years.



His team’s collection of sculpting tools has evolved well past spoons and bowls over the years, though. The only things that cannot be used at the international competition are heat and power tools, so competitors are able to get pretty creative with their strategy. In 2018, Tomczak said his team upped its game by bringing snow-specific sculpting tools they purchased from China that are designed to chip away at the block delicately and precisely. The team also frequently uses a roofing shovel, a six-pronged ice pick, a horsehair brush, and sandpaper.

Even with all of the tools at their disposal, it seems that the creation of these gigantic frozen sculptures would be near impossible without a carefully coordinated plan, though Tomczak notes the 2018 competition was the first time his team utilized a to-scale model of its sculpture. In other years Team Wisconsin-Tomczak came to the competition with drawings of the front of its sculpture and simply improvised the rest, Tomczak says.

“Historically, most teams have a model of their sculpture with details on all four sides,” he says. “But we are very organic and fluid with our process. This year, when we decided to use a model, we

thought it would be easier, but it was actually a lot harder than we thought.”

For their 2018 project, Tomczak’s team decided on a ballerina who would stand in a pirouette position with a circular ribbon wrapped around the outside of the sculpture—an ambitious undertaking, Tomczak admits, being their first time working to scale and with an entirely new team member.

Unfortunately, the team eventually pushed the sculpture a little too far, and it collapsed before the judging phase of the competition. “We never had a piece fall before,” says Tomczak. “We knew this year our concept was really fragile, but if you want a chance to get on the podium, you have to push yourself. If it falls, well, then you know you pushed too far.”

Though the sculpture did not hold up for judging, Tomczak says its misfortune was a true showcase of the camaraderie at this event. Members of nearby Team Mexico immediately ran over after the incident to offer assistance and to check on their safety.

#### THE JUDGING

With fifteen teams left standing, voting commenced to decide on a winner in

five categories: Gold, Silver, Bronze, Artists’ Choice, and Kid’s Choice. The Gold went to Team Mongolia-Erdene for its sculpture titled *Secret*, Silver was awarded to Team China, while the Bronze was awarded to Team USA Wisconsin-Vogt. The Artists’ Choice medal—decided by peer vote—went to Team Mongolia-Tserendash, and the Kid’s Choice was also awarded to Team China.

The community of snow sculptors that has formed out of these events is truly supportive and, even more important, just fun, Tomczak notes. While many people can’t comprehend the point of spending countless hours on a piece of artwork to let it melt away a few days later, he says that the real meaning is in what the experience at large can bring you.

“Just because there’s not a clear end in sight for what you’re creating doesn’t mean you shouldn’t do it. I love the idea that ‘the things that make us weird as children make us interesting as adults.’ Whatever you’re doing—if you’re enjoying yourself while doing it—that’s reason enough.”

For more info, visit [gobreck.com](http://gobreck.com)

# art to feather your nest

## Front of Tear Out Card 2

**lemon pull-apart  
BISCUITS**

**Biscuits:**  
1 can refrigerated biscuits,  
jumbo size (8 biscuits)  
2 lemons, zested  
½ cup granulated sugar  
¼ cup butter, melted

**Citrus Glaze:**  
1 cup powdered sugar  
1 tablespoon butter, melted  
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice



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## Back of Tear Out Card 2



SERVES 4 TO 6

1. Spray a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray or create a foil slow cooker liner to prevent the biscuits from overcooking on the edges. Use two pieces of foil that are 18 inches long. Fold them in half and then fold again so that each foil piece measures 4 x 18 inches long. Place both pieces into the slow cooker so that they line the sides of the slow cooker. Then place a piece of parchment paper in the slow cooker, over the foil.
2. Cut each biscuit into four pieces. Mix the lemon zest and sugar together.
3. Place the lemon sugar mixture in a plastic bag, add the biscuit pieces and toss to coat. Place the biscuit pieces in the slow cooker. Sprinkle the remaining sugar from the bag over the top of the biscuits. Drizzle with the melted butter.
4. Place a cotton towel or paper towel between the lid and the slow cooker to absorb condensation. Cook on high for 1½ to 2 hours. Remove the lid for the last 15 to 30 minutes of cooking time.
5. For the glaze, mix together the powdered sugar, butter and lemon juice, and drizzle it over the top of the cooked biscuits.

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